



Guidelines for Promoting Inter-agency Coordination to Design and Implement SARD-M Interventions

**Sustainable Agriculture and Rural Development in
Mountain Regions
(SARD-M) Project in the Hindu Kush-Himalaya**

**International Centre for Integrated Mountain
Development Kathmandu, Nepal**

October 2008

Contents

1. Introduction	4
2. Rationale for IC	5
3. Guidelines	5
3.1 Mandate of IC in all major policy and planning	6
3.2 Need for having National Policy on IC	7
3.3 Overcoming Barriers	7
3.4 Enabling Conditions and Tools for Coordination	8
3.5 Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation at three levels	10



Guidelines for Promoting Inter-agency Coordination to Design and Implement SARD-M Interventions

1. Introduction

The four-year Project (2005 – 2008) for Sustainable Agriculture and Rural Development in Mountain Regions (SARD-M) addresses policy issues and bolsters institutions. It aims to support the rural livelihoods of mountain people by facilitating the design, review, implementation and evaluation of relevant policy packages and institutional processes for promoting SARD in mountain regions at global, regional, national and local levels. ICIMOD, as the regional focal institute for the Hindu Kush – Himalayan Region coordinated four case studies (China, Bhutan, India and Nepal) on the strengths and weaknesses of SARD policies in mountain areas, concluded by a regional workshop in July 2006 (see information sheet).

These case studies pointed out two basic factors as contributing to the ineffectiveness or low performance of interventions in mountain areas, one of them being “Missing or weak interagency coordination in policy programme intervention”

It is the topic of the present study.

Although it is generally felt that providing clear cut guidelines or blueprint for IC is not possible as Inter Agency Coordination (IC) will vary depending on the issue at hand, nevertheless some generic guidelines can be provided to facilitate development and operationalization of IC. It should be emphasized that issues of IC should be identified at the time of initial planning or designing of development intervention. Based on the contents of policy or interventions, it should be quite clear on how many and what type of stakeholders will be potentially involved and what their roles and responsibilities will be in order to make IC more effective.

Despite the importance of IC and the difficulties associated with it, IC finds a special place in the mountain context by virtue of its specificities. The specificities may be seen as two set of forces in the mountain development context. While the negative force associated with inaccessibility, fragility and marginality hinder or obstruct mountain development; the positive forces associated with niche advantages and adaptation of mountain people helps promote development. The complex nature of these forces requires IC to harness the positive forces and deal with the negative forces.

While SARDM does not provide any guideline per se on IC in the context of the mountain areas, it nevertheless can be seen as a reminder to all who plan mountain development to be aware of the mountain specificities and be holistic in addressing policy interventions or program/project implementation to avoid further accentuation of problems or to valorize mountain comparative advantages to benefit mountain

people and their environment. While the mountain areas have high potential to provide a variety of environmental services to the downstream areas, the resource base of the mountain environment to sustain life support systems, assimilate waste and provide environmental services to the mountain people as well as the downstream population, have to be balanced with generating/providing benefits to people, from the available renewable

and non-renewable natural mountain resources. SARDM thus can be seen as a reminder that IC can play a vital role in mountain development and also to better ensure interests of the present as well as future generation.

2. Rationale for IC

The rationale for IC is fairly clear. A major outcome of development has been that society's consumption and production behavior and their interactions with the environment are getting more and more complex requiring more multidisciplinary approach to address emerging issues and challenges. At the same time resources to address these complex challenges do not seem to grow proportionately. IC can play an effective role to:

Address problems with multiple and interrelated causes – problems are becoming more complex than ever and single sectoral approach or methods are becoming less effective in understanding and addressing problem. For example in the mountain context, agriculture plays an important role in meeting food and other needs of a large majority of people. Countries are developing new policies to move out of subsistence production and as the case studies document, one single ministry such as the agriculture requires support from many other institutions including the private sector. Agriculture problem can no longer be seen in isolation as they have interconnectedness with poverty which has social, economic, cultural, environmental dimensions etc. and hence requires collaborative efforts to understand, develop interventions and evaluate impacts.

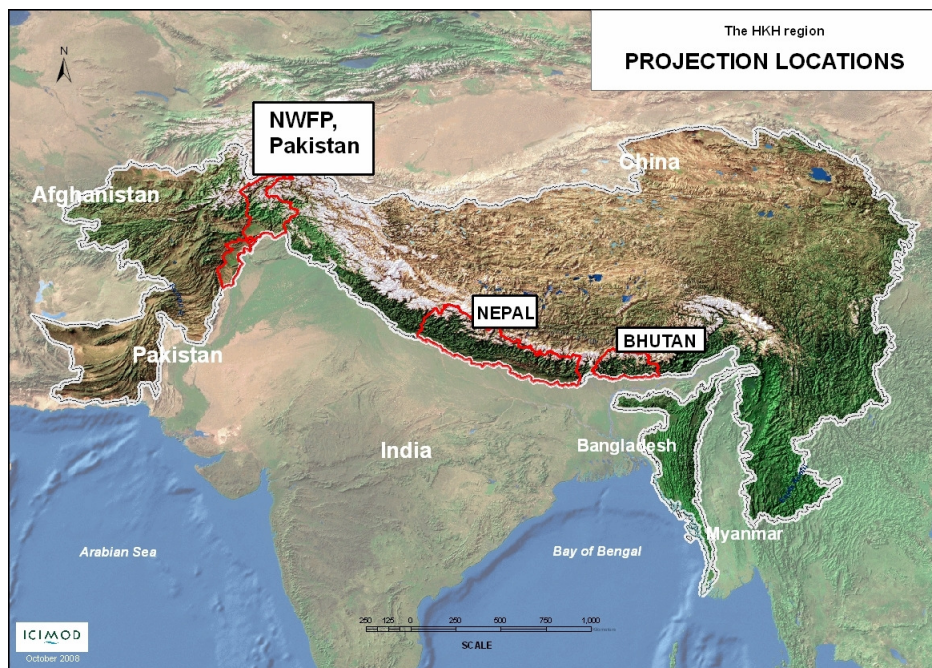
Generate economics of scale – all recognize that resources are always scarce. Information and communication technologies can be utilized effectively to coordinate actions that help reduce waste and duplication. If plans and interventions across agencies can be synchronized savings can result which can be used for other purposes.

Reduce policy fragmentation – too much earmarked funding often leads to policy fragmentation – duplication- poor coordination. As was highlighted in the Nepal case study, due to poor coordination illegal import of fertilizer continues despite some tangible gains from the new policy.

3. Guidelines

Based on the three country case studies carried out in Bhutan, Nepal and Pakistan and experience and literature, a generic guideline is provided below to help improve

interagency coordination in planning and implementing mountain polices. Providing guidelines on interagency coordination is not a simple task and hence the guidelines presented below are attempted to remind policy makers and program implementers on some important issues and steps that are necessary to improve the interagency coordination, before embarking on policy formulation or project/project interventions.



3.1 Mandate of IC in all major policy and planning

IC has often been a victim of the "lack of mandate", despite its recognized importance not only at the national level but also within different institutions. It can be distilled from the case studies that when complex national level polices are being designed with multiple stakeholders at micro, meso and macro levels, simply keeping track of the needs and interests of them all can be a challenging task. Given the important role of IC, it was therefore discussed during the workshop that an important first step is the need to mandate an IC Committee (ICC). At the national level such an ICC could be under the Cabinet, national planning authority, finance minister or it could be a separate body or other some other appropriate model could be developed. The primary objective ICC should be to monitor and evaluate whether the required IC at the macro, meso and micro levels are taking place effectively as planned and to raise a voice (from the highest level) for this to happen in an effective manner, when IC is becoming ineffective or even absent.

ICC has to be able to coordinate effectively at all the three levels which require timely flow of information within macro, meso and micro levels as well as across these levels. Hence an important task of ICC is to establish effective communication across the different levels and to facilitate the flow of information and provide feedback at all levels and report to Cabinet or the appropriate authority on how IC is performing and make recommendations.

Having a mandate alone will not suffice and the role and responsibilities (a kind of terms of reference- ToR) of IC at the macro, meso and micro levels is also necessary. A ToR for IC would have to incorporate the following common elements:

- Identification of all stakeholders and awareness raising
- Selection of stakeholders for effective participation
- Defining organizational goal for IC to bring clarity on each stakeholder's participation to help define a common goal, how each can benefit from IC, etc
- Need and provision of planning committee
- Help carry out joint planning after understanding their expectation and they can benefit; what resources each has or can provide; etc.
- A small budget resource might help the ICC staff to fulfill its mandate (meeting costs, short travels...)

3.2 Need for having National Policy on IC

While the importance of IC seems to be well recognized it is not backed by a policy on IC as a key requirement of public policy or intervention. An ICC -a watch dog – has to be vigilant on how sectoral policies and programs are addressing complex problems that go beyond sectoral boundaries, in meeting the defined objectives. ICC can help bring about better coordination across institutions by stepping beyond the sectoral compartments and facilitating a variety of issues.

- Understanding problems that have been addressed: agencies involved may not perceive the problem in the same manner and ICC can facilitate for a common understanding of the problem.
- ICC can help develop tools and working modalities for agencies/stakeholders especially in the mountain context as mountain areas by virtue of their specific conditions require decentralized approach and hence more agencies and IC;
- ICC can facilitate joint planning across concerned agencies/stakeholders to make IC more effective; ICC can help agencies to expand their goals and integrate new emerging issue, environment (goods & services, valorization), food crisis, energy shortages, growing population, globalization, climate change issues, call for involvement of multiple agencies and hence effective IC.

3.3 Overcoming Barriers

The reason for which IC does not generally work well, needs to be understood and how it can be avoided or what incentives can be provided to make IC effective needs to be analyzed. Some important issues on why IC is difficult to work are:

- Individual agencies seek to preserve their autonomy & independence
- Organizational goals differ among collaborative agencies
- Organizational procedures are difficult to synchronize
- Constituents bring different expectations & pressure to bear on each agency
- Managers try to minimize the uncertainty of their environments but are less concerned with minimizing uncertainty for others
- Fear of loss of some freedom to act independently
- Must invest scarce resources & energy when potential returns to this investment are often unclear & intangible

- Coordination not possible when institutional capacities vary across participating agencies

Difficulties are often addressed by appropriate incentives. At the heart of the success or failure of any IC lies in the proper understanding and dealing with varied forms of incentive required to coordinate at different levels. Amongst several factors governing the coordinated relationships with other agencies are presence or absence of financial advantage, problem solving potential, professional values, uncertainty reduction and legal mandate as stated below. Not all these elements are of equal concern to all agencies engaged in coordinated actions at different levels. For some agencies financial incentives is the overriding principle of coordination while for others other elements are more important depending on the nature of agencies and of the program they are dealing with at different levels. In any case it becomes important to understand their interest, power and influences at different levels through rigorous stakeholder analysis so as to investigate the critical entry point of intervention before devising successful strategies for incentives to work. Agencies need to sit together and figure out and prioritize the problems and address them accordingly. To summarize the points on incentives may be noted as follows:

- Financial advantage: Resources are often scarce and generally all institutions desire to have more resources than they have been allocated. Working together or jointly with other institutions can help to overcome some of the resource deficit problem. For example when agencies work together good practices can be up scaled in mountain areas, which may be a constraint if it had to be done by a single agency.
- Problem solving potential: The incentives to cooperate during a crisis (flood or earthquake) are high and effective, but the efforts lose intensity as problem is being solved. ICC can play an effective role to enlarge the vision to sustainability and encourage continuation of collaboration.
- Professional advantage: if professional of the same profession from different sectors are brought together, there is quicker understanding of the problem and cooperation to work together will likely result. ICC can facilitate this approach.
- Uncertainty reduction: ICC can demonstrate how uncertainty can be reduced if agencies work together.
- Legal matters: Sometime law makes agencies cooperation necessary on practical ground, several of the above factors could be facilitated by appropriate managerial conditions.

3.4 Enabling Conditions and Tools for Coordination

After having identified the critical incentives associated with different nature of agencies, the next step involves creating enabling condition and tools for incentives and motivation to work for effective coordination. This is because coordination is not a one shot exercise as is normally practiced in the beginning stage as a fixed outcome. Rather it should be an ongoing process carefully internalized as a means for realizing the desired outcome at every stage of the project cycles, with ongoing participatory monitoring being institutionalized as a tool for informed decision making for corrective actions through responsive and flexible management structure.

Some key principles pointed out for creating the conditions for IC to work well are:

- Effective leadership
- Flexibility and discretion as essential components for a success.
- Building a common sense of purpose for multiple, participating agencies.

- Client's involvement and participation is ensured.
- Bureaucratic culture of pragmatism is made more goals oriented.
- Negotiation and mediation skills are fostered.
- Minimize political disturbance/interferences
- Small membership

Since there are no a priori best coordination structures or tools, it is important for each participating agency to design and implement the structures and tools that suit their mutual purpose. In this process, it is crucial to make the program as simple as possible and involving only the key relevant agencies that contribute to each level. Basic strategies and tools for coordination are suggested below at four different levels: starting from policy decision making, program design and planning, implementation to service delivery. Some key obstacles and potential solution/strategies at each level that have emerged out of three working group session during the SARDM workshop are provided in Annex. Based on these inputs together with the existing literature, the following generic tools and actions are suggested.

Policy Decision-Making Strategies

Decision-making strategies for policy coordination include a variety of structures, procedures, and policies for ensuring that effective communication develops, and shared goals are identified and pursued. There are various methods to ensure effective communication strategies at this level depending on the nature of policy intervention. This would mean that the possible form of institutional arrangement should be set up accordingly which may be interagency task forces, cabinet council, single council for several program interministerial information sharing mechanism, etc.

Program Design and Planning Strategies

Experiences from case studies show that coordination strategies often tend to weaken as we move from policy to planning and implementation level. The best way to develop coordination strategies at this level is to follow the participatory planning processes to generate intersectoral and intergovernmental planning by involving all the relevant agencies and setting up of coordinating committees and other intergovernmental entities. This will help not only to identify the common areas of interest of agencies for joint planning but also to ensure a growing sense of ownership and mutual interest to share credit and compare accomplishments.

Strategies for Operational Coordination

Agency must develop mechanisms for operational coordination among the planning and implementing agencies. This may involve a variety of activities, each providing some degree of integration of programmatic operations such as clear cut division of labour between or among agencies, cost sharing (joint funding) arrangement for implementing a common program, joint decision making about and oversight of a program. As with program planning level, participatory processes can be structured in ways that allow to have a forum where citizen representatives, local government and sectoral agencies can exchange information and agree on funding for local investments.

Coordination at the Service Delivery Level

The overall performance of any coordination strategies depends to a large extent on what happens at the point of service delivery. The workshop provides a number of issue and options for addressing IC at this level. Lack of coordination among the service delivering agencies (supply side institution) on the one hand and the

absence or weak capacity of community based organizations (receiving mechanism) has resulted in poor delivery outcome at the grass root level. Addressing this and other issues affecting the poor coordination performance at this level requires a combination of strategies to strengthen the supply and demand side institutions.

One-stop shopping is one way to coordinate programs by uniting them within a single, all-purpose facility, and thereby enhancing service visibility and accessibility. Case-management is a process in which an individual or unit is assigned to assist a client (individual or family) in developing and executing a coordinated plan of services. Developing shared information services system will reduce duplication of effort, ensure transparency and facilitate service delivery.

3.5. Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation at three levels

For effective IC there has to be participatory ME at all the three levels (macro, meso and micro) involving all relevant stakeholders. The primary task of ME is to share knowledge and information within each level and across macro, meso and micro levels. This then provides the basis for the ICC to provide recommendation to the authority for making IC effective and useful.

Some references

- **Acknowledgement:**

This work has benefitted enormously from “What Makes Inter-Agency Coordination Work? Insights from Literature and Two case Studies“by Rodrigo Serrano and Edited by Jose Brakarz; August 2003; Inter-American Development Bank, Sustainable Development Department, Social Development Division.

- **Former SARD-M assessments in Asia:**

- Information sheet Asia
- Regional Summary
- Country reports: Bhutan, China, India, Nepal

- **Country case studies** on promoting inter agency coordination to design and implement SARD-M interventions: case studies in Bhutan, Nepal, Pakistan. + summary of these 3 case studies

Contact Information

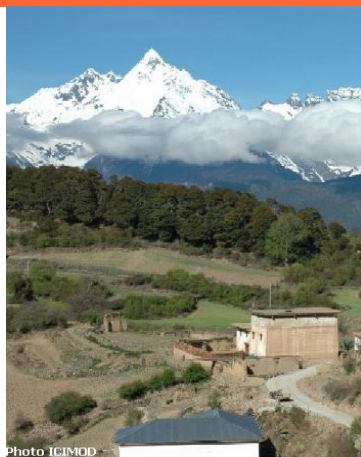


Photo ICIMOD

▲ Regional Focal Point

Contact: Kamal Banskota
Address:
 ICIMOD
 G.P.O. Box 3226, Khumaltar
 Kathmandu, Nepal

Phone: (+977) 1 500-3222

Fax: (+977) 1 500-3299,
 500-3277

E-mail:
kbanskota@icimod.org.np

Website:
<http://www.icimod.org>

▲ SARD-M Team

Contact: Jean Gault
Address:
 Economic and Social
 Development Department
 Food and Agriculture
 Organization of the United
 Nations (FAO)
 Viale delle Terme di Caracalla
 00153 Rome, Italy

Phone: (+39) 06 570-54204

Fax: (+39) 06 570-52004

E-mail: jean.gault@fao.org

Website:
www.fao.org/sard/sard-m

Annex I

Summary of Obstacles and Solutions to IC Emerging from Working Groups Sessions during the Regional Workshop

A. Obstacles to IC Policies	Potential Solutions/strategies
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of organizational policy for IC. • Policies are too sectoral and not based on broader framework (lacking integrated approach). • Conflicting interests, goals, vision and objectives among the agency. • Frequent shift in development policies due to donor interventions. • Lack of recognition of mountain perspective in the national policy. • Lack of multidisciplinary 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Formulate clear national policy to establish and institutionalize IC with special reference to integrated mountain development. • To mandate prior approval and recommendation of inter-agency cooperation/coordination for all relevant programme, harmonization before approval. • Multi-level stakeholder consultation in policy formulation. • Ensure adequate and effective incorporation of

<p>team in preparing the policies and consultations.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policy formulation and implementation is still top down. • Programme and activities differ from policy goals and budget is also not considered. • Budget doesn't support policy and policy formulation. • Formal coordination responsibility lacking. • Institutions responsible for ensuring IC is lacking including coordination mechanisms are absent. 	<p>imperatives of mountain specificities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policies should meet the concerns and aspirations of the local people.
<p>B. Programme Design/Planning level</p>	<p>Solutions</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of integrated planning processes. • Lack of participation of stakeholders and key agencies in the whole planning cycle. • Budget does not support programme and planning • Programme and policy don't match. • Lack of capacity for integrated programme planning. • Lack of clear role and responsibility for design and planning. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Multi-level stakeholder consultation in programme design and planning • Ensure the participation of key stakeholders in the planning process. • Specify the roles and responsibility of stakeholders. • Sufficient availability of funds for policy planning and design. • Suitable institutional set up required with communication flow to implement and monitor IC. • Identify communication strategy within the design to ensure conceptual clarity of the policy to ease implementation and monitoring. • Joint activity between agencies.
<p>C. Operational Implementation Level Obstacles</p>	<p>Solutions</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of commitment and motivation and incentive of different stakeholders. • Not addressing local needs, concerns and priorities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Performance-based incentive mechanism established. • Strengthen participation in the local consultation

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of participation of real stakeholders. • Centralized working culture and rigid decision making processes. • Inadequate communication of policy and programme and understanding amongst stakeholders. • Lack of stakeholder capacity. • Lack of participatory M&E system and public auditing system. 	<p>planning and implementation process.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Devolution of decision making authority to the local level. • Sustained sensitization, awareness raising and capacity building at implementation stages. • Establish and institutionalize participatory M&E system (including public and social auditing).
<p>D. Service Delivery Level Obstacles</p>	<p>Solutions</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No clear awareness about policies resulting in lack of coordination • Lack of capacity of local institutions • Lack of empowered and effective CBOs • Lack of coordination in service delivery agencies • Lack of timely delivery • Ineffective incentive system for stakeholders (local and extension) • Lack of coordination among different service delivery agency resulting in ineffective delivery resulting in overburdening of local stakeholders and increased demand of their time. • Lack of devolution of funds, functionaries and functions. • Inequitable delivery of services. • M&E system in service delivery lacking. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish and institutionalize participatory M&E system (including public and social auditing). • Strengthen capacity of local CBOs and other service providers and intermediaries. • Inter-agency coordination mechanism to be established and strengthen. • Promote devolution of funds, functionaries and functions. • Strengthen organizational capacity of community institutions to increase and stream line demand pressures to service providers. • Develop and institutionalize PME system in service delivery points.

