

OECD DEVELOPMENT CENTRE

POLICY BRIEF No. 6

TOWARDS SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN RURAL AFRICA

by

David Turnham

- A growing recognition of the need to delimit the role of the government, to promote the market framework, and to rely on the private sector as the engine of growth, offers the prospect of a new beginning in rural development in Africa.
- Rural people must take a more dominant role, both in shaping their economic prospects and in assuming the responsibility for a high quality of stewardship of natural resources.
- To help to bring about such an empowerment of the people, governments and the donors will need to undertake some drastic reforms in the old systems and habits of governance.

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DEVELOPMENT CENTRE POLICY BRIEFS

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Africa's chronic stagnation, crushing burden of rural poverty and ruinously rapid depletion of natural resources must be tackled through renewed efforts to secure sustainable development. While such renewed efforts need to be guided by the lessons of past experience, they also need to depart radically from many of the ideas and practices that led the failures that continue to litter the African landscape. In urging governments and donors to encourage and sustain community-led self-help as the centre piece in the renewed effort, and to focus on the policies and services that complement self-help and private sector activities, the Brief draws heavily upon the conclusions of a meeting held in Francistown, Botswana in December 1991. The consensus reached by the participants at that meeting — most of whom have been directly involved for many years in the efforts to secure sustainable development in Africa — continues to be reinforced by the results of research conducted at the Development Centre and elsewhere.

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Introduction

Africa's chronic economic stagnation, a crushing burden of rural poverty, and a ruinously rapid depletion of natural resources, have been sufficiently discussed in recent years as to need no further elaboration or emphasis. The problems are compounded by the very high rates of growth of the population — on a continent-wide basis, among the highest the world has ever witnessed.

In the light of the extraordinary severity of the African crisis, the urgency of meeting the challenge of achieving effective, sustainable development of the Continent's natural resources can scarcely be exaggerated. For, despite the damage already done, Africa must of necessity depend on its natural resources for a long time to come. This is most obviously true for the large majority of the population who will continue to live in rural areas and to derive their work and income from the land, but the rural areas also supply the markets and furnish most of the food and raw materials on which urban development is based. Thus, prospects in Africa's towns are also directly linked to success in tackling the resource use and management problems that increasingly stand in the way of sustainable rural development.

The origins of this Policy Brief derive from the growing recognition that the development of Africa's rural areas has to be based on an integrated approach to natural resource management and use. Integration, as the term is used here, relates to three fundamental elements: self-help efforts on the part of the individual and the community as the driving force, support for these efforts through a wide range of locally-directed services and public sector investments, and a complementary framework of governance and general policies. As recognition of the validity of the integrated approach is more and more widely shared in Africa, so it is also important that the lessons from past efforts to use some of the elements of such an approach — notably the experience gained with programmes of integrated rural development — be incorporated in the design and implementation of the new programmes.

With this in mind, a Workshop was held in Francistown, Botswana, in December 1991. The Brief draws heavily on the background papers produced for the Workshop as well as the six days of discussions¹. The Workshop was supported by the Governments of Botswana, Norway, and Sweden, and by the World Bank. For the Development Centre, the deliberations of the Workshop mark a logical extension of work summarised in an earlier, more general, discussion of environmental management contained in the Brief entitled "Managing the Environment in Developing Countries". The current Brief highlights the reform of governance as a critical element in a broader framework of policy reform — an emphasis that also reflects the findings of research carried out at the Centre.

It was expected that the 28 participants at the Workshop, all experienced practitioners in Africa, with considerable knowledge in the fields of government and administration, foreign assistance, integrated rural development, conservation, ecology, and public policy, would be able to produce guidelines useful to both specialists and generalists dealing with natural resource management. In this regard an unusual degree

of unanimity was achieved, as indicated by the endorsement by the Workshop of 16 statements, “the Francistown Principles”, incorporating the three elements of the integrated approach and constituting a set of necessary conditions of crucial importance for effective rural development and environmental management. The principles should be helpful to government leaders and officials, to aid agency staff and for a variety of training purposes.

Many of the participants at the Workshop and a number of other specialists have commented on drafts of the Brief. The authors — all of whom were also Workshop participants — have attempted to take these comments into account, but they take full responsibility for the views expressed in the Brief. Similarly, the support of the various organizations for the Workshop and the writing and publication of the Brief does not imply endorsement by them of its content or conclusions.

The Past Narrow Approach to Natural Resource Management

In the context of this Brief, natural resources refer to those resources of actual or potential value to mankind that are of a renewable kind, especially soils, water, forests and other vegetation, rangelands, wildlife and fish. In general, these resources can be sustainably managed so as to maintain or renew their full potential for future use. The wise management of natural resources thus embraces the idea of conservation; it also takes account of specific activities such as investments in soil and water conservation and in nature conservation.

In the past, most natural resource management has focused narrowly on a single use for a single target resource². Forestry focused on production of commercial lumber. Range management focused on maximum production of domestic livestock. Intensified crop production was handled in a similar fashion. Decisions were largely in the hands of managers who were technical specialists, and the local people and communities played no role in planning or execution, nor in most cases did they share in the values on which the programmes were based. Such management largely ignored other uses for the resource and other users of the resource or the area it occupied, and paid little or no attention to local peoples’ knowledge of the resource.

Thus, those interested in preserving bio-diversity and the integrity of ecosystems concentrated on the creation of national parks and nature reserves. While there are some exceptions, these were frequently established without reference to the local people, and people in the park area were often moved out. The people usually did not understand what the purpose of the park was. But they bore the costs of the park in terms of lost access to grazing, cultivation, tree cutting, and hunting, and often also in terms of depredations by park wildlife which damaged their fields or livestock. All revenue from visitors went to the central government, and the local people received no benefits from the park. As a consequence, the people were often resentful of the parks and sought to continue after their establishment to graze, hunt, or cut wood in them.

The same situation often also held for forests reserved for timber, with all proceeds from the lumber going to the central government and the foresters acting as police to keep the local people out. Moreover the foresters’ narrow approach to commercial

lumber, excluded consideration of the other values and uses of an intact forest, such as grazing, water catchment, biological diversity, wildlife, recreation and tourism, and collection of other products from forests including medicines, grasses, vines, fruits, and seeds.

Pastoral range and livestock projects illustrate another aspect of the problem of narrow focus. The range managers were from developed countries or were trained there, and they brought with them ecological, economic and cultural concepts, as well as technologies which were usually totally unsuited to Africa. For example, large scale and environmentally damaging efforts were made to clear the land of ground cover and local species in a vain effort to stamp out tse-tse fly, one of the principal pests of the fledgling livestock industry. Similarly, generations of managers acted on the assumption that the purpose of livestock raising was to realise the maximum marketable weight of animal. However, livestock in Africa normally plays a complex dietary, cultural, social, economic, and even religious role in which marketing meat and hides plays a minor or at any rate a subsidiary role. Thus herd size, composition, husbandry practices, and usage all were a function of the local cultural and ecological dynamics, which were not served by imported ideas of range management, virtually all of which have failed.

Soil conservation also illustrates the situation. In Lesotho, for example, generations of soil conservationists sought to cure the extreme erosion by a narrow focus on building terraces and other anti-erosion structures. The local people, who for the most part were not effectively consulted nor involved in the planning or implementation, resented, ignored, or occasionally destroyed the structures. The erosion is a symptom of underlying problems involving land rights and tenure, cultural factors, the pressures from growing livestock and human populations, and economic policies.

These examples illustrate aspects of the past narrow approach to natural resource management. They are characterized by: (a) a focus on a single use and single type of user; (b) a prescriptive approach, usually bringing technology and knowledge which is not culturally or ecologically appropriate; (c) a neglect or active exclusion of local people and communities from any part in the planning, implementation or benefits of the projects; and (d) a disregard for other uses and users of the target resource or the area it occupied. In general, such an approach conflicts with a basic reality which is that farmers use resources in multiple ways and integrate into their farming systems the use of a wide variety of resources. Not surprisingly, Africa is littered with failed projects involving one or more mistakes of this type.

An Integrated Approach to Natural Resource Management

There has been a belated but now rapidly increasing recognition that the narrow approach to natural resource management is not working and that a broader, more comprehensive approach is needed. With this has come increased recognition of the need (a) to have local participation from the start by bringing local people into the problem identification, planning, development and implementation of natural resource management schemes and (b) to assure that programmes are culturally sound, that they fit local customs and gain strength from village dynamics, and that the people recognize and receive benefits. In most cases these objectives imply the integration of activities involving several disciplines, usually under different sectors and agencies — in essence, schemes of integrated rural development. For example, an effective range management project may need to involve not only livestock, but also agriculture, infrastructure, marketing, wildlife, and tourism. At the same time there must be government support and effective policy linkage. Where donors are involved, there is a need to involve them in a co-ordinated way. It should go without saying that the projects or programmes should be economically sound and viable. In this regard, the involvement of the local community in contributing to programme financing is a form of security as well as being desirable for other reasons.

In recent years there have been an increasing number of projects which attempt to apply this broader approach to natural resource management. The Tropical Forestry Action Plans in some cases have sought to bring such an approach to forest management, as have various programmes designed to address resource problems in the Sahel. Biodiversity conservation, and approaches to protected areas provide further illustrations. While now in a phase of rapid development, the use of an integrated approach in this field is not new. The Maasai Mara Reserve in Kenya, which was first developed some thirty years ago, is among the oldest continuing examples of this approach. However, there is now a new burst of effort on the part of donors, NGOs, and some governments to apply an integrated approach to conservation (usually parks or wildlife) so as to provide benefits to those living in the vicinity of the parks.

Lessons of Experience from Rural Development Programmes

Most of the newer efforts based on a broad approach to natural resource management involve systems that are closely related to those followed under integrated rural development schemes. These are schemes that embrace investments and services to improve income and living conditions for small scale farmers and other poverty groups living in rural areas. They are often activated in generally resource-poor areas where poor people tend to be concentrated. They typically involve an attempt to draw together and support a wide range of services and types of investment, including “directly productive” activities, such as delivery mechanisms for farmer advisory services, seed and fertilizer supply, credit, etc., plus “productive infrastructure” such as roads and — more rarely — irrigation facilities, and indirectly productive elements, often with longer term effects, such as improved education and health services.

In Africa particularly, such approaches often encountered severe difficulties. Failure is frequently ascribed to complexities in management, weak institutions, plus a lack of ownership and commitment from central bureaucracies (whose power was seen to be threatened by ceding control of resources to the local level). However, many other factors also help explain these failures. The political leadership at the highest level was often less interested in promoting agriculture and rural development than in other goals such as rapid industrialisation and the development of an urban society. The governance system was often weakened by a lack of openness to ideas and criticism and was frequently hostile to market-based development, as reflected in the framework of macro-economic and sector policies and excessive regulation. Programmes were also flawed through technical weaknesses in diagnosis and programme design; the limited number and poor training of staff; and in all aspects, a low level of participation on the part of the affected communities³. The donors, while sometimes operating in a vacuum because of the lack of commitment from government, often added to the management problems, in part by their encouragement of overly-ambitious project designs and through efforts to force the pace of pace of implementation relative to local capacities.

The adverse impact of these factors has also been powerful enough to frustrate the narrow or single activity approach to the promotion and support of faster growth of output and income in rural areas. So the main lesson of experience may be that complexity is a fact that cannot be ignored or easily dealt with; we argue later on that the involvement of the local community must often be the main integrating force rather than, as in the past, some management group in the public sector.

The early efforts at rural development were rather unfortunate in one other respect. The programmes were put together and implemented mostly by people who had little prior experience with such multi-disciplinary, integrated efforts. Problems, mistakes, and learning by doing — all these were part and parcel of the early experience. New efforts focused on natural resource management need not and should not suffer from the same mistakes, though the risks are often quite similar and the challenge is the same.

The Francistown Principles

The 16 principles that follow reflect the consensus views of the participants of the Francistown Workshop on the necessary conditions for the sound management of natural resources in Africa. While the observance of any of the 16 principles would contribute to improved performance in sustainable rural development, the essence of the message is the need for them to be considered and applied as a package. They embrace the entire panorama ranging from governance to policy to programmes to participation to the private sector to the responsibilities of governments and donors and, finally, to the family and to the individual woman and man in the village or the town.

Taken collectively, application of the principles is clearly a major undertaking, in many instances constituting a radical and fundamental reform when contrasted to current ways of doing business in rural development or natural resource management. While the principles themselves and the underlying concepts will have a familiar ring to most practitioners, *they have rarely been respected in a systematic way or more than very partially translated into practice.* But the participants at Francistown were convinced of the critical need for radical solutions if the several adverse factors that have severely compromised many past efforts in Africa are to be dealt with.

There is a basis for optimism if the following principles are accepted by the people, governments, and donors. Specifically:

1. An effective strategy must be founded upon a national political will and a policy framework derived through a democratic process and based upon market philosophy.
2. A long term strategy must be formulated; programmes with specific projects should flow from strategy.
3. Participation of the relevant local communities in the formulation, design, execution, review and further development of the strategy, policies and programme is an essential feature.
4. Effective participation calls for special efforts to build environmental awareness at all levels of government and in the communities.
5. Decentralization/delegation of authority from the centre to local government institutions is a vital link in the participatory process and an essential means of expediting action.
6. Programmes will succeed if they generate tangible, economic and other benefits over the short to medium term both for the nation and for the communities involved.
7. Conservation and development programmes require continuing efforts aimed at strengthening existing institutions and building up their capacity to provide/deliver effective services. Capacity building and ensuring sustainability will also call for investments with a long gestation period, e.g. in human resource development.
8. Combining conservation and development is necessarily a multi-sectoral and interdisciplinary enterprise, involving close and sustained coordination of the activities of all parties.

9. Programmes reflect a complex reality but the elements must be simple and clear in their definition and approach, and compatible with the capability to execute.
10. Flexibility and feedback are essential components in programme implementation and in the evolution of policies.
11. Timely and continuous monitoring and evaluation as a part of an information system for management, project staff and beneficiaries must be built into the programme from the outset.
12. Involvement of local NGOs and private sector institutions should be promoted; they will increase the capacity to implement and sustain programmes.
13. Sound technology that reflects sustainable development principles is largely lacking. Major new efforts to develop user-friendly, affordable technology through a process involving interaction between the local people and researchers is essential.
14. Special efforts to increase off-farm employment opportunities in rural areas should be a major thrust in relieving population pressures in the most fragile environments.
15. Universal and effective primary education improves productivity and the ability to use resources sustainably and it broadens the basis for participation. It merits a high priority as part of a human resource development strategy.
16. Under the leadership of the national government the role of donors is to support the development strategy and programmes.

The Rationale for the Principles

What follows is a brief explanation of the rationale for each principle, but what should be clear is that the principles are self-reinforcing and build one upon the other.

1. *An effective strategy must be founded upon a national political will and a policy framework derived through a democratic process and based upon market philosophy.*

A hard-won lesson of experience across most of Africa and indeed many other parts of the world, is that without a democratic framework, governments only rarely respond to the interests of the community as a whole. Lip service may be paid to the need to address poverty and rural development, but these sentiments frequently mask the reality of a government that serves a narrow group of mostly urban-based and better-off stakeholders. Democratic process itself is far from perfect, nor is it free from distortions and weaknesses that often detract from governments' ability to pursue the best interests of the country; nevertheless, under democracy there are opportunities — at least from time to time — to substitute a new leadership for one that is discredited.

Similarly, the importance of a steadfast adherence to market philosophy can scarcely be overstressed. Africa's farmers and other rural entrepreneurs must have enough incentives to motivate the self-help investment and innovation that is an essential feature of effective and sustained development. In the past, weak incentives — often the result of a government preference for high-cost single-channel marketing and low administered farm-gate prices — in many instances have rendered programmatic efforts at rural

development vain. Similarly, inappropriate incentives, for example, in the form of pesticide subsidies, or in some instances for tillage and land-clearing machinery, have served to aggravate resource degradation by encouraging environmentally destructive cropping systems and practices⁴.

Experience also shows that the government cannot compensate for the deficiencies of the private sector by substituting a public service or production facility: rather, ways must be found to strengthen the private sector. This is not because the private sector is particularly reliable — indeed, in Africa particularly, this is generally far from being the case. But serious weaknesses and deficiencies in government have greatly hampered its ability to manage and implement the programmes. Thus, for the government itself to be effective it must confine its activities to those areas where the provision of publicly managed and financed services and investments is most critical.

2. *A long term strategy must be formulated; programmes and projects should flow from strategy.*

The formulation of a long term strategy is a difficult task, but positive results can flow from the attempt to think in strategic terms. It should force governments to grapple with the ugly reality of resource scarcity and with the necessity to develop programmes designed and sequenced according to such scarcities. A realistic appraisal of government's resources and capabilities should also direct attention towards the role of the local communities and to the role of the private sector.

A considered response to the scarcity of public resources should be a conscious effort to minimize and limit the role of public sector services and investments to those areas where the private sector and the community cannot be induced to play a major role. Thus, the private sector has not yet been very effective in providing technical services to agriculture in Africa and experience also shows that matters such as the conservation of soil and water resources cannot safely be left to self-interest or to the local community acting on its own. On the other hand, experience also shows that government-run marketing institutions and co-operatives are rarely successful and are better left to private initiative.

As part of the effort to develop long term strategic thinking and vision, the need for flexibility and the value of adaptation in the light of lessons from evolving experience is reinforced. The long term strategy is emphatically not meant to be a blueprint and it should evolve flexibly with changing circumstances and in the light of better information⁵. In the process of discussing and agreeing on a strategy, a sense of commitment and shared purpose can be developed. This may later prove helpful in counteracting the endemic problems of non-co-operative ministries and bureaucratic infighting. Finally, a long term framework — in conjunction with other elements that reinforce expectations of stable governance — promotes confidence and commitment to the objectives of sustainable resource management and rural development.

Experience with an older generation of rural development projects has demonstrated that overly-complex designs and a host of difficulties in implementation have frequently resulted from an attempt to crowd actions and activities into a short time frame that should properly have been developed and sequenced over a much longer time period. The

financial, organizational and managerial implications of such a crowding in of activities frequently made the effort impossible to sustain for very long. This has been especially true of efforts in integrated rural development supported by external resources.

What role can donors play in the planning process and how does the heavy reliance on aid affect the strategy? Historically, donors' commitments, perhaps largely for legal reasons, have been confined to commitments lasting no more than 5 or 6 years, generally for specific projects. A change of view or adverse experience during the initial years can therefore lead to a withdrawal of support for the programme as a project cycle is completed. Ideally, Governments should seek to avoid a heavy dependence on donor support so that the risk of a collapse or radical cut back of the programme is minimized if donor support is withdrawn. However, given the current reality of very heavy dependence on aid, a more appropriate solution is to design the activities in a programmatic rather than a specific project framework while seeking donor support for the programmatic approach. Both governments and donors need to appreciate that mistakes and failures are virtually inevitable from time to time. Mistakes can be corrected, but the rigidity of the project framework can be a hindrance and is often in conflict with the required flexibility for successful rural development and natural resource management initiatives.

While donors can only rarely bind themselves formally to provide support over a long period, there is much that they can do to strengthen their commitment in principle to the long term framework. In some instances, while the legal commitment is short term, the intention to provide long term assistance can be made explicit. Such a commitment is illustrated by the support of the Swedish International Development Authority to the Kenyan National Soil Conservation Programme for more than 25 years⁶. What is needed is to extend such practice to a wider circle of donors and to a wider framework of activities. (Other issues relating to the activities of the donors are taken up later in the Brief).

3. *Participation of the relevant local communities in the formulation, design, execution, review and further development of the strategy, policies and programmes is an essential feature.*

At one level, this principle can be interpreted as a restatement and reinforcement of the importance of democratic process in the system of governance. Without the mass of rural peoples having a voice in choosing the leadership there is little hope either for sustained help for the problems that confront them or for the people to contribute to the development of the strategy and the choice of priorities. In the narrower programme context, too, there is much evidence of errors in design and of missed opportunities to strengthen execution and implementation through the failure to involve local people.

In African circumstances this deficiency has had especially serious consequences, because so much of the real expertise and knowledge required to begin to address the problems can be found only among members of the local communities. For example, formal and otherwise well-documented property rights are of secondary importance compared to customary and traditional rights, the knowledge of which is largely held within the community. Abuses arising from the disregard of such rights is often a source of local resentment and opposition to development schemes. If conservation is seen as

a threat to traditional sources of livelihood, community opposition is certain. In such instances, the rationale for including the affected communities as partners in the design and decision making process is overwhelming.

The same applies to efforts to increase productivity in agriculture where new knowledge emerging from local and international agricultural research has in recent years been meagre and limited in relevance to African conditions. This reflects in part a paucity of well-trained researchers and of research facilities in Africa but also a lack of in-depth field-based investigation of farming systems and of their evolution. The main repository of such knowledge is the farmers and farming communities and their close involvement and participation in the design and implementation of adaptive research is essential. Similarly, those most knowledgeable about local wild life, plant species and their possible uses are almost always the local people.

The reference to **relevant** local communities in the Principles draws attention to the heterogeneity of interests and expertise and the range of knowledge among various groups within the community. In particular, a point increasingly recognized in recent years but one that continues to merit emphasis, is that African women perform a wide range of functions relating to household and family welfare and to agriculture so that their specific knowledge and their interests need to be accounted for in the design and execution of programmes. African women have much to contribute and the neglect of this tremendous potential is a major weakness of many programmes, past and present. In many instances too, because the men are absent in seasonal migratory work in commercial agriculture or in the towns, women form the large majority in the village community. There are also other groups for example, differentiated by occupation or age (including the youth in the community), each and all of which have something to contribute and something to teach in the context of local programmes.

The need for effective participation implies two further considerations in programme design. Firstly, it is important that the community has adequate time to respond to external initiatives and to develop its ideas and contributions to such programmes. Thus, except perhaps in response to true emergency situations, programmes must not be rushed through to execution if in the process the essentials of participation are lost⁷.

A related point is the necessity for — and most often, unfortunately, the lack of — a good deal of experimentation and testing through pilot operations and activities to discover the most effective modes of participation and interaction. At the local level, there is also plenty of scope for social and economic conflict, and the promise of extra resources through outside programmes may serve to stir up such conflict⁸. This is but one among many complicated questions that need to be addressed. It is not so surprising that government officials shy away from finding the appropriate institutional base for participation, seeking the links to recognized traditional sources of authority such as village elders, bringing women into the decision making process, deciding what procedures to develop etc. They are likely to have had little training or opportunity to develop experience in such fields especially if the social and political climate is not conducive to democratic processes. They are also influenced by the common reluctance of the “expert” to seek to involve or consult with ordinary farmers⁹.

The importance of flexibility and local adaptation in programme characteristics also needs to be stressed. Too frequently in the past, programmes have leaned heavily in the direction of standard designs and “blueprints”, and in the process have set up counterproductive rigidities and inflexibilities. Aid agencies have often been particularly guilty in this respect, though central governments are also responsible for the blueprint approach¹⁰. This may partly be a response to the lack of well functioning local systems and approaches that the aid programme can readily support, although helping to develop such systems should then be the first priority. The rural development fund concept under which communities can apply for assistance from a menu of possibilities, with justifications draw up in line with specified criteria, is one example of an approach that can help encourage community-level planning.

Finally, implicit in much of the above is the vital importance of listening and learning on the part of the officials and technicians in respect of their dealings with the local community. Officials need more and more to operate in an interactive and not prescriptive mode vis a vis the local people; to quote Tobisson and Rudqvist, Workshop Proceedings, a shift is required from “inducing and controlling people for environmental action to motivating, supporting and empowering them to do so”. Or, as another Workshop participant put it in her closing remarks, “To regard them [the community] as a ‘target group’ is to put them at the periphery of the projects’ activities. They should be encouraged to be masters of their own development”. (Matenge, Workshop Proceedings). It is difficult to over-emphasize the importance of this message.

If the participatory approach poses considerable challenges, it can also be the source of much strength. Indeed, dynamic institutions, led and operated at the village level, can and should be encouraged to take on major responsibilities for problem identification, planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation, and to serve as the essential integrating force, thus relieving the government of many burdens¹¹.

4. *Effective participation calls for special efforts to build environmental awareness at all levels of government and in the communities.*

As illustrated by recent experience in Madagascar and Lesotho¹², environmental awareness is the necessary prelude to a conviction of the need for action. Environmental awareness raising has not figured very prominently in Africa, partly because of the limited development and influence of local environmental NGOs and partly due to the limited environmental education in the schools. There is an acute need at all levels to become much more aware of and sensitive to the problems of environment. At the community level, the need is to reinforce through continual emphasis what most people already know — namely, the costs of ignoring the environment and the enormous advantages of prevention over cure through a wise use of natural resources. A heightened awareness also serves as a means of reinforcing peer pressure from the community at large on the free riders and foot draggers. An informed and enlightened local leadership is immensely important in securing an effective partnership between the local community and government officials.

There is also the need for at least as big an effort to further the environmental awareness and understanding among all levels of government officials. Realistically, given the other, sometimes conflicting, pressures on government officials and the difficulty in linking any financial or career incentives to the effectiveness of their performance in

environmental terms, the motivation must come in large part from a measure of personal conviction of the need to defend environmental interests and that the environment deserves one's best efforts. A part of the environmental education for officials is to reinforce the earlier point about communication with, and listening to, the local communities.

Properly undertaken, environmental education will contain specific messages targeted for particular audiences with follow up to see whether or not the messages are received correctly and acted upon. There are many potential audiences — children in school, male and female adult members of the community, community leaders, and various levels of official. The role of environmental education is as yet a much smaller part of the total environmental effort than it deserves and needs to be.

5. *Decentralization/delegation of authority from the centre to local government institutions is a vital link in the participatory process and an essential means of expediting action.*

This principle is virtually self-explanatory. Significant decentralization of authority to local level is implied by the fostering of local participation proposed under Principle 3 above. It is also linked to local taxes and contributions to finance local expenditures. Which elements to decentralize and how to achieve the participatory goals are matters to be determined in the light of the specific local circumstances; for example, where there are few trained and experienced specialists and planners, there may be a strong argument for concentrating them at the level of a province or district, with most activities at the village level being handled directly through community-based institutions. In any event, a broad measure of local authority involvement in the planning of resource use and in the choices about activities and investments to be promoted is essential.

District or village-level land use planning is an essential adjunct to both the development of decentralised authority and acceptance of that authority by the communities concerned. There are promising experiences in several African countries, for example, Burkina Faso, Mali, and Botswana, of land use plans that have been developed in consultation with local communities and that have helped to secure community acceptance of, and respect for, appropriate restrictions in land use, based on conservation principles. A well-defined and accepted planning approach to land use can do much to minimize land conflicts, arbitrate tenure and usufruct issues, and strengthen farmer confidence in their land use rights. Much remains to be done to strengthen land planning services and land use mapping.

Often in the past, increased local level authority has been resisted by the central authorities for fear of abuse. Indeed, this must always be a concern, one that is linked on one hand to a careful consideration of the scope for such abuse (and the measures needed to minimize the risk that abuse would occur) and, on the other hand, to the insistence on an openness and transparency about local decisions and decision-making processes relating to the projects. A principal concern is that the interests of the poor within the local community not be jeopardized or sacrificed by the use of power by the rich. For example, in local self-help conservation or rural infrastructure activities, it is wrong that the poor contribute labour without payment if the benefits of the schemes mostly go to better-off landowners. In such a case, the central authorities may need to insist that the better-off community members pay for the use of village labour, so that benefits can be enjoyed by all groups.

While the link between decentralization and local participation is the most critical one, it is also important that the officials working at local level have delegated to them sufficient powers to be able to react fast to changing situations and to adjudicate and coordinate where situations demand such action¹³. All too often though, local authority is fatally weakened by the necessity to refer decisions to higher authority. The delays have frequently frustrated progress and blunted initiative; often too, the need to consult or refer is an excuse for inaction and delay by officials anxious to avoid taking the responsibility for action or seeking to share the responsibility and thereby to dilute it. What may seem to be an advantage of deferring decisions to higher levels in order to get the advantage of more expertise and maturity of insight tends frequently to be offset by the ignorance at that level about critical local factors. As well as costly side effects of delayed decisions, there is in practice quite a high probability that the decision taken will be no better than if it had been made locally in the first place.

In sum, for a variety of reasons, the luxury of not decentralizing can no longer be afforded; the structure of decision making and authority needs to be reconsidered as a matter of urgency in many African countries. As noted, consideration of local taxes and other means of financing local expenditures is an integral part of this task.

6. *Programmes will succeed if they generate tangible, economic and other benefits over the short to medium term both for the nation and for the communities involved.*

Sustainability is a concept with several dimensions. As noted earlier, a dimension that is sometimes neglected by conservation-minded environmentalists concerns the incentives that are needed to generate local support for environmental management. The resources of the people are extremely tight and they do not have time to participate for the sake of participating. Tangible financial rewards are an immense incentive and an essential one if the communities themselves contribute with their own very limited resources. In addition to direct financial benefits, investments that bring water closer, reduce the time to get to market, or that increase the supply of accessible fuel for cooking, can all have similarly powerful effects, especially for the women.

Natural resource management and conservation needs to be integrated with production and income-generating opportunities. Indeed, sustainable utilization of natural resources is vital if conservation is to be effective¹⁴. For example, as mentioned earlier, active support from local communities for game parks and nature reserves (with incentives through employment and community-based park services) is usually essential if the parks are to flourish.

The link between conservation and development works in both directions, since sustainable programmes of rural development also need to respect sound resource management and conservation principles. Neglect of the sustainability factor is part of the explanation of the past failures of rural development schemes¹⁵, though this neglect is even more of a weakness with traditional, single purpose schemes of crop or livestock development. Today, in agriculture, the emphasis is increasingly on packages designed to support mixed farming systems involving both annual and permanent crops, plus multi-purpose tree planting for shelter, fuel wood and building materials.

While farmers are usually well aware of soil erosion and land degradation problems, they often neglect remedial action in favour of activities with a shorter pay-off. Interventions to correct for short term bias is an important activity for the public sector, both through its support of programmes and in respect of special incentives to induce more appropriate community and individual responses. Government support for education programmes, especially of primary education for girls, can also often be justified along similar lines (see later discussion of Principle 15).

At the national level, it is evident that even the most rural- and poverty-minded government will not pour resources into either development or environment local programmes indefinitely, without some national return to offset the nationally-shared resource costs — human as well as financial. Such benefits take various forms — less fluctuation and more certainty in the food supplies for the urban populations, expenditures from tourists drawn by environmental attractions of the rural areas, higher rural expenditures that help to sustain the growth of urban supplier industries, and so on.

Tangible returns along these lines will also do much to assure administration support for the long term rural investments both in the environment directly and in other capacity-building activities such as education and training.

7. *Conservation and development programmes require continuing efforts aimed at strengthening existing institutions and building up their capacity to provide/deliver effective services. Capacity building and ensuring sustainability will also call for investments with a long gestation period, e.g. in human resource development.*

For a long time in Africa both rural development and environmental management programmes have been greatly weakened by the lack of experience and the inadequate training of officials and staff. Over-estimation of capacity and under-estimation of the difficulties in building up the necessary systems are among the leading causes of past failures¹⁶. Time and again, ill-prepared and under-qualified staff have been overwhelmed by the sheer weight of their responsibilities¹⁷.

Capacity building needs to be systematically built into the programmes; the donors, too, need to be willing to admit capacity-building investments into their programmes as a needed overhead investment and as a prerequisite for enhancing the sustainability of growth.

Training is most valuable when combined with experience. The process of institution building is bound to take a long time, especially if the attrition rate among the best staff is high. Successful training frequently opens up new opportunities for those trained, so accelerated attrition is often an unlooked for by-product. This result, however, largely serves to underline the value of training and is better interpreted as a need to increase rather than to decrease training efforts. Training needs are also continuous in nature — partly changing along with growing experience and an expanding capacity to benefit from new material and partly by way of reinforcement and renewal. Part of the training effort should also be devoted to the needs of local NGOs and private sector institutions — indeed, training is probably the most useful form of subsidy in efforts to promote the development of these institutions. There are many opportunities to

develop training for local people — especially women — and these should not be neglected in favour of an exclusive focus on officials. Finally, the training of the aid officials also needs to be pursued as part of a general effort to enhance training opportunities.

8. *Combining conservation and development is necessarily a multi-sectoral and inter-disciplinary enterprise, involving close and sustained coordination of the activities of all parties.*
9. *Programmes reflect a complex reality but the elements must be simple and clear in their definition and approach, and compatible with the capability to execute.*

The above two principles are best considered together since the implicit challenge and potential difficulties associated with the close co-ordination or integration of apparently disparate elements called for by the first of the two principles must, in large part, be resolved by respect for the management approach called for under the second.

As noted in the Introduction to this Brief, and as endorsed by the participants at the Workshop, the problems of complexity are largely inherent, reflecting the nature of the requirements for programmes of environmental management and development. Complexity may seem to be avoided by the adoption of various kinds of narrow approach, typically approaches that are focused on support for the activities of particular agencies, but the appearance of progress thereby achieved is often illusory or nullified by a lack of long term sustainability.

How to cope with complexity is evidently a question with answers that will vary greatly depending on the make up of the problems and the types of local administrative system, community institutions, etc. It is essential that programmes be based on activities which are manageable within the existing institutional capabilities and which can demonstrate some early successes. As the capacity increases, as more becomes known about the problems, and as local support builds up, additional activities can be included. At the Botswana workshop, Dejene described this as the principle of *incremental integration*.

In addition, the emphasis on sequencing of programmes, the reliance on self-help and community participation, and the enhanced role of the private sector should all make co-ordination within government (the issue that attracts most discussion) less burdensome than it would be otherwise — and less burdensome than it has often been in the past. It is also important that programmes be designed with sufficient flexibility and with a capacity to adapt to the lessons of experience¹⁸. Finally, the careful testing and development of appropriate systems through pilot schemes should also be helpful — especially when taking up innovative and new elements, for example, enhanced participation on the part of local communities.

Even with all these points taken into account, there is frequently a need for a specific co-ordinating mechanism at high levels in government to resolve problems of inter-agency co-ordination and there is a strong case for decentralisation of more powers to a local level (see discussion of Principle 5).

Aid donors — where they are involved — can significantly add to the difficulties of co-ordination, indeed some such difficulties seem inevitable no matter how closely agencies are prepared to work with the government. There are costs in bringing in donors during the pilot phase of experimentation and exploration of approaches with the local communities. Unfortunately, the solution used in some Asian countries — which is to

develop viable approaches and systems *before* bringing aid donors into the picture is much more difficult in Africa because of the need for resources during all phases. Resolving this issue remains a challenge.

10. *Flexibility and feedback are essential components in programme implementation and in the evolution of policies.*
11. *Timely and continuous monitoring and evaluation as a part of an information system for management, project staff and beneficiaries must be built into the programme from the outset.*

The need for flexibility and feedback is a clear corollary of an approach that seeks to emphasize the active participation of the local community in all phases of programme design and implementation. There are also a myriad of reasons why a programme will have differing mixes of activity at the local level and a rapidly evolving sequence of activities. A good deal of this can be accounted for quite naturally where private entrepreneurs are allowed to respond freely to market forces, but there will also be a need for flexibility on the part of the publicly financed and managed parts of the programme.

A successful programme must have the capacity both to fine-tune for local differences and to move at a pace that will be largely dictated by local enthusiasm, participation and action. As activities proceed, so new side effects will be revealed that constitute both new opportunities and call for compensatory adjustments to minimize or avoid undesirable effects. This is inherent in the process and part of the basic rationale for an integrated approach to environmental management and development. There will also be a need to make larger adjustments from time to time. For example, the investment in rural road maintenance may need to be dramatically increased if washout from rains and the poor drainage is more severe than anticipated. Or the people may place a much higher priority on water harvesting than roads and thus may wish to substitute dams and reservoir construction for road building, at least for a time. Similarly, new approaches to problems such as soil erosion may necessitate different patterns of activity on the part of the supporting services, such as agricultural extension¹⁹.

The role of feedback in enabling the programme managers and the government to become aware of the problems and/or opportunities is evident in all this. Again, the importance of participation must be stressed as a crucial element in securing such feedback. Left on their own, the tendency for managers and bureaucrats is very frequently to seek to control sources of information — either to suppress it or to ensure that the story is supportive of the continuing presence and involvement of the directing group. This tendency should be checked where the people have the opportunity to speak up and be heard. In addition, the emphasis on monitoring and evaluation as a key management tool needs to be reinforced with clear directives accompanied by specific instructions for reporting.

The preference for the deceptive simplicity of a blueprint approach, where progress can be measured against preset and rigid targets (often enshrined in annual programmes), is frequently a response to the problem of monitoring progress and the difficulty of an objective evaluation of the performance of the officials charged with its implementation. This preference is usually reinforced by aid donors' preferences for "appraisal" based on

detailed project designs, in advance of any decision to support rural environment and development activities. While donors' rhetoric may be replete with references to the need for flexibility, such flexibility is less frequently encouraged in practice.

Such an approach is a hindrance to the sort of flexibility that is needed for effective programmes, responsive to local needs, with the blueprint too often functioning as a straightjacket. Time and again, such approaches have broken down early in the life of the programme, leading to constant recrimination and obscuring what may be very real successes in activities "on the ground". Much time can also be spent in the recalibration and redesign of the blueprint design.

There is much to be said on the side of central government and the aid donors in this endemic debate. There are no magic solutions to the need to try to ensure a wise application of very limited funds and resources on one side and the need to facilitate flexibility and to strengthen the local voice in the disposition of the resources on the other. At a formal level, efforts must clearly continue to devise more effective monitoring and evaluation programmes, partly perhaps through a better targeting on the crucial elements and certainly through greater efforts to ensure that local people have a larger say in how resources are used and are listened to as part of any evaluation of the results of the programme.

12. Involvement of local NGOs and private sector institutions should be promoted; they will increase the capacity to implement and sustain programmes.

This principle complements others, for example, support for the market philosophy and the encouragement of local participation. Effective participation, in particular, is often achieved through the medium of NGOs as the representative organs of various concerns and interest groups in the community. Moreover the committed and motivated officials and members of such institutions perform specific tasks very well. A reliance on NGOs also ties in with the need for feedback and flexibility which come easier to NGOs and is hard to avoid in the private sector where performance is reflected in profits — at least as long as competitive forces are operative. NGOs have also been particularly effective in pioneering new types of activity and in the testing and development of new approaches to natural resource planning and rural development. Finally, NGOs are often particularly useful as part of a monitoring and evaluative capacity.

These are all arguments for according major emphasis to building up local self-managed and financed institutions — through farmer associations for example, or rural savings and credit institutions, or community institutions relating to education, womens' groups, social amenities etc. Frequently in the past, the existence of such groups has been ignored as part of the general neglect of community participation.

NGOs have a valuable role to play as facilitators and innovators, but there are problems when their role is over-extended. They should not be put in a position as either a proxy for government or a proxy for the views of the people. The competence of the NGO should not be taken as an excuse for avoiding resource allocation and management attention to institution building to strengthen public services and other types of institution.

These problems sometimes become more apparent as NGOs become more influential and successful. NGOs have frequently been rendered ineffective by a mixture of envy and too much kindness. The envy may be from within the government where a negative reaction may be provoked by what is seen as a diversion of power and authority. This is sometimes brought about by too much attention to NGOs by aid agencies. Government or the aid agency may also over-use the NGO and a combination of too much interference and regulation and the imposition of too many burdens can eventually destroy the spirit of the institution. The history of co-operatives in Africa is replete with examples of this kind. Also, for some functions — such as the monitoring and evaluation function mentioned above where an arm's-length relationship with the government is very desirable, there is scope for tension and enmity between the NGO and the authorities.

These problems of NGO/Government relationships tend to become more severe as the programme shifts from pilot-scale to widespread implementation. They are also especially difficult when “northern” NGOs are involved, sometimes because the objectives of these institutions are somewhat different from the community-based concerns which are the prime interest — and also the main strength — of local NGOs. On the other hand, the build up of local institutions owes much to the support of external NGOs. This is not something that can be achieved overnight: indeed, experience shows that a long period of patient and unobtrusive support may be necessary.

13. Sound technology that reflects sustainable development principles is largely lacking. Major new efforts to develop user-friendly, affordable technology through a process involving interaction between the local people and researchers is essential.

A source of much disappointment with rural development programmes in the past has been technological failure. The potentials of known technology for sustainable land development under African conditions as well as cost-effective innovation relevant for some of the most important African crops (especially food crops) have been quite meagre. Many efforts founded on a greater use of chemical fertilizer, the use of new equipment, etc., have not been sustained partly because the incremental returns to the labour of the farmer turned out to be not sufficiently attractive and too risky. Some of the failures are also due to unrealistic assessments of the capacity to manage and maintain equipment; others to underestimations of the costs of delivering inputs into scattered, relatively low density farming communities with poor transportation links. For example, under the traditional *chitemene* system of slash and burn common in better watered parts of Northern Zambia, the critical population density appears to be between two and four persons per square kilometre, or some 220 hectares of land per five to six person household²⁰. This practically guarantees that villages are small and scattered thus adding considerably to the costs of services and input delivery.

Farming communities are under pressure to adopt more intensive cultivation systems because of the growing population pressures and the desire for higher per capita incomes. For one or more of the reasons summarized above, these needs are not being met, at least they are not being met in a sustainable way. This failure has in turn helped to bring about many of the most serious problems in natural resource management as unsuitable land is farmed (or suitable land is farmed unsuitably) and as expanding

populations seek better opportunities through a move from degraded or ruined land into the natural forests and other fragile ecosystems — which all too often are then degraded or ruined in turn.

If much experience is negative, there are nevertheless indications of more promising directions for follow up in future work. Under necessity and stimulated by favourable market conditions, modified farm systems do evolve — thus the *chitemene* system of Zambia mentioned earlier is evolving to a system (the *fundilike* system) based on *in situ* composting of weed and crop residues — a system which requires a much shorter fallow. With the addition of fertilizer and lime, it is suggested that such systems may be capable of evolving — at least in the well-watered areas — to the point of more or less continuous cultivation. Many variants of such systems exist: characteristically and encouragingly, they tend to evolve through the use of technologies that are more benign in environmental terms than those they replace. Thus the emphasis is on moisture conservation through ground cover and the use of trees, grass strips for erosion control and water harvesting, and incorporation of organic material into the soil.

These technologies will be adopted where they meet the central concerns of the farmers, namely, to increase crop yields and incomes while reducing risks and without increasing farm labour requirements. The need to husband available labour (itself often severely reduced through the ravages of illness and disease) and to match it to a cropping calendar which is typically severely peaked in the busy planting and harvesting seasons is something that officials and researchers have often poorly understood. Thus, for example, under the soil conservation programmes of Kenya and Tanzania, only after officials began to listen and observe the farmers was it found that the farmers had evolved much less labour-demanding methods of erosion control than the old technology of terracing inherited from colonial times²¹.

The crucial role of technology indicates strongly that the testing of new ideas for agriculture under field conditions should be treated very seriously, involving well-designed pilot schemes and careful monitoring and evaluation. The key is the evolution of new technology from an interaction of the research community with the farmers²². Indeed, under African conditions especially, the complexity of many of the decisions that farmers make and the subtlety of the constraints to which they must adjust, argues for very close attention to and interaction with the farming community, including of course, women farmers. Here as elsewhere, there is room to test a “menu” approach under which various possibilities and combinations of possibilities are explained to the farmer and submitted for him or her to test and apply as appropriate²³.

The link between proposed changes and their impact on economic betterment is a crucial one. Unless betterment is assured, changes cannot become operative, but the link can only be established through work with farmers, and with innovations that address what are the real constraints to productivity enhancement. This also ties up with an earlier point about the need for market-oriented policies and farm prices that provide reasonable incentives and opportunities to encourage investment in technical change and land development.

14. Special efforts to increase off-farm employment opportunities in rural areas should be a major thrust in relieving population pressures in the most fragile environments.

Very frequently rural settlement in Africa is based on a mixed environment with some land that is relatively well suited and adapted for crops or for livestock, plus other land either that cannot be used sustainably for these purposes or that has a very high opportunity cost (in terms of the destruction of natural ecological conditions) if it is so used. A reduction in the pressure of labour and population on the land resources in such conditions is likely to relieve pressures disproportionately on the more fragile environments, because such environments are the least profitable for farming in the first place.

One way in which this can be done without causing or inducing people to leave the area entirely is through the development of off-farm employments. Unlike the experience in some other parts of the developing world however, notably Asia, off-farm employment in villages and in rural towns does not seem to have grown very fast in Africa. Even so, in terms of total non-farm employment, the rural areas often account for the largest share of manufacturing employment²⁴.

Special efforts to stimulate non-agricultural enterprise and employment as part of a sustainable development programme are highly desirable in the context of mounting population pressure on land resources. This is linked to the active encouragement of entrepreneurs as part of the effort to provide a market-friendly environment and in this context, the promotion and active development of credit and savings institutions in the rural areas is important in the more advanced agricultural zones. NGOs, too, can sometimes play a valuable role in the initial stimulus, technical assistance and support of newly established institutions for these purposes. Government's role in the planning and provision of infrastructure is a vital element in the development of rural market centres (centres in which much off-farm employment is usually created).

Experience in other parts of the world, however, also shows that the growth of rural non-farm employment is closely related to the stimulus of agricultural development itself. The stimulus takes various forms, including employment in enterprises supplying inputs and farm services or associated with processing and marketing agricultural outputs. Some employment growth is a direct response to the growing purchasing power among farm families. Thus, the relatively slow growth of non-farm rural employment in Africa is in part a reflection of the slow progress of agriculture and its technological stagnation, as discussed earlier. This indicates the need to relate the efforts to stimulate non-farm employment — for example, by the support of rural savings and credit institutions — to progress in agriculture.

15. Universal and effective primary education improves productivity and the ability to use resources sustainably and it broadens the basis for participation. It merits a high priority as part of a human resource development strategy.

In recent years, the importance of education, especially primary education, has been clearly recognized as a driving force in all the successful cases of sustained development. The lack of education among the women of rural Africa is widely recognised as a particularly severe problem: indeed, female education at the primary level is lower in Africa than in any other part of the world. Rapid rural progress is clearly helped by primary education in regard to entrepreneurial pursuits, be they in farming or in off-farm activities,

as shown by studies demonstrating the higher productivity and income of more educated entrepreneurs and farmers, other things being equal²⁵. A better educated and trained labour force, women as well as men, is also very helpful in the development of new technologies. Similarly, the development of rural leadership and a better performance in many crucial skill positions in local institutions and organisations is closely tied up with education. Further, it is the community of high and rising standards of general education that is best able to retain its most dynamic and able young people who might otherwise — as has been so often the case in the past in Africa — run off to the town.

In the view of the Francistown participants, where the resources for education are tight — as they have been and are likely to remain for many years in most African countries — it is primary education that should attract the top budgetary priority, more than the higher secondary and tertiary education. This has not been the case in the past, resulting in much tragic waste in education spending as well as in lost human potential, as rural primary education has at best remained very inadequate, and more often has deteriorated. A big effort is needed to restore and revitalise primary education if it is to serve the cause of sustainable development in rural Africa. This is a very suitable area for international support but, thus far, the amounts donors have furnished are very limited and are widely acknowledged to be grossly insufficient.

As well as renewed efforts in the area of primary education, a heavy emphasis on training as a most important form of capacity building is also essential²⁶. As discussed earlier, training is an activity that should involve all the parties contributing to natural resource management and rural development — farmers, community leaders, NGOs and officials, as well as government servants at various levels.

16. Under the leadership of the national government the role of donors is to support the development strategy and programmes.

The final principle serves primarily to reinforce points made in several places in the earlier discussion about the importance of the donors taking a subordinate role. The Francistown Principles are indeed principles designed for use by Africans. Too often in the past donors have used their power of the purse to impose systems, plans and designs to compensate for real or imagined deficiencies in local schemes or in governance and administration. This is wrong in principle, and it is usually wrong in practice, since imposed schemes do not work. However well-intentioned and able are the staff of the aid agency they tend to push their own and their agency's views. These views, however, are almost always formed on the basis of a very imperfect understanding of the local circumstances and constraints within which programmes actually work. Moreover, the range of donors and their individual interests creates additional difficulties, as Lusigi and Nekby put it: "In the absence of a clearly articulated government strategy, ongoing projects now tend to reflect a series of diverse donor perceptions, and the resulting efforts are often confused and contradictory, ineffective and discontinuous, and detract from rather than enhance the prospects of building a permanent development capacity"²⁷. Too often, therefore, the result has been conceptually ill-thought out projects, contributing to failure rather than to success.

One suggestion is that donors would be advised *not* to offer assistance if the conditionality associated with the offer is equivalent to asking for an institutional and/or policy revolution. Such a revolution may indeed be required if the programme is to be

effective: but the revolution will not work or will not be sustained if it comes at the behest of the donor and not as a result of a commitment to change on the part of the people and the government. In short, reform has to be “internalized” if it is to be lasting reform.

In practice, in the context of Africa’s current crisis situation, this suggestion is not an altogether realistic or acceptable one. Donors must and will continue to play a big part in Africa’s future development for a long time to come. They *must* because the governments need donor support in developing new approaches and plans for natural resource management and rural development. In Africa, donors may have a very imperfect understanding of the issues and the priorities, but in terms of what to do about the problems they can contribute critical inputs of expertise and technology (for example, in land use mapping and planning) which complement those which are locally available. Donors *will* continue to play a big role because most of the countries of Africa will for many years continue to be heavily dependent on donor assistance to finance their development efforts.

What Donors and Governments should do

A heavy responsibility falls upon the donors, because most African countries will be hesitant to reject assistance, even if they disagree with some of the strings attached to it. For instance, even if they do not agree with initiatives concerning an enlarged role for women, for population planning, for land reform, or for a highly services- and investment-intensive rural development package, they will “go along” (at least pay lip service) because they are so heavily dependent.

To an unusual degree therefore, the donor often finds itself in the role of both the judge and the jury. Donors have not in the past weighed their initiatives in this light and African nations fell victims to fads, to unrealistic time horizons, to incorrect technology based on a lack of awareness of the rationale for traditional practices. The argument could be made that the Government should prevent such errors, but sad to say that is a spurious argument, because the governments do not have the leverage and may not have the capacity. In short, donor representatives must understand that they are sitting on both sides of the table.

What should the donors do given the complexities of the situation and their special role in Africa? Each country situation is of course a unique one, so that universally applicable answers can be ruled out, but there is merit in considering the following as a set of principles to guide donor behaviour.

Firstly, the donors should seek to work together within the framework of an agreed plan and set of programmes for natural resource management and rural development devised in the light of the Principles. In recent years, some progress has been made in this direction through the development of Environmental Action Plans²⁸.

Second, in reviewing elements in the total programme, a distinction can sometimes be made between those which are well-founded and capable of early, broad-based implementation and others where considerable development and experimentation through a pilot phase or phases is necessary in the first instance. The development and

strengthening of primary education might be a case of the first kind while rural credit schemes and village-based agricultural trials and options testing might be of the second type. Donors can demonstrate their commitment to the overall approach by generous funding of the well established elements plus support and assistance with specialist expertise and pilot scale funding for programme elements of the second kind. Evidently, donor agencies should — in consultation with the government and with the other donor agencies — take up elements according to comparative advantage.

In following this approach, donor lending programmes will not, considered in isolation, appear to be balanced or comprehensive. But they do not need to be: these are appropriate characteristics of the countries' programme, not that of the aid agency.

Third, donors must be prepared to take the long term view and not be overly impatient for quick results. As noted in earlier discussion, the needs of long term institution building are often neglected by both the donors and governments. Acceptance of this requirement also implies a willingness to plan for an involvement over long periods — 20 years or more, like the Swedish commitment to soil conservation in Kenya, even if the actual commitment of funds remains limited to relatively short periods of five years or less.

Finally, donors, like governments, have to cope with the necessity of flexibility and feedback into programme design through learning by experience. The crucial idea is to think comprehensively but plan for simplicity in programme design and implementation. Programmes and the institutions grow out from successes not from failures. It is essential to start from the right beginning point so that later sequencing can evolve from a simple but successful programme. We have already referred to Dejene's principle of incremental integration; as another participant at Francistown remarked, rural development is in practice a voyage of discovery²⁹. If there was not the likelihood (if not the certainty) of surprises, then there would be no need to plan in an incrementalist, step-by-step fashion. Operating this way sometimes seems to go against the donors' (and the governments') established principles. The real problem, though, is to have the need for flexibility fully recognized and accepted: once this is accomplished project and programme design can be evolved accordingly.

Governments, too, must accept and act upon the need for flexibility and simplicity in execution while aiming at what are inherently complex and far-reaching objectives. For the governments however, the challenges posed are of greater difficulty than they are for donors. The achievement of effective and sustainable resource management linked to rural development clearly goes far beyond both the resources and the purview of individual ministries. Indeed, in large measure the solution goes beyond the capability of government in some larger sense, whatever the selflessness of its civil servants and the efficacy of its management and administration.

In a nutshell, the most important lesson of experience is the need for the people themselves to take a dominant role both in shaping their own economic prospects and in ensuring a high quality of stewardship of the resources handed down to them by the previous generations. Thus, the people must be encouraged to organize themselves and in large measure — with the encouragement of reasonable incentives — to secure their

own development. For governments to stimulate and help to bring about such an empowerment of the people involves changing the old post-colonial *dirigiste* ways and habits of governance in rather fundamental ways.

Governments need to be convinced either by pilot projects or by examining the experience of others that communities are capable of excellent planning and execution especially when they are helped by well-trained professionals. The professionals in turn need organizational discipline and supervision and this means strong leadership from a suitable local level — such as the provincial level in many setups. It is therefore critical to nurture and support the local government organisations that mobilize the people and which take the responsibility for the execution of programmes. Sources of income that are independent of largesse from the central government are important for success.

It is also important that the local community have opportunities to choose from a menu of options and encouraged to plan and organize their own activities. The menu has to be carefully designed so as to focus on appropriate items — many of which will be infrastructural and farm-based. Resources that augment local contributions are important in galvanizing and motivating community participation in development but they should be used sparingly and in ways that maximise social and community benefits; the use of public funds to confer primarily private benefits should be avoided since these can be handled by individuals themselves.

Conclusions

In the past, the struggle to establish the nation state took up much of the energy and strategic thinking of the first generation of African leaders. A lack of confidence in the political process and the rigidity of thought and action that was often associated with governance under the one-party state may have hindered the acceptance of reform, both institutionally and in terms of economic policy. Donors too largely continued to wear colonial blinkers or were reluctant to challenge the top down approach fostered under centralized planning and related governance structures. Neither donors nor the governments were disposed to believe that much could be learned from the people.

Gradually, recognition is being given to the need to delimit the role of the government, to promote the market framework, and to rely on the private sector as the engine of sustainable growth. Africa's ongoing crisis is dictating the need for drastic change away from post-independence policies, and towards a more democratic and responsive system of governance. This is essential if a full implementation of the Francistown Principles is to take place. However, the process of democracy is still largely in its infancy and there is a large agenda of reform in the governance system before a full acceptance of the Principles would become possible. It is however the hope of the participants that the signs of a new spirit of pragmatism and acceptance of change will prove enduring, both on the part of the governments and among the aid community³⁰.

In opening the Francistown meeting Minister Balopi of Botswana urged the participants to present a radical but practical manifesto setting out the principles for an integration of sound conservation with development, one based on experience but not afraid to use imagination and vision. The Principles seek to reflect this advice. We have

also tried to follow his advice in underscoring over and over again that it is the people and not the bureaucrats — international or national — who should be making choices. In many countries quite a drastic change in attitudes on the part of governments and donors would be needed, both to assure more effective co-ordination and in dealing with the local people as equal partners. This will involve major new efforts at raising environmental awareness and training at all levels within the government, the aid agencies and in the communities, as well as working with and for communities in a truly participatory way.

Each country, aid agency and other concerned body should reflect on these principles. There are considerable differences in the current policies, strategies and approaches of the countries and agencies and this implies that the package of reforms needed for the principles to be fully applied has to be assessed on a case by case basis. Meanwhile, the human and natural resources of Africa are the capital on which the future must be built and both are being wasted and misused in large parts of the continent at present. Thus we recommend that this review be undertaken as a matter of urgency.

Notes and References

1. A volume of the papers and proceedings of the Workshop (hereafter referred to as “Workshop Proceedings”) published as *Integrated Natural Resource Management: Report from a Workshop, Francistown, Botswana, December 1-7 1991*, (1992), is available from the Environment Division, Africa Technical Department, The World Bank.
2. See Talbot, Workshop Proceedings, *op. cit.*
3. For a critique of early efforts in support of rural development see: *Rural Development. World Bank Experience, 1965-86* (1988), A World Bank Operations Evaluation Study, Washington, D.C.
4. See BLACKWELL, Jonathan M., Roger N. GOODWILLIE and Richard WEBB (1991), *Environment and Development in Africa: Selected Case Studies*, EDI Development Policy Case Series No 6, The World Bank, Washington D.C.
5. The need for flexibility is one of many aspects of long term decision-taking discussed by Falloux and Talbot in the context of National Environmental Action Plans — see FALLOUX Francois and Lee TALBOT (1992), *Environnement et Developpement: Crise et Opportunité*, Editions G-P Maisonneuve et Larose, Paris.
6. See Lundgren, Workshop Proceedings, *op. cit.*
7. See Khalikane, Tobisson and Rudqvist, Workshop Proceedings, *op. cit.*
8. See Mannathoko, Workshop Proceedings, *op. cit.*
9. See Khalikane, also Molosi (for a description of a training approach used successfully in Botswana to deal with some of these problems), Workshop Proceedings, *op. cit.*
10. Patten however describes a very different government outlook in the development of programmes for rural Indonesia, see Workshop Proceedings, *op. cit.*, and PATTEN, Richard H. and Jay K.ROSENGARD (1991), *Progress with Profits: The Development of Rural Banking in Indonesia*, ICS Press, San Francisco, Calif.
11. See Twumasi, Workshop Proceedings, *op. cit.* Examples include the Catchment Conservation Committees in the Kenya Soil Conservation Programme discussed by Lundgren, Workshop Proceedings, *op. cit.*, and the Village Health Committees under the Blue Nile Health Project, discussed in Blackwell *et al.*, *op. cit.*
12. These examples are discussed at length in Falloux and Talbot, 1992, *op. cit.*
13. See Patten, Workshop Proceedings, *op. cit.*
14. See Mukutu, Workshop Proceedings, *op. cit.*
15. See Liphuko, Workshop Proceedings, *op. cit.*
16. See Dejene, Workshop Proceedings, *op. cit.*
17. See Olindo, Workshop Proceedings, *op. cit.*
18. See Patten, Workshop Proceedings, *op. cit.*
19. See Lundgren, Workshop Proceedings, *op. cit.*
20. See Blackwell *et al.*, 1991, *op. cit.*
21. See Lundgren, Workshop Proceedings, and Blackwell *et al.*, 1991, *op. cit.*
22. See CHAMBERS, Robert, Arnold PACEY and Lori Ann THRUPP (Editors) (1989), *Farmer First: Farmer Innovation and Agricultural Research*, Intermediate Technology Publications, London.

23. See Nekby, Workshop Proceedings, *op. cit.*
24. See LIEDHOLM, C. and D. MEAD (1987), "Small Scale Industries in Developing Countries: Empirical Evidence and Policy Implications". *MSU International Development Papers, No. 9*, Michigan State University, East Lansing, Michigan.
25. See Turnham, Workshop Proceedings, *op. cit.*
26. See Molosi, Workshop Proceedings, *op. cit.*
27. See LUSIGI, Walter J. and Bengt A. NEKBY (1991), "Dryland Management in Sub-Saharan Africa: The Search for Sustainable Development Options", *AFTEN Working Paper*, Environment Division, Africa Technical Department, The World Bank.
28. See Falloux and Talbot, 1992, *op. cit.*
29. See Patten, Workshop Proceedings, *op. cit.*
30. On recent thinking in the World Bank see CLEAVER, Kevin and Gotz SCHREIBER (1992), "The Population, Agriculture and Environment Nexus in Sub-Saharan Africa", *Agriculture and Rural Development Series No 1*, Africa region, The World Bank.