

**COMMUNITY-BASED NATURAL RESOURCES MANAGEMENT AS A
PROGRAMMING ELEMENT WITHIN E&NR**

or is it

ECOSYSTEM MANAGEMENT FOR SUSTAINABLE LIVELIHOODS

but why can't we just be simple and conceivably understandable by saying

FOOD AND WATER SECURITY

Notes for 15-Minute Presentation at Open Program Meeting
04 May 1999
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APPROPRIATE AND MISPLACED CONCRETENESS

I sense that everyone sort of relaxes when we turn to ENR because we feel comfortable with it. Of all our programming areas, it is the one that seems most easily defined and conceptualized, and no one ever questions whether it is really research! Therefore, I almost want to say that, fortunately, it is not so simple, as I hope my comments on MENA yesterday indicated. Perhaps we pretend that ENR is easier than other areas because it is so tangible. To paraphrase Tevya in Fiddler on the Roof, GNP is GNP and bytes are bytes, but soil is something you can touch and water is something you can drink. (Tevya of course said the God is God, but a glass of whiskey is something you can drink.)

As a result of this actual concreteness, we have presumed a lot about research on natural resources with excessive (and, I would say, misplaced) emphasis on such approaches such as case studies and surveys, by no means all of which have made for good research. If I had to generalize about a research failure in ENR, or more particularly in the Community-Based Natural Resources component of ENR,¹ I would say that it lies in our failure to develop good methods for scaling up -- from the case study to the general lesson, from the watershed to region, from the village survey to the population. All too many IDRC-funded studies have remained at the micro level, and, though caution in scaling up is always necessary, the value of this research has been highly attenuated from the failure to generalize.

¹ By research failure, I mean a distinction from failures to maximize the reach of research or other failures related to the use of research.

Contents

My comments will focus, as requested, on Community-Based Natural Resources Management, or CBNRM, but they include a special discussion of urban environments at the end. They are a distillation of material from Joachim's original paper, from a couple of other papers that have been prepared over the years, from the electronic discussion, and of course from my own thoughts. As for the electronic discussion, I think it is something of an advantage that I was travelling when the site was open; as a result, I can now look back at it as a whole and without any personal attachment to a contribution that I might have made, had I been here. For the most part, my paper will follow the format that was in Joachim's paper. It will not, however, deal explicitly with the four cross-cutting issues identified by Caroline -- gender, public policy and decision making, good governance, and South-South linkages -- partly for lack of time but mainly because I think that they are really incorporated in what follows. For much the same reason, I will also avoid talking about regional differentiation. The very nature of CBNRM requires regional, sub-regional and indeed local differentiation -- but, to return to my first point, always with the potential for scaling up to reach broader conclusions.

Context

No one challenged the context set out by Joachim, so let me just highlight two points that may have been partially overlooked. First, with the emphasis on the growing inequity in economic relationships within and between countries, there is a great overlap between *les raisons d'être* of all three of our major research themes. Each of them depends significantly on the other two, which is just as it should be. Second, the overview noted the series of reports that emphasize the frightening prospects for fresh water in the world. I would only add that, in my view, the prospects are equally serious for soil fertility. Needless to say, these two factors of growing inequity and declining natural resources (which, for the economists here, I must note are among the least substitutable resources) make for a frightening and perhaps explosive combination.

I would also like to challenge one statement made by Joachim. Toward the end of the electronic exchange, he highlighted the importance that participatory breeding had had in genetics, and he wondered aloud as to what was the comparable breakthrough in CBNRM. My answer to Joachim is that CBNRM is itself the breakthrough. We use the term so easily in IDRC that we tend to forget how radical it really is, particularly in a world of characterized, even in the North, by top down and centralized management of natural resources. It is an approach to governance that puts the people at the bottom -- or more accurately, people closest to the natural resources -- in charge of some (rarely all) the key decisions about the use and, in some cases, non-use of those resources. This is radical stuff.

Objectives and Approach

There is also a consensus on the need to focus on ways to, in Joachim's words, "improve poor people's livelihoods over the long term." Others have added "vulnerable

people” and “fragile ecosystems.” Similarly, we agree on the need to incorporate goals of social and cultural equity, economic efficiency, and ecological sustainability (to expand a bit on the terms used by Joachim). Therefore, as Stephen said, let’s “not spend a lot of time on elaborate logical frameworks justifying what we all agree we should be doing.” I’ll only add a point that I emphasize in discussions of sustainable development. The three goals of equity, efficiency and sustainability cannot be achieved piecemeal; they must all be achieved simultaneously. Moreover, the only way to work on the three of them simultaneously is through the political process, which is to say through civil society and governance, which is why it is worth spending a lot of time on CBNRM, and on its close cousins, such as common property resource management, co-management etc.

Let me therefore turn directly to suggest a number of areas of research that I believe IDRC should explore within the general term of community-based resource management. In so doing, I make no claim to completeness; rather, the following items represent a selection among those topics that I feel are most usefully approached from the perspective of shared management of natural resources. To make my own task easier -- Does any else note that time is limited during an OPM? -- I only show a heading for topics that overlap with what I covered yesterday in the discussion of IDRC programming for Environment and Natural Resources Management in MENA. ,

1. Demand Management

2. Local and Marginal Sources

3. Local management at a time of changing economics and institutions

By accepting a focus on CBNRM, we imply the need to give communities greater control over their resources on which their livelihoods depend. In many cases, the original or traditional management systems reflected a period when the resources were used for subsistence purposes or traded within a small geographic area. One of the key areas where IDRC can make a contribution is to explore in considerable depth what happens when market pressures are introduced into such systems, as they are in many, if not most, parts of the world. To what extent can and should those institutions be preserved when they are no longer working as intended -- perhaps because farmers now have off-farm income opportunities, or because roads and trucks permit access to urban markets many kilometres away. We give a lot of attention to ecological resilience; we need to give equal attention to institutional resilience.

4. Opportunities for / Limits to Market Options

Another area that IDRC can usefully explore is the limits to market systems. In saying this, I am by no means neglecting the importance of pricing, particularly for un-priced or under-priced resources such as water and sewage. However, I am assuming that there are lots of people out there willing to fund work to demonstrate the importance of market systems, and relatively few exploring their limits. For example, many traditional irrigation systems depended on a labour-for-water exchange. As opportunities for off-

farm income arise -- and I might add, as restrictions on child labour and inducements to keep kids in school increase -- the opportunity costs of this labour contribution increase. Pricing of water might be a good option that would simultaneously increase efficiency and still preserve the traditional structure. On the other hand, it may be necessary to retain the labour option for those without cash income. In the absence of explicit attention to equity, we risk losing a situation in which everyone, rich or poor, was entitled to some share of available water (which is not to say that the shares were equal), for one in which the rich get all the water and the poor none.

5. Inside the Commons

Major gains have been made with research demonstrating that common property and co-management schemes are viable ways of promoting our goals for both economic efficiency and ecological sustainability. Typically, it is also assumed that, because they are "common" or "co," they are also equitable. This may or may not be true. Generally, they are equitable for those included in the "common" or those part of the "co-," but by their very definition those concepts imply exclusion of others. The question is whether, in common terms, they are "significant others." We should encourage research that will determine more about the power structures and distribution of returns from community-based resource management.

6. Conflict Management

7. Policy Frameworks

Even as we focus downward on community processes and local options, we must devote some attention to the macro conditions -- policy, institutions, geography -- that will determine in considerable measure whether or not those community and local approaches will be viable. If the resources are not right, as they may not be, for example, with large aquifers, or if governments do not provide the space for maneuver, as they typically do not in centralized systems, all the research in the world will not make them viable.

LINKS TO USE OF ICTs

My comments to now have neglected that part of the electronic discussion that focused on use of ICTs in Environment and Natural Resources Management. This neglect is was only because I do not feel competent to incorporate ICTs into my comments except as tools. CBNRM already uses ICTs to support networks and to improve connectivity among researchers and research institutions. Equally important for CBNRM is the potential of comparatively low tech ICTs, as with radio, for getting across the message, as argued eloquently by Guy. As Guy points out, radio may be low tech, but it is remarkably effective, very cheap, and widely accessible.

However, the foregoing approaches are a long way from using ICTs in a way that connotes research. The comments by Gilles Cliche and Robert Valantin are very helpful in this context. Perhaps CBNRM projects are making a start with some of the

work in Asia, where ICTs are being used more in the sense of a knowledge network.

URBAN ENVIRONMENT

I would like to shift at this stage and take advantage of the time remaining to me to take a clear position on the issue of urban environment, which has come up repeatedly as a neglected area. In a sentence, IDRC has a rural bias, and I do not except myself from this bias, for I too prefer to work in rural areas. However, given the rate at which the world is urbanizing, and the headstart we have from relatively small investments in urban agriculture and urban ecosystems, I do not believe that this neglect can be justified any longer. I strongly support Stephen's contention that urbanization is part of the solution, but I have to add that this is true only if cities are livable. Otherwise, we will merely trade ecological for social problems.

To be more specific, I believe that the conjunction of urban agriculture, urban water and wastewater, and municipal solid waste to create a coherent and effective area of research for IDRC -- indeed a context that suggests an approach similar to but distinct from community-based natural resources management. Therefore (and with apologies to John Hardie who argued valiantly that the OPM should stay above the level of PI), I wish to argue that we need a PI that will build on the work accomplished to now and expand to provide a focus on the urban environment. (Note that I do not call it sustainable cities, as I think that is too broad. Even environment is too broad, as I propose that the PI focus on municipal solid waste and water, not air issues nor toxics.) I have several reasons for urging that this be a special PI:

- a) External visibility
- b) Internal recognition
- c) Intellectual coherence
- d) Policy reach.