

by a reasonably well functioning local NGO which is capable of working closely with the community and enabling it to analyse and address its own problems. However, this institution has to co-operate closely with the country's government at all relevant levels. It is advisable that the funds required for the projects should be channelled through the NGO and not through government agencies, because that would most likely have adverse effects on the objective of the project.

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CARE Österreich Development Policies

In 1992 the development section of CARE Österreich was founded. Two programme officers who present the staff of this section are actively involved in planning, design and implementation of development projects in the Third World. The section concentrates on two major subject areas: Small Enterprise Development and Natural Resources Management.

I would like to give a brief idea on the contents of three CARE Österreich environmental development projects already in operation and then try to analyze the common features of all the interventions supported by CARE to give a picture on the development policies CARE Österreich tries to pursue.

Bushenyi Agricultural Innovation Project, Uganda

The oldest CARE Österreich project is the Agricultural Innovations Project in Bushenyi District, Uganda. It was actually conceived by Dr. Palme, the organizer of this conference who went to Uganda in 1992 to define useful and feasible ways of intervening through a project in the SW of Uganda, a priority area for Austrian development co-operation. The two year pilot project started in 1993 and seeks to help farmers of Bushenyi District to increase household income and to stop the alarming environmental degradation in this area. It is attempt to achieve this by strengthening the extension service of the Government of Uganda, by direct participation of small farmers, and by the promotion of local initiatives to safeguard the environment. The project has been working in three sub-counties which were chosen to cover the whole range of socio-economic and environmental conditions of the area.

The pilot phase project ends in December 1994 and is now in the process of extension to two districts and a duration of five years. The pilot project served as a start, a way of trying out interventions, finding flaws and being able to change directions if necessary.

In the first phase project participants were more or less unexpectedly confronted with new ideas to be introduced in their management of natural resources. These included banana management, pasture improvement, agroforestry, erosion control and nutrition.

In June this year, after 18 month a participatory planning workshop with representatives of all project participants was held. It was the aim to conceive and create a second phase which tries to learn from the pilot, include as many

wishes as possible and redirect where interventions have not proved efficient or even failed.

Support of the Green Belt Movement, Kenya

In a two year effort, it is tried to give support to the Green Belt Movement, a Kenyan NGO which for 15 years has been involving a network of women's groups in tree planting activities. It has thus contributed for many years to fighting the environmental degradation of the country and additionally raised women's self-esteem and income possibilities. The whole project by no means aims at changing the GBM's way of operation which has been tried and has slowly developed out of the local structures.

CARE's intervention tries to introduce an efficient and decentralized administration which shall lead to an increased effectiveness of the Movement after the finalization of the project. Through the establishment of offices in the districts GBM tries to get into closer and more continuous contact with the actual beneficiaries of the project, the farmers who plant trees and so have an important influence on the conservation of natural resources in the country. Also, increased efficiency in central management and independence from the actually sole co-ordinator is to be achieved through intensive training of staff and creation of some new positions in administration. Exact and punctual internal monitoring due to improved data processing should improve all the local activities.

'TIERRA' Guatemala

Since July 1994 the project 'TIERRA' ('earth, ground') is operational in the lowlands of Guatemala, the Petén. Incorporated into a larger project dealing with environmental education, it seeks to tackle the problem of land-ownership. Land tenure can be regarded as one of the basic problems, faced by the so-called Third World, leading to environmental destruction by subsistence farmers who are seeking to survive on the base of the natural resource. In many countries, these people are under constant threat to be evicted from the land they are settling on. They therefore do not think of investing in the future by applying lasting and sustainable agricultural practices which would help to keep the soil fertile.

The sub-project tries to lend effective legal assistance to settlers who exert ecological pressure on the Biósfera Maya (largest forest conservation area in Guatemala) in order to enable them to acquire land titles. Thus, and by means of extension work about careful and ecologically sustainable but economically profitable cultivation of the existing agricultural area, a stabilization of the agricultural borders is aimed at. Also, it tries to add to efforts preventing the further destruction of forest resources.

Activities comprise the surveillance of land borders, the results of which should in the future be the basis for the acknowledgement of land titles; a survey of the customary law of the Q'eqchi', free legal counselling, training of community members as legal promoters and elaboration of suggestions for an agrarian reform adjusted to the Petén situation are to be carried out.

By giving legal advice to settlers in the Petén which includes bringing into order the papers in principal necessary to acquire land and enlighten them on their rights as found in Guatemaltecan law, the project pursues giving the inhabitants of six villages a basis for and the hope to becoming the lawful owner of the land they settle on one day. With this in mind, the people are more likely to adopt sustainable cultivation practices, which on the one hand conserve and protect the soil and on the other make it unnecessary to expand or shift their agricultural borders.

Small pilot activities

This was a very brief overview on CARE Österreich activities in the natural resources sector. As apparent, CARE Österreich tries to start small, with pilot activities large enough to give a representative picture on what the projects' interventions try to achieve and change to the positive, but small enough to prevent unintentional damage.

Flexible projects adapted to local structures

We hope to learn lessons of these pilots which in the future can be applied in longer and broader term interventions. We are, however, aware that any project has to be flexible during the whole of its duration. It must not be defined and planned too rigidly. It has always to be able to answer the changing needs of its ultimate beneficiaries and in the shorter or longer run be incorporated in their every-day lives. CARE Österreich projects aim at helping the poorest of the poor to improve their lives not only during the project but in the long run. This is only possible if they are adapted to local structures and traditions and if all beneficiaries are able and willing to participate. We try to explore possibilities and find interventions that make it possible for the population concerned to carry on with it even if the project has been terminated. What I have described is generally called sustainability. In my view, it can only be achieved, if from the start a project pays attention to and makes use of the various interrelationship between man and nature, political structures and traditions of the countries they are working in.

Capacity building

CARE Österreich tries to restrict its interventions to supporting already existing initiatives or institutions. In that way CARE Österreich believes to have a guarantee that interest in changing a situation already exists. CARE Österreich tries to hook in and assist with means of technical and institutional support in order to strengthen and widen capacities in all its projects.

Participatory planning, help for self-help

CARE Österreich aims at carrying out the planning of projects with as many of the participants, as possible, 'from farmer to director general'. Only that way it is possible that everyone who is to benefit can utter his/her wishes, ideas, concerns, and doubts. The aim is to offer help for self-help and can only be achieved in a participatory way. CARE Österreich programme staff tries to listen, to structure, and add the necessary technical details in order to make it one piece. Projects should thus assist as many people as possible to improve their living standards and consequently decrease the environmental degradation often connected with the use of natural resources.

Location specific environmental interventions

In Uganda participatory planning is even taken a bit further by taking into consideration that needs vary from location to location and can hardly be defined for, as is the case in this instance, a whole district. It was realized that some interventions introduced during the pilot phase showed higher acceptance than others suggested by the project. It is believed that this was due to the impossibility of researching priority needs in a short preparation phase. In the new phase it is aimed at trying to make use of groups of environmentally interested beneficiaries to define the particular problems and formulate priorities for their area. The project will then step in and decide about interventions from location to location. By involving the farmers in this process, a high acceptance and adoption of interventions can be expected.

Local project staff

CARE Österreich prefers to employ local professionals for the management of projects. It is believed that a crucial part of exercising influence and of having a chance to being listened to by the local population is that the project staff know the local language and courtesies and that they are aware of the traditions and also the administrative labyrinths of the country and region they are working in.

It is CARE Österreich's belief that by making use of local expertise where possible a large step towards the acceptance of project interventions is made

from the start. Neither of the three operational projects in natural resources management mentioned employs expatriates. CARE Österreich, however, does not guarantee for this to be valid for all future projects. CARE Österreich is aware of the difficulties in many countries to find adequate personnel. However, much effort will certainly be put in finding project staff with enough experience and a deep understanding of the local culture in order to avoid unnecessary delays and problems in the implementation.

Improved internal monitoring

Critique was made by a review team that during the pilot phase of the above mentioned agricultural project in Uganda insufficient instruments for monitoring the success of the project had been developed. In reaction to this it is now tried to adjust the next phase in a way that strong emphasis is put on establishing a monitoring system that satisfies the needs of outside parties who want to have a measurable proof of the achievements.

It is, however, believed that more importantly the monitoring of projects can be used as a precious means to evaluate the effectiveness of interventions with respect to its beneficiaries. In the future, monitoring systems will be set up which help to refocus activities during the run of the projects so as to guarantee optimal adjustment to the needs of the ultimate beneficiaries. In order to achieve this, as mentioned before, projects have to, be designed very flexibly, giving space for changes during implementation, avoiding a too rigid definition of project interventions. Baseline surveys at the very start are essential to assess the situation at hour zero. A lot of care has to be given to the definition of verifiable indicators with which the move towards the goals aspired to can be pointed out. They must not be too ambitious and they need to be easily measurable, if possible by the beneficiaries themselves. If, in the course of projects, it is realized that things are not going in the desired direction, monitoring will serve as a guide and help to decide on changes which raise the probability of approximation to goals.

Emphasis on gender aspects

It was found that in some of the interventions – although aware of gender issues – introduced by the project in Uganda, which is the only CARE project running long enough to see trends in one or the other direction, women's workload increased even more. Therefore, the danger of non-acceptance and non-sustainability of the new practices introduced was given. It is the aim to find and define in existing and future CARE Österreich projects ways of achieving and promoting a more just distribution of work on the farm between women and men. In particular, the project in Uganda will focus on

defining interventions that on the one hand improve the farmers' situation, and on the other, by tradition, are exclusively carried out by men. It will also try to promote so-called women's crops in order to achieve the possibility that of a share of the household income being kept by female parts of the family.

I hope to have been able in this short time to draw a sketch for you on the directions we want to follow in the future in order to achieve maximum impact. It is also an important goal to guarantee a moral justification for the interventions CARE Österreich choose to implement.

Abstracts

Dieser Artikel beschreibt drei umweltorientierte Entwicklungsprojekte in Uganda, Kenya und Guatemala, die von CARE Österreich betrieben werden. Einige der gemeinsamen Merkmale und Erfahrungen dieser Projekte betonen die Notwendigkeit der Aufrechterhaltung einer bestimmten Flexibilität während der gesamten Projektlaufzeit, um in der Lage zu sein, Antworten auf sich ändernde Bedürfnisse der Betroffenen zu finden. Dies verlangt eine Anpassung an lokale Strukturen und Traditionen, was die Bereitschaft und Fähigkeit der Betroffenen zur Teilnahme am Entscheidungsprozeß erfordert. Die Interventionen sind auf lokale Initiativen und Institutionen beschränkt, die auf die Erweiterung der technischen und organisatorischen Fähigkeiten der Betroffenen abzielen. Deshalb zieht es CARE Österreich vor, einheimische Fachleute für die Projektleitung einzusetzen. Die Entscheidungsteilnahme wird so breit wie möglich angelegt, um alle Wünsche, Anliegen und Zweifel der potentiellen Nutznießer während der Planungs- und Designperiode schon zu berücksichtigen.

This article describes three environmental development projects run by CARE Austria in Uganda, Kenya, and Guatemala. Some of the common features and experiences from the projects emphasize the necessity for maintaining flexibility during the entire period of the projects in order to be able to find answers to the changing needs of the beneficiaries. This calls for an adaptation to local structures and traditions which requires the ability and the willingness of them to participate. Interventions are restricted to local initiatives or institutions with the aim of enhancing their technical and organizational capabilities. Therefore, CARE Österreich prefers to employ local professionals for the management of projects. Participation is designed to be as broad as possible in order to incorporate all wishes, concerns, and doubts of the potential beneficiaries during the planning and design process.

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Towards a Strategy of Institutional Reinforcement: A Personal Synthesis¹

The objective of institution building consists of increasing the capacity of local actors to achieve their development objectives efficiently (that is: effective and at the lowest cost) and autonomously (that is: by their own means). To a certain extent, institution building has always been an objective of the international development co-operation system, as witnessed in the tens of thousands of people sent abroad for training and education, the counterpart-technical assistant system (at least in its theoretical justification), the investments made in local universities and policy units, etc. Yet, this objective has not received the priority it deserves: most development aid seeks to solve problems, not to strengthen local capacity to solve problems. Moreover, the strategies employed to achieve this objective have not been adequate, and their results disappointing. In fact, some experts consider most development aid to be a case of institutional *destruction*. Hence, the need for reflexion on new strategies – the topic of this conference.

It is now generally recognized that in *all* development projects, the strengthening of local institutions, public, private or associative, should be a primary objective. This will increase both effectiveness and sustainability, i.e., the chance of survival of the project's results after withdrawal of external support. This conference dealt with this problematique in the field of rural development.

A first issue confronting the practitioner is the crucial one of the choice of the institutions-to-be-strengthened. Any discussion about this is a highly ideological matter, and this also showed up clearly in the conference. For some, the private and associative sectors are the ones to be strengthened, for it is from them that durable development will emanate. For others, it is only the state that can guarantee equitable and sustainable development, and hence public institutions should be strengthened in priority. For others, the debate is between the role of the state as a provider of services to the population (health, education, security, transport, research and extension, etc.) and the state as an enabler/regulator with the actual services being provided by the private sector. The discussions in this conference reminded us that

¹ The main points of this synthesis have been prepared and discussed previously with the two organisers of the conference (Mr. Palme and Mr. Fino).