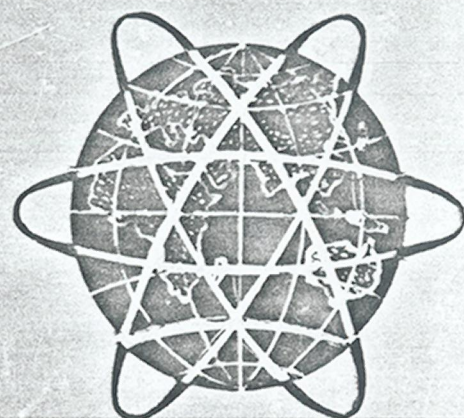


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*Comments on Dr. Aminuzzaman's  
Article : « Design of Integrated  
Rural Development Programmes :  
Some Ideas and Issues » and the  
extent of its application to the  
Saudi Arabian Case*

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*I. Comments*

Dr. Aminuzzaman's article provides a good analytical account of Integrated Rural Development Programmes (IRD) in the Third World countries in general and the South and South-east Asian countries in particular. The author has very aptly identified the pertinent pointers for streamlining the planning and execution of IRD programmes, and has also suggested some befitting principles for the design of appropriate institutions required for the execution of these programmes. However, it is felt that the assumptions and definition of IRDPs stated in the article need to be reviewed in the context of a number of conceptual dilemmas which are presently confronting the Third World countries.

Dr. Aminuzzaman's assumption that "conceptually it (IRD) is welfare and equity oriented, a contrast to the growth and production orientations of other models" does not appear to hold good for all the Third World countries, both conceptually as well as empirically. Conceptually, the IRD program should be formulated within the framework of national policies and regional development strategies, rather than being conceived in isolation. The fact of the matter is that the policies of different countries in the Third World are at great variance and range from production or welfare oriented measures to a differential mix of the two. Maung, in his comparative study of Burma and Pakistan, has very aptly illustrated the two extreme cases :

"... Pakistan seems to follow the strategy of letting the size of the economic cake grow first and of sharing it equally later, while the opposite holds true for Burma. Social and economic repercussions testify that the two goals are not simultaneously attainable and that the relative neglect of either one has serious economic and political consequences. The effect of too much pre-occupation with efficiency or productivity in the development programming of Pakistan has been to widen the gap between urban and rural standards of living, the rich minority and poor majority, as well as the economic growth of West and East Wings ... whereas Burma's excessive pre-occupation with distributive equity and an ideal socialist economy has resulted in an economic disaster of inefficiency and stagnation ... Whether or not the trade-off between productivity and distributive equity proves to be damaging to Pakistan involves a value judgment and will be determined in the future" (1).

It may, however, be pointed out that although production and welfare oriented measures have often been regarded as dilemmatic actions and appear to lead to different results of growth of GNP and alleviation of income inequalities respectively, they are in fact

(1) Mya Maung, *Burma and Pakistan : A Comparative Study of Development*, New York, Praeger Publishers, 1971, pp. 155-156.



mutually inclusive. Williamson, in his excellent study (2), has provided a conceptual and empirical basis for understanding the relationship between national economic development and inter-regional inequalities based on international cross-sectional and time-series analysis. Williamson concludes that national economic development and regional inequalities are related by a non-linear relationship described by an inverted "U", i.e. with the national economic development, things have to get worse in terms of regional inequalities before they start getting better. Also, the faster the rate of national economic development, the faster will be the rate of aggravation of regional disparities in the initial stages of economic development. The above mentioned studies of Maung and Williamson show that both the production and welfare oriented measures have their own implications and political sensitivities. The former results in the increase of income disparities both between and within urban and rural areas in the initial stages, whereas the latter, while alleviating the income disparities, broadens the poverty base.

It may be pointed out that eventually both measures tend to achieve the same results rather than leading to contradictory consequences, as might appear. The productivity and welfare oriented approaches are in fact two routes leading to the achievement of productivity as well as welfare. In the former approach economic benefits start accruing earlier at the expense of welfare and even personal liberties, although eventually the system achieves welfare through the spread effects of economic development. In the latter approach, however, the social system achieves economic development in course of time with the optimization of social benefits (3). Viewed in this context, production and welfare oriented measures appear to be the two extreme ends of a continuum. Selection of either the extreme measures of productivity or welfare or an intervening mix of the two, is the prerogative of the political system of each country and the assigned emphasis may even vary

with time in the same social system due to changes in the socioeconomic and political conditions. The IRD model should, therefore, be essentially dynamic and able to adjust its orientations accordingly.

Coupled with the foregoing production-welfare dilemma, is the dilemma of traditional methods versus modern technology as a means of production. Continuation with the traditional techniques, being labor intensive, is highly equitable; nevertheless, with its use the Third World countries will continue to subsist below poverty levels. On the other hand, the use of modern technology will no doubt achieve the objective of high rate of growth of GNP. However, being highly capital intensive, it will increase both the unemployment and income disparities which may result in social tensions and political upheavals. Obviously, this dilemma will have to be resolved in the context of each country by using a differential mix of both the traditional methods and modern technology and/or developing intermediary techniques based on technological innovations.

Dr. Aminuzzaman's remarks that "IRD intends to give particular emphasis to the improvement of the less privileged strata" and that it "shows a bias for disadvantaged target groups" appear to be very valid if considered as broad goals and objectives of a comprehensive IRD strategy. However, if viewed strictly as the outputs of an isolatory IRD programme, they appear to lose their validity, both conceptually as well as empirically in the context of Third World countries. This contention may be elaborated in the light of an interacting set of dilemmas and processes. These pertain to: (a) population explosion brought about by the drastic reduction in infant mortality and increase in life expectancy due to the availability of modern technology in the field of health services, (b) phenomenal growth of cities and (c) accelerated rural-urban migration. Due to heavy population pressure of land, the Third World countries have often been described as "overurbanized" as well as "overruralized" in relation to their economic development (4). Even though both the phenomena are highly correlated (5), the positive role of cities in the growth of GNP and national development cannot be denied, as pointed out by Koichi Mera:

(2) Jeffrey G. Williamson, "Regional Inequality and the Process of National Development: A Description of Patterns", *Economic Development and Cultural Change*, Vol. 13, No. 4, Pt. 2, July 1965, pp. 3-45; also reprinted in John Friedmann and William Alonso (Eds.), *Regional Policy: Readings in Theory and Applications*, Cambridge, MIT Press, 1975, Chapter 6.

(3) Anis-ur-Rahmaan, *Planning for Urbanization Policies: A Conceptualization with an Application to Pakistan*, Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation, University of Wisconsin, Madison, 1976, p. 60.

(4) United Nations, *World Social Situation: 1957*, p. 124.

(5) Harley L. Browning, "Recent Trends in Latin American Urbanization", *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 316, March 1958, p. 117, esp. note 6.



"The available empirical analysis presented above show that large cities are more productive and that the largest cities are likely to be particularly more productive relative to others in a less developed country. Therefore, a decentralization policy of investment and population distribution over the country cannot be encouraged, particularly for less developed countries, if national goal is to maximize the growth rate of national products" (6).

Discussing the problems of overurbanization and overruralization, Browning also contends that, "the real solution to this problem does not lie in reducing the urban population, but increasing it" (7). The plight of the less privileged strata can, therefore, best be improved by tackling it comprehensively both at rural and urban levels rather than confining it only to IRD programmes. One should not be overly alarmed by rural-urban migration as it is part of a wider phenomenon. It is neither possible nor desirable to completely halt it. Furthermore, it is not the quantum of rural-urban migration which is alarming, it is the quality of migrants which is of great significance. For instance, there is no dearth of service workers or "village fillers" in the rural areas. They should in fact be encouraged to migrate to urban areas where they can become absorbed as unskilled workers in various sectors of the economy. This will not only improve their condition but will also relieve the extra burden on the rural areas and result in the increase of per capita income in these areas. It is, however, the migration of innovative entrepreneurs which bleeds the rural areas of a very valuable human resource. These people can truly be reckoned as "village builders". Efforts should, therefore, be made to lure these people to stay in the rural areas by providing incentives such as (a) fully-paid training programs in agricultural extension work and agro-based industries, (b) establishment of rural development academies and university extension centres in rural areas, and (c) rewarding the development of innovative techniques and appropriate technology for farming.

The availability of advanced communication and transportation technologies has greatly facilitated the iterative interaction between rural and urban areas. As a result, the rural

and urban phenomena are no longer dichotomic; they are in fact two mutually inclusive physical manifestations of the process of socio-economic development and are inter-connected cyclically rather than related linearly. It is, therefore, imperative that IRD programs should not be conceived in isolation, but rather, should be formulated within the framework of national spatial strategy and comprehensive regional development plans. As a consequence, the IRD model, rather than opting for "a decentralized, bottom-up model of planning and programme identification" as suggested by Dr. Aminuzzaman, should perhaps opt for an iterative "top-down" and "bottom-up" model, using the systems approach.

In conclusion, we would like to emphasize two salient aspects. One, already pointed out by the author, is that "the exact coverage and scope of IRD as a development package have yet to be determined". Such a determination, we feel, should be based on the resolution of conceptual dilemmas which still shroud the IRD models. As a consequence, definition of IRD may require restatement and assumptions may need to be redefined. Conceptually, the IRDPs should not only be based on integrated "multi-agency efforts" as suggested by the author, but should also be fully integrated (a) physically by means of a national and regional spatial strategy, formulated within the framework of national objectives and policies, (b) technologically by resorting to the most innovative and appropriate techniques of production and welfare, and (c) temporally through a system of rolling plans, progressively adapting to the changing conditions. Second, while agreeing with Dr. Aminuzzaman's concluding remarks, we would like to add that no matter how liberal may be the external assistance, the real breakthrough can only be made by the motivated entrepreneurs of these countries themselves. Therefore, it is imperative that incentives are provided which will not only keep the innovators in the rural areas, but also attract more from outside.

## II. Application of the Suggested IRD Program to the Saudi Arabian Situation

It may be pointed out at the very outset that the Saudi Arabian case is unique and in some cases even diametrically opposed to those of the countries in South and Southeast Asia, due to an entirely different set of socio-economic and political conditions. For instance, unlike Third World countries, Saudi Arabia is predominantly urban in its character. According to Saudi Arabia's 1974 census, 52

(6) Koichi Mera, "On the Urban Agglomeration and Economic Efficiency" in *Economic Development and Cultural Change*, Vol. 21, No. 2, January 1973, p. 324.

(7) Browning, *op. cit.*



percent of its population was already living in cities and towns (8). Although no census has since been carried out, the Fourth Development Plan (1985-1990) mentions that "the population is now largely distributed in metropolitan centres and regional towns and most of the nomads are now settled" (9). Furthermore, in contrast with the Third World countries, Saudi Arabia, due to its oil wealth and sparse population, could also afford to pursue welfare oriented measures as well as resort to capital intensive techniques and the use of high technology. In the process of rapid transformation from primary to tertiary civilization, Saudi Arabia has even by-passed the long route composed of time consuming sequential steps which took European countries centuries to traverse. The following table provides an idea of the fast structural change in employment in primary, secondary and tertiary sectors during the period 1974-1984/85:

*Structural Changes in Employment in Primary, Secondary and Tertiary Sectors in Saudi Arabia during 1974-1984/85*

Sectors	Years	1974 (%)	1984/85 (%)
Primary*		42.2	15.5
Secondary**		13.1	29.2
Tertiary***		44.7	55.3
Total		100.00	100.00

Source: 1974 Census of Population; and Fourth Development Plan (1985-1990), p. 32.

\* Agriculture, Mining and Oil Sector.

\*\* Manufacturing and Construction.

\*\*\* Transport, Storage and Communication, Trade, Community and Social Services.

The above table is self-explanatory. Relative employment in the three broad sectors of economy during 1984/85 clearly shows that Saudi Arabia is well on its way to tertiary civilization, whereas the Third World countries are, at best, struggling to enter the sec-

ondary phase with the majority of their population still living in rural areas.

Having highlighted the significant differences between the Third World countries and Saudi Arabia, it would be pertinent to state Saudi Arabia's national policies related to rural areas and provide a brief comparative description of its IRD program.

National policies regarding nomads and rural population have been outlined in the Fourth Development Plan as follows:

"Government policy towards the nomads continues to provide all possible realistic opportunities and options to allow them to choose the form of life they wish to follow. The agricultural sector programs attempt to redress the imbalance between rural and urban population by increasing incomes and improving the living standards and welfare of the agricultural community including the nomadic population... social assistance is available to those who wish to remain nomads as well as to those who choose to settle. Land, equipment, and training are offered to those who wish to take up farming. There is great scope for employment in the private sector and in the armed forces. Special education and medical programs, designed specifically for nomads, are available. Social service agencies, in conjunction with other human service providers, will serve as one of many conduits whereby all individuals may be mobilized into productive roles and to participate in development programs" (10).

In pursuance of the objectives and policies set out in the Kingdom's Third & Fourth Development Plans, the Ministry of Municipal and Rural Affairs has been engaged for some time in the formulation of National Spatial Strategy (NSS) and Comprehensive Regional Development Plans, and has also recently embarked on the Integrated Rural Development Program. The development objective of the IRD project is to promote an integrated approach to socioeconomic development of rural areas throughout the Kingdom within the framework of national and regional development plans.

Having been conceived in an entirely different socioeconomic environment, the Saudi Arabian IRD program varies greatly from those in the Third World countries. The

(8) Anis-ur-Rahmaan and Salama El-Shawaf, *Planning for a Hierarchy of Rural Settlements: An Approach to Facilitate Integrated Rural Development in Saudi Arabia*. A paper presented in Symposium on Integrated Agriculture, King Saud University and UNESCO, 1981.

(9) Ministry of Planning, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, *Fourth Development Plan - 1985-1990*, Riyadh, MOP, KSA, p. 63.

(10) *Ibid.*, p. 342.

designation of a hierarchy of rural settlements and village cluster centres within the context of regional development strategy has led to spatial integration. Most of the village cluster centres have been connected by means of an efficient highway and telecommunications network and have been provided with the necessary community facilities and services. Most of the rural populace has access to the modern amenities of life and even the nomads, out in the desert, enjoy the benefits of mechanical transport, radio and television. In addition to the social welfare facilities, sufficient financial incentives are available to retain the motivated entrepreneurs in the rural areas such as outright grants, interest-free loans and subsidies for the purchase of agricultural machinery and cultivating specified crops. The Real Estate Development Fund and Industrial Development Fund also advance interest-free loans on terms which are similar to those prevalent in urban areas. Although all these socioeconomic inducements are available to

prompt the innovative entrepreneurs to stay in the rural areas, everyone is free to migrate to the urban areas where ample job opportunities are available, both in the public as well as private sectors.

By and large, the Saudi IRD program is quite comprehensive in its coverage, as it (a) attempts to accomplish socioeconomic as well as spatial integration, (b) simultaneously pursues both the welfare and productivity goals, and also (c) affords the use of capital intensive techniques due to shortage of manpower and the availability of substantial financial resources. The programme is quite successful as it is not influenced by most of the conceptual dilemmas which retard the planning and implementation of the IRDPs in the Third World countries. Unlike the IRDPs of the Third World countries, it is quite dynamic and is transforming the rural areas by taking modern facilities and the urban way of life to them.



