

Monitoring and Evaluation Structures and Mechanisms for Integrated Rural Development in the Southeast Asian Region

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The experience of five Southeast Asian countries, namely, Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Thailand and Vietnam, in the monitoring and evaluation (M and E) of the integrated rural development (IRD) approach in programs and projects reveals several problems in the conduct of M and E, such as, internal organizational problems, subjective utilization of reports, poor staff quality, inadequate number of staff, limited resources, massive data requirements and lack of understanding of the role of M and E. There is a need to look into the performance of M and E mechanisms and strategies, including the effectiveness of the IAD approach as against the sectoral approach in program delivery.

Introduction

Monitoring and evaluation (M and E) are critical processes in determining the progress and effects of programs and projects. Monitoring is particularly useful in providing the immediate data for managers to institute corrective action for problems or bottlenecks in the process of implementation. Monitoring usually involves an assessment of inputs in relation to the outputs of the program/project. Inputs refer to the resources necessary to fulfill the objectives of a program or a project. Outputs, on the other hand, refer to the results obtained when inputs are converted.

Evaluation, in turn, is more comprehensive in scope than monitoring as it entails an assessment not only of inputs and outputs but of the effects of the outputs on targetted beneficiaries both immediate and long-term. Evaluation

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Paper presented at the Sub-Regional Workshop on Monitoring and Evaluation, Arrangements and Techniques in Rural Development, April 25-May 1, 1983, Manila, sponsored by the Center for Integrated Rural Development for Asia and the Pacific (CIRDAP) and the National Council on Integrated Area Development (NACIAD); published in *CIRDAP Training Series No. 5* by the CIRDAP, Bard Campus, Kotbari, Comilla, Bangladesh.

may be carried out in the different phases of a program or a project. *Ex ante* evaluation is usually undertaken before the commencement of the program or project in order to ascertain the merits of forging a program/project in an area. This is also called program evaluation or project appraisal.

The evaluation undertaken to assess the progress of the program and the effects of the output refers to ongoing, *in vivo* or concurrent evaluation. The purpose of concurrent evaluation is to ascertain difficulties, both internal or external, in the implementation of a program or project to enable managers to recast their strategies. It may also help them make a decision regarding the continuance, modification, or discontinuance of the program or project.

Impact evaluation is undertaken to determine the benefits or outcomes derived after the program or project has been completed or terminated in an area or in a number of areas. This is also sometimes labelled as summative, *ex post* or terminal evaluation. The results of this activity constitute an important information not only for program managers but policy-makers as well, since the results of the activity provide an assessment of program/project effectiveness. Whether or not the program or project model has fulfilled its goals can determine whether the program/project merits expansion in other areas or whether implementation ought to be terminated.

This article seeks to compare the experiences of Integrated Rural Development (IRD) programs/projects in the Southeast Asian countries particularly Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Thailand and Vietnam in terms of the structural arrangements used for monitoring and evaluation; the existing mechanisms or strategies adopted to undertake monitoring and evaluation; the techniques adopted for data collection and data processing; the role of citizen participation in the conduct of monitoring and evaluation; and, the problems encountered in the conduct of monitoring and evaluation. There is also a background discussion on the Integrated Rural Development Programs/Projects pursued by the aforementioned countries. In the concluding portion, it presents the issues that have not been resolved in the conduct of monitoring and evaluation. Data for this paper have been drawn from the country papers presented at the CIRDAP-sponsored Sub-Regional Workshop on Monitoring and Evaluation Arrangements and Techniques in Rural Development held in Manila on April 25-May 1, 1983.

The IRD in Southeast Asia

Rationale

A comparative assessment of the rationale for undertaking integrated rural development in the Southeast countries reviewed reveals that, for the

most part, the thrust is to correct the conditions of poverty in the countryside. In the case of Thailand, the target beneficiaries of the integrated rural development program refers to one-third of the provinces in the country involving 11 million people in 12,000 villages that lag behind the rest of the country in agricultural development.¹ In Vietnam, the target beneficiaries include 80% of the population involved in agricultural production.² A more complex set of indicators is adopted in the Philippines as depressed areas are selected on the basis of high tenancy rates, high development potentials, low incomes, low level of economic development and poor access to basic social services.³

In the case of Indonesia, the rationale for undertaking integrated rural development is to develop villages into self-reliant communities (SWANEM-BADA Villages) with an annual target of 4 percent.⁴

The basic assumption for forging an integrated approach in the delivery of services hinges on the argument that it is an alternative mechanism that would bring about the efficient management efforts, programs and scarce resources vis-a-vis the piecemeal and fragmented implementation of rural development projects.⁵

Content of Integration

A review of the content of integration of the programs in Southeast Asia reveals that it can either be unisectoral or multisectoral. The case of Malaysia's Integrated Agricultural Development Projects (IADPs) represents the first type since the numerous activities pursued are primarily agriculturally related. The ultimate goal of the IADP concept is to reduce and eventually eradicate poverty by "modernizing the rural agricultural sector through increasing the use of modern methods and techniques of farming including mechanization; a comprehensive programme of agricultural extension, credit facility and marketing arrangement; encouraging the participation of the rural population in non-farming economic activities; and, training and upgrading knowledge and skills of farmers in farm management."⁶

The more common content of integration is multisectoral as the activities pursued in the development plan involve the different ministries. For the most part, these activities are socio-economic in nature. A case in point is Indonesia which tackles a "comprehensive multilateral" rural development comprising "various aspects, both the aspect of prosperity and that of security."⁷ In Thailand, the major thrusts are basic education and health care, village self-help and specialized programs intended to solve the basic constraints to increasing agricultural output.⁸ In the case of Vietnam, the activities of development veer towards the amelioration of the peasants' material and cultural living conditions and the building of productive, healthy and self-reliant communities.⁹ The usual components of the integrated programs in the Philippines include "agricultural development, infrastructure support, and social services."¹⁰

In all of the countries reviewed, participation of the citizens is considered an important component of integrated development in the different phases of planning, implementation and evaluation.

Targets for Accomplishments

The targets for accomplishment in a development plan may either be well formulated or not at all. In the Southeast Asian countries under review, only Vietnam has a set of targets explicitly defined in its development plan. The other countries have not explicitly defined their targets. Vietnam, for example, envisions that by 1985, food production would be around 20 million tons, reforested areas about 300,000 hectares, and fisheries production about 700,000 tons. It is of interest to note that targets had not been set for social services. The critical issue that can be raised is how feasible are these targets in research terms and in administrative parlance?

Structure for Implementation

The organizational machinery for implementation of integrated rural development programs in the Southeast Asian countries follows any one or a combination of the following models. The first structural model is implementing a program under the tutelage of a *single agency*. A country that exemplifies this model is Indonesia. Its Integrated Rural Development Program is implemented by the Ministry of Home Affairs particularly the Directorate General for Rural Development. This agency has representatives at the local level such as the Regional Inspector at the provincial level and District Inspector at the village level, particularly for projects assisted by the Ministry. Village projects that are self-initiated may also be provided financial or technical assistance by the Ministry.¹¹

A second organizational model for implementation is the *lead agency type*. Under this arrangement, an office is responsible for coordinating the efforts of various agencies in pursuing the goals and purposes of IRD Programs or Projects. The choice of the lead agency is usually made on the assumption that its program or programs are considered the priority activities in the IRD Program/Project. An example of the lead agency model is Vietnam's IRDP implementation structure. The primary role is undertaken by the Ministry of Agriculture's Central Commission for the Management of Agricultural Cooperatives which operates in coordination with other agencies. It has mini-offices at the provincial and district levels which are responsible for the management of local agricultural cooperatives.¹²

Malaysia is also another case. Leadership in the project is provided by the Ministry of Agriculture which coordinates the efforts of other entities both agricultural and non-agricultural.

The third model called the *coordinated structure* is characterized by consolidation of efforts of officials representing various offices in forging the

concerns of IRD. Unlike the second model, no agency is selected to perform the role in spearheading the program or project. This model is exemplified by Thailand which structures working committees to supervise the implementation of IRD Program/Project in the different levels of the administrative system.¹³

In the Philippine case, organizational machinery for implementation is a *combination* of the coordinated model and the lead agency model. At the national level, the *coordinated* structure operates through the NACIAD (National Council on Integrated Area Development), a sub-committee of the Cabinet under the Office of the Prime Minister.¹⁴ It is composed of the Prime Minister as Chairman with the Minister of Agrarian Reform, the Minister of Agriculture, the Minister of Finance, the Minister of Human Settlements, the Minister of Local Government, the Minister of National Defense, the Minister of Natural Resources, the Minister of the Office of Budget and Management, the Minister of Public Works and Highways, the Minister of Trade and Industry, the Director-General of the National Economic Development Authority and the Executive Director of the Council, as members. At the Project level, the *lead agency model* is adopted and the project is spearheaded by the agency whose projects are considered top priority. A case in point is the Bicol River Basin Development Program (BRBDP) which is under the supervision of the Minister of Public Works and Highways since the priority component of BRBDP is infrastructures development.

Monitoring and Evaluation Arrangements

Structure for M and E Internal to the Implementation Machinery

It is interesting to note that the five countries under review have monitoring and evaluation systems that inhere in the implementation machinery. The structural arrangements for monitoring and evaluation may be one or a combination of the structural models for implementing IRD, i.e., single agency, lead agency and/or coordinated models. It must be emphasized however, that the structural model for implementation need not be the same model adopted for the conduct of monitoring and evaluation.

Countries with a *single agency model* for monitoring and evaluation include Indonesia and Vietnam. In Indonesia, the unit responsible for monitoring and evaluation at the central level is the Subdirectorate for Monitoring and Evaluation under the Directorate General of Rural Development in the Ministry of Home Affairs with field representatives at the provincial, district and subdistrict levels.¹⁵

In Vietnam, the Central Committee for Management and Agricultural Cooperatives under the Ministry of Agriculture, particularly the General Statistics Services, undertakes monitoring and evaluation with representatives at the provincial, district and cooperative brigades levels. At the cooperative

level, the state is represented by an accountant paid out of the national budget. The state-paid accountant has local counterparts paid by the cooperative brigades.¹⁶

The *lead agency* model is exemplified by a country like Malaysia where the Monitoring and Evaluation Division is part of the Planning and Development Unit of the Ministry of Agriculture. Its representatives at the project level man the Project Office or Project Management Unit (PMU).

The *coordinated approach* is typified by the Philippines and Thailand. In the Philippine experience, monitoring and evaluation functions are undertaken by the NACIAD's Program Management Department at the national level but is assisted by the different Monitoring and Evaluation Divisions of the different offices.¹⁷

Thailand's practice in monitoring and evaluation is to form a committee representing all agencies participating in IRD at the central level and at the local level. All countries reviewed undertake ongoing and impact evaluation. Still to be developed is *ex ante* evaluation which is commonly practiced only in Malaysia and Thailand.

Both monitoring and evaluation are regularly undertaken in all the countries studied which means that these activities are fairly entrenched in the administrative system.

In majority of the cases reviewed (i.e., Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand and the Philippines), monitoring and evaluation are highly specialized responsibilities and are the only ones performed by the units assigned the task. It is only in Vietnam where monitoring and evaluation activities are woven with other activities such as planning, training and supervision of the implementation of programs/projects.

External Institution Undertaking M and E

Entities other than the implementing machinery of IRD undertake monitoring and/or evaluation in such countries as Malaysia, Thailand and the Philippines. In Malaysia, the Prime Minister's Office is interested in the overall effect of the different programs and projects. Immediate effects are assessed by the Implementation Coordination Unit while impact evaluation is pursued by the Socio-Economic Research Unit.

Thailand's experience reveals the Budget Bureau to be actively involved in undertaking a study of the cost effectiveness of IRD and non-IRD programs/projects.¹⁸ Impact evaluation, in turn, is the concern of the National Economic Planning and Social Development Board. The Office of Agricultural Economics, on the other hand, monitors IRD programs/projects.

The most complex set of external participation in the conduct of monitoring is noted in the Philippines.¹⁹ The National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA), the highest planning body of the country has regional offices which undertake monitoring and evaluation of programs/projects in the regions.

Their reports are consolidated at the central level by its Project Monitoring Staff. The information gathered in the field are regularly reported to the President. The Regional Offices of NEDA apprise the Regional Development Councils, the regional planning bodies, regarding the progress of programs/projects.

The Office of the Budget and Management also assesses the fiscal requirements and accountability of IAD programs/projects particularly those that are assisted by foreign entities.

In the Office of the President, there is a Presidential Management Staff (PMS) which conducts periodic on-the-spot assessment of programs/projects to identify their bottlenecks. The PMS has a Presidential Program Implementation Monitoring Center (PPIMC) which provides the centralized feedback mechanism with offices at the regional and local levels headed by the Presidential and Monitoring Officers and local chief executives, respectively.

Furthermore, the newly created Office of the Prime Minister (OPM) is tasked to supervise the day to day operations of all ministries particularly with respect to the effective implementation of programs/projects. Because it is relatively new, it relies on information derived by the PMS, NEDA-Project Monitoring Staff and NACIAD.

Mechanisms and Techniques for M and E

Mechanisms

What are the mechanisms by which monitoring and evaluation results are conveyed to policy-makers? The most common strategy in the case of monitoring is the submission of regular reports to the different levels of the administrative and political hierarchy, the terminal point of which is the central office responsible for the project and also, the top political leader of the country, such as the Prime Minister in Malaysia and the President in the Philippines.

The second important mechanism is the discussion of M and E results in meetings or conferences among program managers.

A less developed strategy is the conduct of informal/formal dialogue or conferences with clients to obtain feedback about the program/project. Oftentimes, program managers take a passive position by waiting for feedback (positive or negative) to be conveyed by the clients instead of assuming an active posture, by actually soliciting reactions from the clientele.

In the case of *evaluation*, the mechanism for transmitting reports on the clientele's reactions on the program is by submission of regular reports to the top leadership of the program/project.

A critical issue that remains unanswered is how well these mechanisms are relied upon for corrective action by policy makers and program managers? Are the reports conveyed at the appropriate time for program managers and policy makers to immediately respond to problems or bottlenecks in implementation?

Data Collection Techniques

The common techniques adopted for collecting information for monitoring purposes are the existing data derived from the persons delivering services such as for example, the accountants' report of the cooperative brigade in Vietnam and the field technicians report of the Bicol River Basin Development Program in the Philippines. Occasional interviews are pursued with program/project managers, field staff and target beneficiaries.

For evaluation purposes, sample surveys involving target beneficiaries are the sources of information using questionnaires and interviews. Secondary reports submitted by other agencies are also relied upon occasionally, especially in obtaining baseline information about the target beneficiaries.

The basic methodological design adopted in the conduct of evaluation research is the simplest approach which is non-experimental in nature and usually involves a "one-group design" such as the program/project beneficiaries.

The countries reviewed have not relied as much on the quasi-experimental methodology which usually involves two groups: the program-affected group (or the experimental group) and the non-affected group (or the control group). In terms of proving the significant effect of a program/project, this methodology is a more refined strategy as extraneous sources of variation can be controlled. It differs from the experimental design only in terms of non-random selection of participants in the experimental and control groups. An experimental design assumes that subjects are randomly assigned to either the experimental or control group. And as such may be difficult to pursue since people may not be willing to be randomly assigned to experimental or control communities.

Data Processing Techniques

The manual strategy in processing information derived from the field personnel or the target beneficiaries is still the practice in Indonesia, the Philippines and Vietnam. In the case of Malaysia and Thailand, the information derived are processed by computers.

Participatory Mechanisms for M and E

The participatory mechanisms for M and E are very well-structured in the IRD programs/projects in the Southeast Asian countries studied.

In Indonesia, the Minister of Home Affairs is encouraging the establishment of the Village Residence Committee (LKMD) as a venue for community participation. This Committee is expected to submit progress reports on the IRD programs/projects.²⁰

In Malaysia, the Farmers' Organization Authority was established in 1973 to encourage people's participation in planning, implementation and evaluation through the NAFAS (National Farmers' Organization). The NAFAS has been envisioned to actively participate in project monitoring and evaluation by acting as a "pressure group to reduce bottlenecks and delays in implementation."²¹ The Farmers' Organization is made up of Small Agricultural Units (SAU), consisting of individual farm members in the village area. In each SAU, a Unit Head is elected for a tenure of two years, to serve as a representative in the Council for the Farmers' Organization in the area. The members of the Board of Directors are elected to handle supervision and policy matters, and to work together with Government-nominated members in the district level. The different chairmen of the Board then constitute a Consultative Assembly for the State. The Consultative Assembly in turn elects Executive Committee members from among them, to execute policies and to make representations at the National Government.²²

The effectiveness of this group for monitoring and evaluation can be questioned since participation is reportedly very limited "due to ignorance."²³ The present membership in the Farmers' Organization is less than 40% of the total farming population which is well below the 60% membership target.²⁴

It is important to note that while reduction of poverty is the target of its IRD program, there is less involvement from the low-income farmers in terms of the membership in the Farmers' Organization. In fact, farmers' activities are riddled with politics since local politicians and village leaders influence decision-making in the Farmers' Organization.²⁵

In the Philippine case, the participatory structure for M and E depends upon the components of the local IAD Project. In the experience of the Bicol River Basin Development Program, the Area Development Team (ADT), the Irrigators' Association and the Samahang Nayon are local organizations that are responsible for giving feedback and suggestions in the implementation of the projects.²⁶

On the other hand, the structure for participation in Thailand is to have beneficiaries of IRD programs/projects represented through the chairmen of the local cooperatives who, in turn, express the feedback of the citizens in the committee development projects or project working groups in the local area.

In Vietnam, the village accountants assist the state-paid accountant in preparing reports on the performances of the cooperative brigade. This report is submitted to the village head which is in turn aggregated by the District Committee for the Management of Agricultural Cooperatives, a local unit representing the Central Committee for Management of Agricultural Cooperatives under the Ministry of Agriculture.

Given these experiences, an issue that can be raised is how seriously have the different governments relied on these structures to assess the progress and effects of IRD programs and projects? Or have these structures remained only as entities that do not effectively perform their duties?

Problems Regarding Monitoring and Evaluation

Internal Organizational Problems

Some of the problems concerning the internal organization of IRD in the conduct of monitoring and evaluation which surfaced in the workshop discussions include the following which are arranged from highest to lowest in importance and frequency of mention:

(1) *Subjective utilization of reports recommended by officials.* Key officials selectively utilize the information derived from monitoring and evaluation, according to their political purposes and objectives. Hence, the results of the M and E are not objectively reported.

(2) *Poor quality of the staff.* In all of the countries reviewed, this is considered a pressing problem. As Thailand reports: "While there are large numbers of personnel assigned to evaluation and monitoring roles, there are only a few who have the necessary training and experience to grasp the project in its entirety, and are able to organize, conduct and analyze monitoring/evaluation functions. The number of evaluations to be conducted is then limited to what trained personnel are able to supervise."²⁷

(3) *Limited resources.* This is also another problem cited by the country participants. It is necessary to have "adequate provision" for the M and E effort. This means "more vehicles, per diem, and equipment. While more total recurrent funding is required, there is the opportunity to make the reporting system more cost-effective, such as the provision of telexes to report field information, and the use of micro-computers to store and complete field data."²⁸

(4) *Massive data required of the M and E staff.* Numerous information is required to be collected particularly by the field staff, which results in delays of reporting. In the Philippines, this is aggravated by the fact that several other agencies than the NACIAD require IAD projects to submit reports. Hence, the "requirement for agencies to report to each of these central offices using different forms and formats unnecessarily burdens the field personnel with report preparation."²⁹

(5) *Lack of understanding of the role of M and E.* The country participants in the workshop also pointed out that the M and E staff and program

implementors and planners fail to appreciate the significant role of M and E. Hence, while a number of reports submitted by the M and E staff are reported and aggregated in the different levels of the hierarchy, they are hardly seriously considered for corrective action. It was reported that: "Project managers and the field project staff too often view monitoring/evaluation as a threat to their performance and capability. As a consequence, their full cooperation is at times difficult."³⁰

(6) *Inadequate number of staff.* Capping the problem of low capability is the inadequacy of the number of personnel for M and E. In Malaysia, this is aggravated by the fact that the staff for M and E suffer low status compared to the other technical staff of Integrated Agricultural Development Project. Hence, turnover is a common problem faced by its M and E unit.³¹

(7) *Other Problems.* Other problems cited include the ambiguity in the objectives for IRD, which could affect the formulation of indicators for M and E.

In addition, all of the countries mentioned the absence of a self-evaluation mechanism to assess how effectively they perform their functions.

Problems with Clientele

Some of the problems mentioned concerns the target beneficiaries. These are:

(1) *The paternalistic attitude of the people.* People still maintain the attitude that the government is a "dispenser" of goods and services and therefore, it is the government and not the people that should effectively deliver, monitor and evaluate the services. In Indonesia, "people always think that all program and activities carried out by the government are always the best."³² Hence, low level of participation is noted among the people.

(2) *Low capability for participation.* In addition to the dependent attitude of the people on government, citizens also lack the necessary knowledge and skills for participation. As Malaysia reported, citizens are "ignorant." An aggravating factor in the case of Indonesia is the low educational attainment of the citizens.³³

Issues in the Conduct of M and E

Some of the issues that have emerged which remain unresolved are as follows:

- (1) How should the M and E staff deal with ambiguous objectives? Should they attempt to clarify them first or should the M and E activities be forged by putting the ambiguous objectives aside?
- (2) Who should undertake an assessment of the performance of the M and E Unit? While evaluation of the M and E unit is considered important, an issue that can be raised is, should the M and E unit undertake a self-evaluation or should another unit be responsible for this activity? What are the advantages of having an internal unit as against an internal entity performing this function?
- (3) How does the M and E unit deal with the objective of equity of IRD when the components of the program lead to inequity? While the overall thrust of IRD programs in Southeast Asia is for the reduction of income inequality, some country experiences in IRD implementation show the further entrenchment of inequality by some of its program components. Should the M and E unit be held responsible for recommending strategies to resolve this problem?
- (4) What should be the appropriate balance between internal and external evaluation? What phases of evaluation should be assigned to what entity?
- (5) What data should be aggregated in the different levels of the hierarchy to effectively utilize the M and E reports?
- (6) How much of the budget should go to M and E activities?
- (7) How soon after a project has been implemented should an impact study be undertaken? Should the frame of reference be the project or should a general rule be adopted?
- (8) Which is more effective, the integrated approach or the sectoral approach in the delivery of services? No serious assessment has yet been made to determine the performance of IAD as an intervention mechanism in the different countries of Southeast Asia.
- (9) Is the participatory mechanism an effective strategy in the conduct of M and E?

Concluding Note

On the whole, the Southeast Asian countries have taken serious efforts to undertake monitoring and evaluation of IRD programs and projects. Of importance is the fact that participation is woven into its development ideology in the different phases of planning, implementation and evaluation. A look into the performance of the M and E mechanisms and participatory strategies must be made.

Endnotes

¹Chittra Wongpanit and Baterng Masang, "Monitoring and Evaluation Arrangement and Technique in Rural Development," paper presented at the Sub-Regional Workshop on Monitoring and Evaluation held in Manila from April 25 to May 1, 1983, sponsored by the Center for Integrated Rural Development for Asia and the Pacific (CIRDAP) and the National Council on Integrated Area Development (NACIAD).

²Le Van Minh, "Monitoring and Evaluation of IAD Projects," *ibid.*

³Alfredo I. Perdon, "Monitoring and Evaluation of IAD Projects in the Philippines," *ibid.*

⁴Soengeng Soemarto, "Monitoring and Evaluation System in Rural Development: Indonesian Experiences," *ibid.*

⁵Perdon, *op. cit.*

⁶Khalil Hassan, "Monitoring and Evaluation of Integrated Agriculture Development Projects in Malaysia," *ibid.*

⁷Soemarto, *op. cit.*

⁸Wongpanit and Masang, *op. cit.*

⁹Minh, *op. cit.*

¹⁰Perdon, *op. cit.*

¹¹Soemarto, *op. cit.*

¹²Minh, *op. cit.*

¹³Wongpanit and Masang, *op. cit.*

¹⁴Perdon, *op. cit.*

¹⁵Soemarto, *op. cit.*

¹⁶Minh, *op. cit.*

¹⁷Perdon, *op. cit.*

¹⁸Wongpanit and Masang, *op. cit.*

¹⁹Perdon, *op. cit.*

²⁰Soemarto, *op. cit.*

²¹Hassan, *op. cit.*

²²*Ibid.*

²³*Ibid.*

²⁴*Ibid.*

²⁵*Ibid.*

²⁶Salvador Daen, "Bicol River Basin Development Program," *ibid.*

²⁷Wongpanit and Masang, *op. cit.*

²⁸*Ibid.*

29 Perdon, *op. cit.*

30 Wongpanit and Masang, *op. cit.*

31 Hassan, *op. cit.*

32 Soemarto, *op. cit.*

33 *Ibid.*