

# **Accessibility Planning and Local Development**

*The application possibilities of the IRAP methodology*

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## Preface

As an effective means to reduce the isolation experienced by a great share of the rural poor, the Development Policies Department (POLDEV) of the ILO has been promoting for several years now a local-level, multi-sectoral planning tool called Integrated Rural Accessibility Planning (IRAP). This planning tool is intended to be used by local planners and practitioners and to complement rather than replacing existing planning practices. It is currently applied in a number of countries in Africa and Asia where it is giving encouraging results.

The present paper, which was prepared in the framework of an interregional project on rural transport and accessibility financed by the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida) and managed by POLDEV, explores the linkages between rural accessibility planning and the local development process. The paper provides indications concerning the likely usefulness of the IRAP tool within specific planning contexts. It also identifies areas for future work to enhance the potential of IRAP.

We consider that this paper will be of interest to local decision makers and development actors as well as to all those who are concerned with poverty alleviation in rural areas.

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## **1. Introduction**

The ILO's Employment-Intensive Program (EIP) sets out to support economic growth and poverty alleviation in developing countries through promoting, facilitating and providing gainful employment. The Program has increasingly become concerned with institutional strengthening and capacity building at the local level as an essential condition for generating employment, and generally as a systematic input into the local development process. One of the program's main areas of intervention is local level planning, and it has developed a needs-based, multi-sectoral, gender-sensitive methodology for local-level planning, called Integrated Rural Accessibility Planning (IRAP), based on the accessibility planning concept. The methodology's R&D being substantially achieved, it has become one of the program's means of action for promoting ILO concerns for full employment and alleviation of poverty.

IRAP is concerned with the improvement of the living and working conditions of rural populations. Its aim is to ensure that available investments are directed towards the most urgent needs of rural communities, for access to basic goods, social and economic services and employment opportunities. Through IRAP, the EIP addresses the problem of poverty alleviation on two levels: directly, by seeking to eliminate isolation of rural populations from the goods, services, facilities and opportunities they need for their welfare; and indirectly through building within the relevant local institutions, the capacity to plan the required interventions jointly with the communities concerned.

This paper presents the accessibility planning approach and the IRAP methodology, and explores their present and potential usefulness to the process of local level development within today's development context, characterized by trends such as democratisation and decentralization. Using specific planning environments it illustrates the situations in which the EIP can offer advisory services in the use of IRAP. It concludes by reviewing the different areas in which more R&D work can extend the methodological range of IRAP whilst keeping its edge as a simple, user-friendly and yet powerful planning tool in the service of local level planners and communities.

## **2. The global context**

There have been deeply felt and far reaching changes in the way the world economy functions since the introduction of structural adjustment during the 1980s. In industrial and developing countries alike, with some exceptions, the process has emphasized economic liberalization through deregulation of prices and foreign capital controls; decreasing state budget deficits through cuts in subsidies; devaluation of national currencies and privatization of inefficient public enterprises. The primary aim of these policies and instruments has been to bring about improvements in the market for products and production by removing trade barriers and rigidities, and they have been successful in this respect, judging by the growth in international trade.

The structural adjustment process has resulted in many national governments disengaging themselves from public ownership and management of various means of production, services, infrastructure and utilities. Thus in many countries, industrial as well as developing, national governments have ceased to be major providers of employment and social services. Whilst a few of them have entered the re-structuring phase of the process, the largest number, and in particular many developing countries ill equipped to take part in and benefit from an increase in international trade, are still in the de-structuring phase of the adjustment process.

This translates for their governments struggling with debt repayment burdens into a social, economic, financial and credibility crisis; and for their populations, an increase in unemployment and underemployment, poverty and insecurity. The emphasis of the structural adjustment programs on market forces, products and production has not been sufficient to increase employment, make the best use of human resources, raise incomes and living standards and improve the social environment.<sup>1</sup>

Furthermore it has led to increased social tensions over the sharing of scarce resources beyond the point where they can be managed by a weakened central authority, with the result that people are increasingly resorting to violence to gain or keep control of these resources<sup>2</sup>. The dramatic rise in the number and scale of destruction of the armed conflicts that have affected developing countries and countries entering the market economy in recent years, correlates disturbingly with the spreading impact of structural adjustment measures. It was during the 80's that the concept of development lost its associations with "growth" to focus instead on "poverty alleviation". In the 90s, efforts directed at poverty alleviation acquire an added dimension of conflict prevention, or to put things in a more positive light, "maintenance of peace". More than ever before, the proposed development approaches and programs need to be relevant and effective in addressing the needs of the populations who have no more margin to maneuver in their struggle to stay alive and ahead.

The ILO's Employment-Intensive Programme (EIP), set up to address poverty alleviation through promoting, facilitating and providing gainful employment, has evolved to incorporate these concerns and realities into its approach and activities.

### **3. Current issues in development planning**

One of the effects of the State withdrawing to play a smaller role in national life, has been to accelerate the trend towards decentralization of government, previously accepted as something desirable but not necessarily pursued wholeheartedly. Regional and local levels of government and state institutions have become more important, seeing themselves increasingly vested with the responsibility for economic development and employment creation - though not necessarily with the means to carry this out, since government is usually broke. The need for building local capacities for planning, implementation and monitoring is critical if decentralization is to effectively enable a more rational allocation of scarce resources according to real priorities.

As governments have become more realistic about their scope and capacity for action, the people have been learning to say "we can do without you since we must." In many developing countries, there has been a parallel movement towards increased and effective popular participation at the local level. New actors and partners have emerged in the social and political arena - the private sector, local non-governmental organizations, community and

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<sup>1</sup> *Strategies for Local Economic Development within the Framework of Sustainable Human Development: Inputs to Capacity Building*, International Labor Organization, International Training Center of the ILO, LED Working Paper, 1996

<sup>2</sup> The violence which displaced 100,000 and killed hundreds in northern Ghana in 1994 was labelled as ethnic violence, but the underlying cause was that the resident population had been denying access to land to a group which had migrated to the area a few decades ago. Tension between the two groups worsened as life became more difficult, reaching the point where a mere incident at the local market sparked off a war.

volunteer organizations. Together with traditional actors (trade unions, traditional leaders, councils and organisations, etc.) and often in partnerships with international NGOs, they are coming to form a resourceful civil society that is prepared to undertake a wide variety of actions that range from the defense of the rights of the child, through the day-to-day work of peace-maintenance<sup>3</sup>, to planning and implementing development programs. Through their organizations, people are claiming the power to decide issues that affect their lives, and the ability to act on their decisions. Accompanied by this transfer of power from the center to the people, decentralization in a number of places is meaningful to the lives of communities.

Where external agents of development are concerned, be these the World Bank, bilateral aid organizations, international organizations or NGOs, the poor performance of centrally-planned, externally designed development investments over the last 30-odd years have imposed the conclusion that local is where it starts. UNDP, the ILO and other international agencies restructure to become closer to their constituents; the World Bank undertakes participatory poverty assessments; embassies are given the right to decide on aid programs in their country: in all spheres there is the recognition that those who partake of a reality are well placed to know what needs to be done to change this reality and must be fully integrated as equal partners in the process of change.

Not only is local, i.e. needs-based, i.e. demand-driven development completely accepted as permitting the most effective, efficient use to be made of scarce resources to satisfy actual needs, but it has come to be given a role in its own right. It is now recognized that it is only at the local level that mobilization of the common sense of purpose, confidence, creativity and energies necessary to embark successfully on the development task can take place.

The welcome news of the coming of the local level into its own has not however obscured recognition that for local level development efforts to be really effective in the medium term will require, amongst other factors, that local level planning and development be able to tie in into an institutionally viable planning process at the regional level. This in turn needs to be fully integrated into a national planning process that seeks to harmonize priorities that have come up from people with national development objectives, potential and constraints. Two main issues are at stake here, a) establishing the necessary institutional framework with clear devolution of responsibilities and of executive and budgetary powers to the local level, and b) supporting regional and local levels with adequate flows of human, technical and financial resources.

That the ILO's Employment Intensive Program has evolved to incorporate these concerns and realities into its approaches and activities, is illustrated by the Integrated Rural Accessibility Planning program of action.

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<sup>3</sup> e.g. between farmers and pastoralists, settled populations and new arrivals, students and the government, workers and management. It is when local level peace maintenance efforts fail, or are deliberately thwarted, that incidents turn to conflicts that attract the attention of the national or international media.

## 4. The Accessibility Planning approach and the Integrated Rural Accessibility Planning Methodology

### 4.1 The approach: grasping local realities

At about the same time the above issues were becoming acute, the spirit behind them was affecting the area of what was subsequently to evolve into accessibility planning: rural transport planning. Up to about a decade ago, it was widely believed that roads could catalyze rural development: if there were enough good roads to ensure access to inputs and evacuate agricultural surpluses to markets, it was felt that rural development was sure to take off. Consequently, rural transport planning directed large amounts of the investment aimed at rural development towards providing these roads. The patent failure of this roads-focus to make any impact on rural development, despite massive investments, led to research efforts to understand what was actually happening<sup>4</sup>.

The accessibility planning concept emerged when the starting point for looking at transport in rural areas was taken as the rural household. A whole new picture suddenly came to life. There were **people** moving around in rural areas for a variety of reasons which ranged from subsistence to economic, through social and administrative. The surveys revealed household transport patterns in fascinating detail: the largest transport burden on households often took place within the village, and was required for the transport of water and firewood. This burden was often head and hand-carried by women. Footpaths and footbridges, were the transport infrastructure most used by rural people, mostly on foot, occasionally with animal drawn carts and bicycles for the economically more fortunate. Availability of means of transport and of transport services conditioned the movement of goods, agricultural and otherwise, into and out of communities. Households could experience labor shortages at critical times in the agricultural calendar e.g. sowing or harvesting, if facilities for safe water and fuel were so far away that the time and effort to go and get them ate away at the time for anything else. Not only did lack of access produce isolation, it could be a real constraint on productive activities.

Based on these findings, a new definition of transport as “the movement of people and goods by any conceivable means, for any conceivable purpose” came into being<sup>5</sup>. A landmark was reached when it was acknowledged that transport is in reality a means to an end, and that that end is gaining access<sup>6</sup>. The heart of the problem is accessibility, determined by the location of different points of satisfaction on the one hand, and on the other by people’s ability to reach these points (the notions of transport and mobility). Accessibility can be defined in terms of the ease (in terms of time, effort and cost) with which a need can be satisfied.

Access is a precondition for the satisfaction of almost any need, and certainly for all physical needs. Hence accessibility provides a central integrating concept with which to grasp

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<sup>4</sup> *Rural Transport in Developing Countries*, Barwell I., Edmonds, G. A., Howe, J. D. G. F. and de Veen, J., Intermediate Technology Publications, London, 1985 presents the findings of these first research efforts to define the nature of rural people’s transport needs and the various constraints within which these have to be satisfied.

<sup>5</sup> *Household Time Use and Agricultural Productivity in Sub-Saharan Africa: a synthesis of IT Transport Research*, J. G. D. F. Howe, I. Barwell, P. Zille, November 1987

<sup>6</sup> *Rural Transport and Accessibility, A Synthesis Paper*. Prepared for the International Labor Office by IT Transport Ltd.

the complex interactions between the spectrum of subsistence, economic and social needs of any population. Indeed, the concept of accessibility was first applied to transport related planning by geographers in developed countries. With the concept of accessibility, it becomes possible to investigate the patterns of movement of rural populations, and identify, for instance, the degree to which a given community is involved in economic activities. Recognition of actual accessibility needs of rural populations leads to identification of the factors that affect their satisfaction: the location and level of service of the facilities, the infrastructure providing access to the facilities, ownership of means of transport and the availability of transport services. Using accessibility as an entry point gives a better idea of what is actually happening from the point of view of socio-economic development in many critical areas of rural life, and what can be done to improve wanting situations such as those described above.

The accessibility concept thus captures real concerns, and the Integrated Rural Accessibility Planning (IRAP) methodology derived from this approach enables these concerns to be addressed at the local level. IRAP is the result of a continuous process of methodology development which has been undertaken since the end of the 80s in a number of countries: Tanzania, The Philippines, Bangladesh, Malawi, Zambia, Zimbabwe, India, Bangladesh, and most recently Lao PDR - different contexts permitting the exploration of different aspects of the methodology. It is demonstrating that accessibility planning is more than a transport planning procedure, more than a physical or infrastructure planning tool. IRAP is a planning methodology that enables local level planners to facilitate local development through diagnosis and promotion of the most cost-effective set of interventions to meet the actual needs of rural populations for access to the goods, services and opportunities with which to improve their standard of living and raise productivity.

## **4.2 The IRAP planning process**

Development planning has acknowledged for some time now that the traditional top-down, sectoral approach to planning makes for extremely inefficient allocation of resources. In this approach, resources are distributed at national level by sector, represented by the different government ministries. Each ministry then spends "its" funds locally, according to "its" program, developed independently. The population loses out in this process: its actual needs are not taken into account, the focus of each ministry being not the population but "its" sector, roads, health, education, etc.; and most areas are not provided with the base from which to realize their potential as there is usually no concertation between ministries at the local level.

Taking people as a starting point and examining the different factors influencing the desired outcome, i.e. satisfaction of their varied access needs, it became clear that these factors are strongly interrelated, e.g. the state of the local transport infrastructure conditions the use of means of transport and the frequency with which people use different facilities. And of course, suitable access improvements require planners with appropriate skills to diagnose and promote them. The analysis shows that an effective local planning methodology has imperatively a) to adopt a systems approach and b) to be conceptually and methodologically within the reach of local planners, if it is to make any significant progress towards achieving the desired outcome on a sustainable basis.

IRAP has these features. It is specifically designed with the local planner in mind, and is multisectoral in its approach, though it can also be used in planning for a specific sector. The sectors presently covered by the methodology are: water, energy, health, education, markets, agricultural inputs and outputs, crop marketing and post harvest facilities.

The basic planning process involves 4 phases: preparation, identification of basic needs whose level of access requires priority intervention (henceforth referred to as access needs),

definition of an intervention strategy and the consolidation of proposals into plans. These 4 phases are intended to be linked to the local level planning framework and carried out together with local authorities and the communities involved, following the sequence of activities shown in Fig. 1.

After the groundwork has been done, it is time to start the identification of priority problems. This begins with the training of local planners to carry out data collection, principally on primary data obtained by rapid rural appraisal methods, as well as on secondary data sources. The data obtained is stored in an accessibility database, which generally comprises 5 main groups of information:

- general socio-economic characteristics of the area;
- location and quality of facilities;
- transport system inventory;
- travel patterns; and
- community priorities.

The last activity of phase two sees the training of planners to develop the powerful diagnostic and prioritization tools that characterize the methodology: the Accessibility Profiles, Accessibility Indicators and maps. The methodology collects information on the time that rural households spend in gaining access to the different sites where their needs may be met, and the effort they put into moving their goods around; the different modes of transport and the quality of services available are also taken into account. This information is used to produce the Accessibility Indicator (AI) for a given locality in relation to a given service.

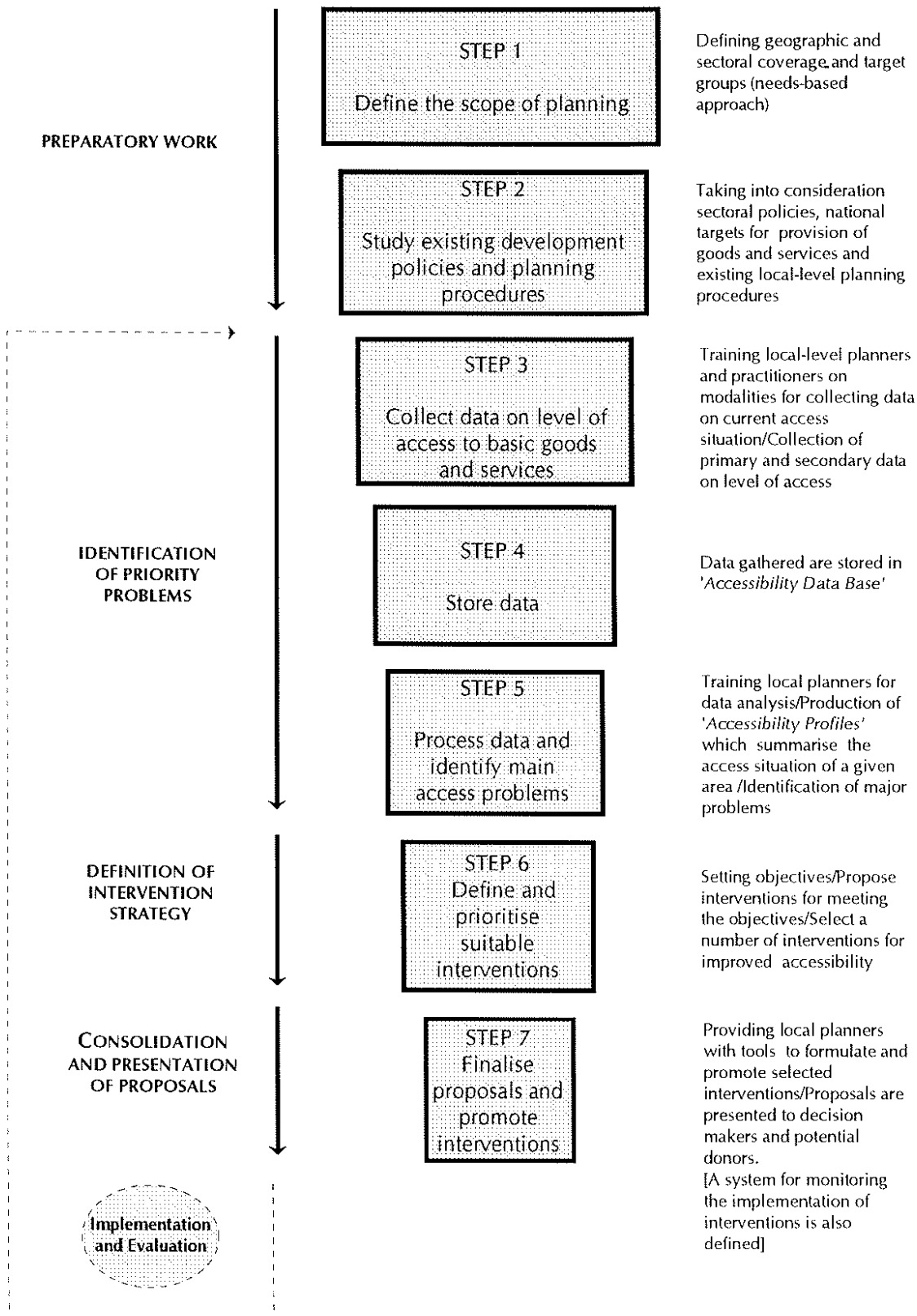
A number of AIs covering different sectors yields the Accessibility Profile, which explains the situation existing in a given area, in terms of levels of access to basic services and goods. Easy presentation of this information is made possible by using maps. The local level planner can use the AIs to:

- categorize or rank communities according to their level of access;
- compare the level of access to a good or to a service within and between different administrative areas and set realistic local targets;
- assess the relative significance of access to each different facility;
- relate the level of access to defined national, regional or local standards; and
- monitor the development within or between administrative areas.

It becomes an easy task for the planner to identify what services are most needed and where they are most needed. With this information, phase three, the definition of an intervention strategy can begin. This hinges around identifying which out of the range of solutions available (see Fig. 2) will be, given the objectives, most effective in responding to particular needs: improving access through the siting of facilities, or through improvements to people's mobility. The stated objectives will be decided on by local decision-makers, who can be the communities' representatives, but ideally are the communities themselves.

The IRAP planning process presently ends with the training of local planners to formulate proposals and to promote these proposals for funding, first to the local chief executive and local decision-makers, and then to others such as the congressman, local or international NGOs, embassies, etc. The planners are trained to formulate proposals in such a way as to make the maximum use of resources available at the local level, for instance through the use of labor-based technologies, so as to stimulate local employment and encourage self-reliance. A system for monitoring the implementation of proposals and its impact on access levels is also set up.

# The IRAP Process



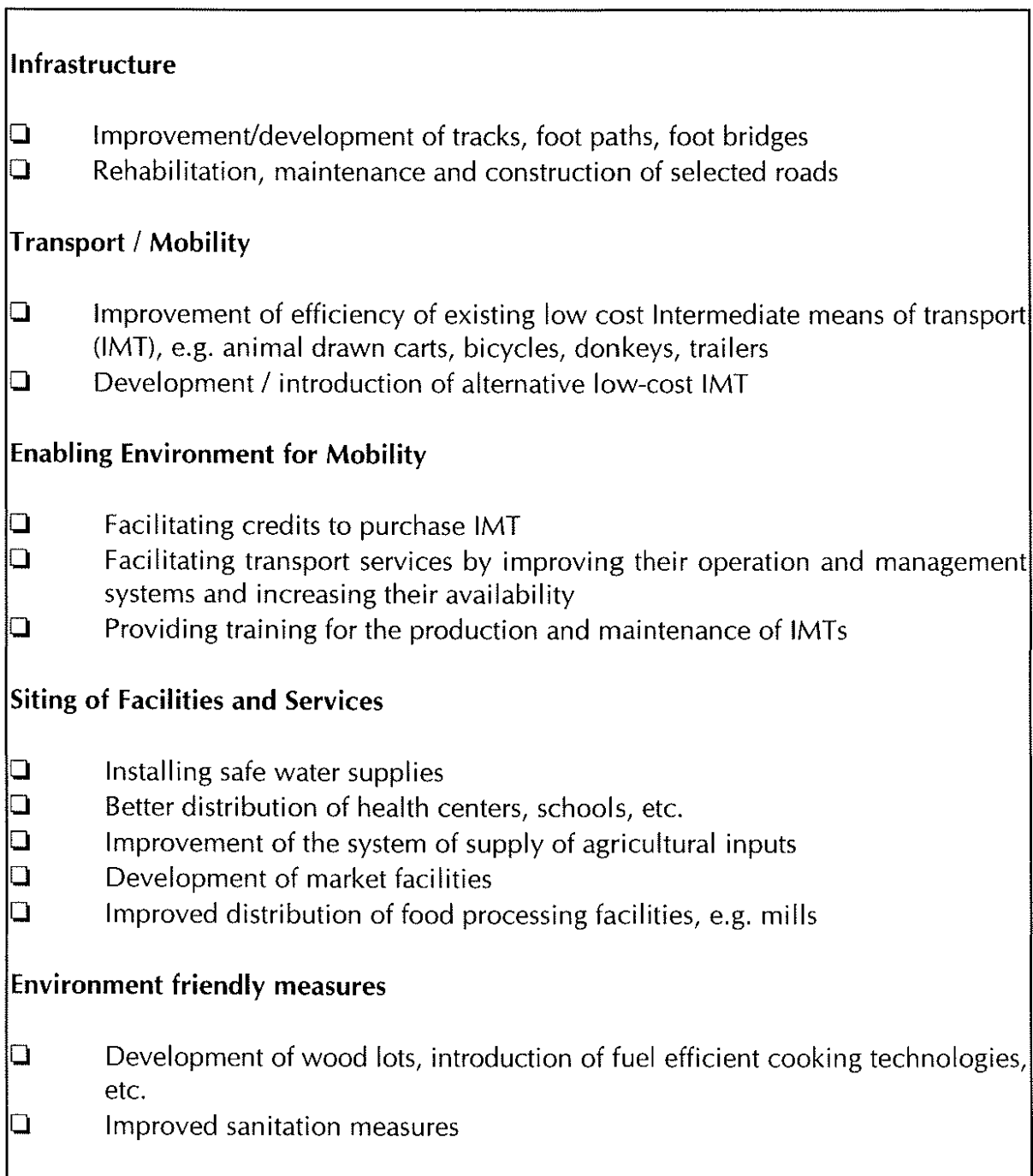


Fig. 2 ACCESS AND ACCESS-RELATED INTERVENTIONS

### **4.3 Characteristics of IRAP as a viable tool for decentralized planning**

As a new tool at the disposal of the local level planner, IRAP was designed to be simple and effective with a vast potential for addressing real concerns. As a new tool however, there has been little empirical evidence on its impact. A first attempt to assess the impact of the viability of the methodology as a local level planning tool has just been completed<sup>7</sup>. This confirms what its possible achievements may be.

The evaluation was able to review 180 municipalities (equivalent to districts) in 13 provinces of the Philippines, whose municipal planning and development coordinators had been trained in the use of IRAP in the course of 1993-94. It wanted to ascertain:

- a) the number of projects presently funded and implemented, that had been identified and prioritized through IRAP and incorporated into local development or annual investment plans; and
- b) the role of the local planning and development coordinators in the application of the IRAP technology and their influence on local development decision-making processes.

The results of the survey support the claims that IRAP is an effective and realistic planning tool for use at the local level, simple, easy-to-apply and of rapid implementation, as described in the following sections.

#### ***The IRAP approach is simple and easy to understand***

For a planning methodology to be useful for decision-making at a local level in a participatory context, a first requirement is that it should be simple. Actors at the local level, politicians, planners, members of the community will bring varying levels of educational achievement, interest, and motivation to the task of absorbing and processing the information required to work through an exercise of informed collective decision-making. The basic concept of IRAP, that of using the ease with which households can access basic goods and service to rank communities according to need for priority intervention, is easy to explain and readily understood by all. This simplicity greatly contributes to its sustainability.

#### ***The methodology is user-friendly and rapidly implemented***

Application of IRAP requires training of local level planners, in this case, municipal, provincial and city planning and development coordinators. The training is designed to take place in 2-3 sessions, the first of which introduces the planners to the theory and concepts behind the methodology and to its data gathering requirements. This 2-day session is followed by a 2-4 month period during which the planners return to their communities to collect the required information. A second (and in some cases a third) training session of 4 days is then convened during which the participants learn to analyze and interpret the data to produce findings and recommendations that address the existing accessibility needs; and to package and present this information decision-makers and potential channels of funds. The final training session concludes with a presentation to the relevant political decision-makers.

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<sup>7</sup> *Post Evaluation: Technical Assistance to Local Government Units, Integrated Rural Accessibility Planning PHI/94/MO4/NET*, prepared by Technical Assistance Team, International Labor Organization and Rural Transport Unit, Local Government Academy, Department of the Interior and Local Government, Philippines, 1996

Whilst the methodology is easy to implement, it does presuppose that an adequate stream of resources is already reaching the local level, not least that a local planning function exists, that it is staffed with “warm bodies”, that these people have the means with which to travel around their communities and the equipment (including computer equipment) with which to work on their return to the office - basically that the only thing lacking is an effective conceptual and methodological tool with which to carry out their function satisfactorily. Furthermore, merely from the point of view of the motivation of the planners in the adoption of the methodology, resources must be available for the implementation of the findings. Given the emphasis on local resources, the amounts involved, for training as for implementation are relatively modest.

### ***IRAP is a relevant and effective tool for local level planning***

The evaluation of IRAP Philippines reveals that two years after being trained, 87% of the 165 respondents of the survey are still using the procedures they learnt in their daily work, with 85% sharing the generated information and their findings and recommendations with local decision-makers and stakeholders using the presentation techniques they learned.

Underlying this remarkable result is another finding of significance to the sustainability of the capacity-building effort: the majority of the planners trained remained in office despite local elections being held in 1995. This is an important finding, given that local planners are appointed by their respective mayors. Out of the 16 new posts of coordinator, 7 were filled by promoted technical staff who had undergone IRAP training.

Not only do the local planners trained continue to use IRAP on their own, but it has given them the ability to significantly influence decision-making over the allocation of resources for local development planning, a process normally dominated by politically inspired considerations. The evaluation report reveals that of the 1238 local government projects being funded and implemented in the survey areas, 908 or 73% were identified through the IRAP process. Most of these have been financed out of local government funds. The conclusions of the evaluation report speak for themselves:

- a planning tool to be effective has to be simple and very user-friendly;
- local planners can determine what is best for their respective areas and, if given the opportunity, can express their recommendations authoritatively;
- sound decisions can easily be reached if the arguments are based on a set of information that is clearly acceptable to everybody;
- effective presentation of issues, needs and programs to stakeholders and major actors of decision-making is a critical activity in local level planning;
- local government units need a system to optimize the use of their resources;
- the dynamics of local politics can be harnessed to be fully productive; and
- there is a growing number of development-oriented local chief executives.

## **5. The possible contribution of IRAP to local and area development planning**

The different scenarios of development planning currently occurring can be characterized according to their planning environment and the planning methodology in use, where applicable. A planning environment conducive to realistic and responsive planning would have the following features:

- existence of a planning function at local level;

- provision for people's direct participation in planning decisions;
- the authority to raise funds locally/regionally and to disburse these at the local level, according to clear guidelines; and
- provision for capacity building of key community members and local government officials.

A conducive planning environment is a necessary but not sufficient condition, as the following discussion will show: realistic and responsive planning also requires a suitable analytical tool. The conceptualization of the tool will determine its relevance: how realistically it captures needs, how well it deals with the need for an integrated, multi-sectoral approach, its diagnostic capacity, the basis it provides for prioritization and how suitable it is for use at the local level. The tool and its application environment are closely linked. A specific tool might not lend itself very well to local level planning, whilst another may be instrumental in improving the planning environment, for example by encouraging participation. Establishing the planning environment is however very much the responsibility of people and their government.

An overview of what is currently happening in decentralized development planning reveals that it is difficult to find situations where all the necessary conditions are satisfied, and where local/decentralized planning is effectively leading to interventions that address people's most urgent needs. The best scenario is where the community is involved in the whole planning process, from information-gathering to monitoring and evaluation, through implementation. When the community is represented, particularly for the decision-making part of the process, this constitutes a second-best scenario, even if all other conditions are fulfilled and people's actual needs met through the planning process.

## 5.1 Towards decentralization

Lack of political will and/or the sorry state of government finances mean that this scenario is a frequent one in many countries which would embark on the path of decentralization<sup>a</sup>. In the worst case, the planning environment itself is non-existent, principally because the process of decentralization is not yet fully in place and/or has not been accompanied by a meaningful transfer of executive and budgetary powers to the local level, nor by any money. Two courses of action are relevant here: enacting of the necessary legislative, administrative and financial measures to create a viable local planning environment within which a planning methodology can be rationally be applied; or mobilization of the population to start the process from the bottom-up. In the first instance, IRAP which has been designed for sustainable application within a local institutional framework cannot be introduced. In the second course of action, there are certain selected circumstances where the methodology can be used, though it will not be sustainable until action of the first variety is taken. The second course of action may be a spontaneous movement. Or it may be catalyzed through development approaches such as Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) and Participatory Action Research (PAR).

### ***Participatory Rural Appraisal and Participatory Action Research***

PRA has been described by one of its principal proponents, Chambers, as "a growing family of approaches and methods to enable local people to share, enhance and analyze their

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<sup>a</sup> The problems that the decentralisation process can encounter are well described in *Désengagement étatique, transfert de pouvoir et participation populaire au Sahel: de la problématique à l'analyse de l'expérience nigérienne*, Kalala, M., Danda, M., and Schwarz, A. Centre Sahel, Université Laval, Quebec, Canada.

knowledge of life and conditions, to plan and to act.”<sup>9</sup> PRA has grown out of activist participatory research, of which Participatory Action Research is one instance, and fields such as applied anthropology, rapid rural appraisal and agroecosystem analysis. These have contributed, amongst others, the awareness that people with low-incomes are creative and capable of doing much of their own investigation, analysis and planning. Rapid rural appraisal (RRA) paved the way for PRA. But whereas RRA did rehabilitate local people’s knowledge, it remained extractive in its mode: its purpose was the learning of outsiders to the community, who used it to produce plans, projects and publications. PRA is participatory; it goes further than RRA in that it rehabilitates the analytical capacities of local people, empowering them in the process. The outcome is sustainable local action and institutions.

PRA’s main innovators and users have been NGOs and Government field services using a variety of methods with which to jointly manage the process of change, alongside the people most concerned: participatory analysis of secondary sources, participatory mapping and modeling, seasonal calendars, daily time use analysis, well-being and wealth grouping and ranking, analysis of difference, presentation and analysis, participatory planning, budgeting, implementation and monitoring, etc.<sup>10</sup>

Both PRA and PAR do imply “radical personal and institutional change.” The emphasis of Participatory Action Research, (PAR) however has been more on mobilization of the underprivileged, and in particular political mobilization of the underprivileged. The first task of the PAR project is to stimulate and support the initial stages of collective reflection and endogenous knowledge-building, through educational seminars, awareness-raising action by change agents, community animators and other catalysts. There is a tendency, particularly in Asia, for PAR movements to be resolutely autonomous and to define the role of outsiders in the empowerment process very strictly.

In the PAR scenario, “mere” improvement of social and economic conditions might well not be the final objective, but one of the consequences of people’s determined action to end their oppression and poverty. Development in this context is not so much a set of activities with a defined goal, as it becomes a creative process, one in which people think for themselves, decide what constitutes development from their perspective, and do what they feel is necessary to achieve this. It has been observed that when people initiate their own development or are stimulated to do so, though economic activities are often the starting point for action, they may first choose to secure their economic rights if these have been disregarded<sup>11</sup>. Initial activities may include the formation of pressure groups to challenge the status quo, to obtain access to resources (e.g. land), better distribution of production, fair prices for services, and so on. When basic rights are secure, then income-generating and social activities take priority and accessibility planning may become relevant to the process.

Individual communities have achieved spectacular successes in defining and achieving their own development objectives, throughout Asia, Africa and South America through PRA and PAR. The visible improvements in employment, income and socio-economic security in communities undertaking autonomous development, prompts other poor communities to request

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<sup>9</sup> The Origins and Practice of Participatory Rural Appraisal, Robert Chambers, in *World Development*, July 1994, Vol. 22 No. 7

<sup>10</sup> The Origins and Practice of Participatory Rural appraisal, op. cit.

<sup>11</sup> *People’s Self-Development, Perspectives on Participatory Action Research*, Anisur Rahman, ZED Books, London & New Jersey, 1993

for assistance in initiating similar organizational development, training and legal assistance activities. A pilot project started in a few villages in the Philippines in 1979 now reaches 300 villages and 50 towns in the largest non-church-based rural development movement in the country. The famous Six-S<sup>12</sup> movement started in Burkina Faso in 1976 now extends to Mali, Senegal, Mauritania, Niger and Chad, and has developed into the largest people's self help movement in Africa. A former ILO program, Programme on Participatory Organizations of the Rural Poor (PORP), has been instrumental in initiating, supporting, studying and cross-fertilizing the participatory approach across communities and continents.

Incorporation of the accessibility planning approach into the larger area-based PRA and PAR movements is possible - and desirable - under certain conditions which will need to be ascertained on a case by case basis. There is scope for outsiders to contribute analysis tools to the endogenous learning process even within the more radical PAR, and IRAP is eminently down to earth. Where outside assistance is present, the means with which to apply the methodology will be found more easily. In spontaneous movements however, the question as to how the community could get access to the equipment and skills with which to adopt and apply the methodology might prove a little more difficult to answer.

The answer to this question might provide the answer to another more fundamental question facing popular mobilization as a development strategy, the "micro-macro" question. This becomes more pertinent as PRA and PAR spread: what relationships between the informal, creative, self-reliant popular organizations, and the formal, government structure are possible and desirable to achieve cooperation and sustainable development? People do need their governments to provide at the very least, a conducive environment for their self-help efforts to succeed in the medium and long-term. Devising the appropriate policies and measures with which to create this environment requires that the government commit itself to new relationships with local communities and their organizations - which brings us back to the first course of action.

## **5.2 Decentralized planning without methodological support**

In certain cases, decentralization has been successfully achieved, but, lacking a suitable planning tool, and without active participation of the population, the results no more reflect people's realities than if planning were still centralized: the planning process remains top-down and sectoral. The Philippines is an example of a country which has achieved a close to perfect local planning environment, but which, until IRAP, did not have the analytical tool with which to exploit this to the people's advantage.

Under the Philippine Local Government Code, local planners are to do research, data processing and interpretation for their respective areas as inputs to the area development and investment plans, and to provide technical inputs to the deliberations at the local development councils. In theory, the decision-makers are supposed to decide on development options as presented and discussed in the development councils.

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<sup>12</sup> Six-S stands for *Se Servir de la Saison sèche en Savane et au Sahel* - making good use of the dry season in the Savanna and the Sahel. In 1987 in Burkina Faso there were more than 2,000 Six-S groups with an average of about 50 members in 33 zones. Six-S promotes the development of traditional Naam self help groups into development-oriented organizations which organize their own income-generating and social services programs. It helps local groups initiate credit and skills development schemes, promotes exchange of experience and knowledge between groups and carries out self-evaluation. *People's Self-Development, Perspectives on Participatory Action Research*, op cit.

In practice, development plan decision-making is the prerogative of the elected local officials - the municipal mayor or the provincial governor, and the local legislative bodies. The technicians have absolutely no say, except where they have come to use accessibility planning. Participants on joining the IRAP training programs report not being consulted over local development planning programs and simply being asked to come up with justifications for decisions already taken; proximity to the local chief executive being a major criteria for obtaining contracts to carry out projects; basic-needs projects being given to areas where the households showed overwhelming support during elections; or themselves allocating funds on a first-come, first-served basis, for want of any other.

Clearly, even where decentralization is accompanied by effective devolution of power and resources to the local level, this does not guarantee that people's urgent needs will be met through the planning process. In this context, the introduction of a planning tool with the characteristics of those of IRAP - simplicity, user-friendliness, speed of implementation and relevance - significantly modifies the dynamics of local decision-making to the advantage of the planners, representing the communities' interests.

The ultimate aim would be full empowerment of the people to make their own decisions - though the very introduction of IRAP already represents a form of empowerment, the decision-making process in the Philippines is still not fully participatory. Decision-making is still mostly done on behalf of communities by the planners and the people's elected representatives (village captains), constituting a second-best scenario. The example does however demonstrate that where a conducive decentralized planning environment exists, significant improvements in meeting people's needs can be achieved with the introduction of IRAP, even when the level of participation is low.

There are also scenarios in which decentralization is substantially achieved, provision has been made for people's active participation in collaboration with local level government, but without a methodology, the prioritisation process and the allocation of resources is not as efficient as it could be. Here again, IRAP can render service in helping communities to see the whole picture: their needs as well as the needs of others, their reality within the wider context; and so negotiate more easily decisions that are truly in the common interest.

### **5.3 Decentralized planning with methodological support**

Certain countries will find themselves at a stage of having achieved some measure of decentralization, presenting some of the elements of an appropriate planning environment and having adopted one of the development planning methodologies currently available. These are examined here.

#### ***Rural Center Planning***

Rural center planning came to be looked upon as a tool in the service of development when it was observed that industrialized countries presented a graduated hierarchy of central places (central place theory), whereas developing countries on the whole presented a "very imperfect" network of centers: often a wide variety of services and facilities would be present in the capital city only, with very little in the way of goods and services available in the rural areas, even in the rural towns. It was the same with employment opportunities, this grossly unbalanced center-periphery development giving rise to rural-urban migration on an unmanageable scale.

In the belief that the balanced spatial organization of services had provided the basis for Western progress, rural center planning set itself the task to devise for the rural areas of

developing countries a desirable hierarchy of centers through which to bring a minimum level of goods, services and opportunities closer to rural populations and so similarly encourage their progress.<sup>13</sup> The planners' task was to decide what services should be made available at what level of center, the concentration of services being seen as a way to rationalize investment in rural service provision.

Its focus on the siting of services makes rural center planning a precursor of accessibility planning, with two crucial differences. The first is that it takes services and productive facilities as its starting point, and not the household. The second is that the only aspect of mobility it takes into consideration is the road network. Rural center planning is conceived of as a needs-based planning methodology, but the limitations in its conceptualization mean that it does not capture the totality of the needs of rural populations. It is multi-sectoral in its approach, but with hindsight is clearly not integrated, as it does not uncover the links between the subsistence, economic and social activities of the rural population. This weakens its diagnostic capacity: it cannot for instance assess whether in a given area the satisfaction of subsistence needs predominates over all activities, and what the main constraint is.

The Indian Government's experiences with Block level planning illustrate how rural center planning can function in the context of decentralized government. One of the most considered attempts at coupling decentralization with people's participation (Panchayati Raj) took place in the State of West Bengal. Nonetheless, the system did not allow for the first level of people's organization, the gram panchayat (an elected body representing 8-12 villages with an average population of 12,000) to take an active part in the construction of development plans. This took place at the next level up, that of the block, in the Block Planning Committee (BPC), so that it was "not possible to speak so much of popular participation in planning, but only of locally elected representatives having a presence on behalf of the villagers on the Block Planning Committee where they could communicate the needs of the villagers."<sup>14</sup> The basic needs proposal budget drawn up by the gram panchayat had to fit the financial parameters defined by the BPC, and its contents correspond to the main development programs defined at state and district level.

Indeed, rural center planning appears to be more of a regional than a local planning tool: since the planner has to have an overview of the region this implies that planning decisions cannot be taken by the people. With participation limited in this way, the best scenario, i.e. people making informed decisions, does not occur; and without a methodology that accurately identifies and prioritizes interventions, neither does the second best, realistic decisions by planners. The methodology lends itself to different institutional set ups: decentralized government, and implementation through a special authority, as was the case for integrated rural development projects and rural growth center projects. The results have been very similar whether the planning function was invested in the government structure or in special bodies: mixed to disappointing. In cases where a planning environment is already in place, but the planning methodology adopted has not lived up to expectations, it would be worthwhile to introduce accessibility planning in order to achieve the second best scenario.

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<sup>13</sup> *Guidelines for rural center planning*, Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, United Nations, New York, 1979

<sup>14</sup> *Panchayati Raj and the decentralization of development planning in West Bengal: a case study*. Neil Webster, CDR Project Paper 90.7, Center for Development Research, Copenhagen 1990.

### ***Objective planning***

This approach consists of appraising projects as to how well they satisfy a set of criteria that have been specified as important, for instance community involvement, gender sensitivity, adherence to government policy, etc. In the context of decentralization, the administrative level responsible for decision-making receives proposals from the levels below it, and processes these. Objective planning ensures that individual projects are designed in an acceptable way to fulfill certain needs. It is not an integrated planning methodology because it does not start from a grasp of the local situation that takes into account the links between people's needs and activities. Its diagnostic capacity is weak and the absence of a unifying concept for situational analysis makes it difficult to prioritize the set of interventions most likely to improve access to basic needs and services.

As an example, this planning methodology is presently being introduced in Malawi as part of the decentralization of responsibilities and authority to the local authorities, a process which is on-going. The newly created Village Development Committees (VDCs) have started to develop proposals which are appraised and approved at the Area Development Committee (ADC) and passed up to the District Development Committee (DDC). The problem facing the DDCs is that they do not have adequate data on the situation in the districts, nor do they have effective tools to be able to effectively select projects for approval. The rate of project approval is very slow, and further handicapped by the still limited availability of money at the local level. More funds are due to flow to the local level when the decentralization process is complete. There is a more fundamental problem which is that the VDCs for the time being are not receiving the information that would enable them to identify and prioritize their most important needs.

As a first step towards producing a second-best planning scenario, IRAP is being introduced at the district level, to complement the existing planning system and provide the district planners with the means with which to become more effective in the delivery of investments and more active in defining, packaging and sourcing funds for interventions. A best scenario would require accessibility planning to be undertaken at the level of the VDCs.

### ***Participatory local development planning***

This describes the situations where planning at the local level is used to mobilize the population to participate in its development, in collaboration with local government and other institutions.

An illustration of this approach is the local development planning approach and methodology of CIEPAC<sup>15</sup>, evolved from work done in Senegal, Guinea, Mauritania, Cape Verde and Burkina Faso, starting in 1973. The approach derives from the analysis that the long term survival of the peasant farmers who make up the majority of the rural population in developing countries will depend on their capacity to invent the suitably productive, profitable and environment-sustainable production systems that will enable them to participate in the prevailing exchange system on their own terms. The key issues are thus the creation of the conditions under which farmers' organizations can emerge, and the methods of professionalisation, and of collaboration with other actors, of these organizations. The process of local planning is seen as a powerful means of achieving these aims.

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<sup>15</sup> *Planification du développement local. Guide méthodologique, suivi de trois études de cas*; Berthome, J., et Mercoiret, J.; préparé pour le ministère de la Coopération et du Développement de la France par le Center International pour l'Éducation Permanente et l'Aménagement Concerté (CIEPAC), Paris 1990.

The planning structure consists of the population and a multidisciplinary team of full time animators, competent in planning, support to farmers' associations, project design, production of teaching materials, etc. The animators are required to have a set of basic qualifications: most of them should preferably be originally from the area or with social ties or professional links to it, speak the local language and have received training in the methodology and in the communication techniques to be used in presenting it to the population.

The planning process consists of 4 phases: a preparatory phase, a diagnostic phase, elaboration of the plan and implementation. The preparatory phase starts with an analysis of the expectations of the instigator of the request for the local planning exercise - which can be a local association or elected representative, an NGO, a regional development project, a research organization, a federation of farmers' associations or an international cooperation project. It is concluded with a data-gathering exercise, by means of rapid rural appraisal techniques, which leads to an "external" diagnosis of all pertinent characteristics of the planning area. The data-gathering exercise is expected to be concluded in 2 weeks.

In this second phase of diagnosis and auto-analysis by the population, the information gained through the external pre-diagnosis is used by the animation team to start identification of the different issues the collective situational analysis should address. Each village programs a calendar of discussions, which are also undertaken with the technical and administrative services present in the planning zone, and any other relevant actors. The second phase is thus one in which the animation team accompanies the process of diagnosis and auto-analysis by the people, interprets and packages the information the people produce and restitutes it to them, encouraging them to take responsibility for defining their own solutions, and start looking to themselves for the means with which to implement these.

The third phase sees the animation team preparing a draft plan from the inventory of solutions the population has proposed, and restituting this to it for discussion, final formulation and endorsement. The discussions serve to define the objectives and orientations of the local development plan, and to collectively prioritize the proposed solutions according to whether they can be done relying exclusively on the communities' resources, or need outside help; their urgency; whether they apply to the whole planning area, or are sectoral or zone-specific; whether they respect certain basic principles of local development. The outcome is an emergency program and a pluri-annual development plan, which, after negotiation and endorsement by all participants, takes the shape of a "social contract" which all parties agree to use as a permanent reference. The fourth stage, implementation, foresees a variety of activities, from implementation of the emergency program, through the set up of an on-going education and training program and the organization of sectoral committees, to the establishment of new relations with outside partners. It constitutes the actual launching of the local development process.

A participatory local development planning process thus conceived enables divergent local interests, competing groups and outside interventions (state, private and public collaboration, NGOs) to position themselves coherently with respect to a development project drawn up by the population. One of the most notable spin-off effects, is that of peace maintenance: the process breeds understanding and shared perceptions, the feeling of having a stake in a common project, all of which contribute not only to reducing tension and conflict, but to mobilizing energy and imagination towards achieving a common purpose. A second notable consequence of the existence of such a process and its outcome, is that the conditions for effective regional level planning and resource allocation start to be fulfilled. Efficient and responsive regional plans, critical for real, sustainable development in certain sectors (e.g. education and training, agro industry, water supply, energy and roads) can be produced on the basis of such local development plans detailing local needs, priorities, potentials and constraints.

In the case of Senegal, the whole process is already underway, with effective devolution of responsibility and authority to the local level, and a regional level which is starting to shape up as an effective planning entity. The effect of this is only slowly being felt because of the lack of funds at the local level with which to implement local initiatives. Nonetheless, the CIEPAC experience has been extended to all rural communities in the country, and local development plans are officially incorporated into the *plans régionaux de développement intégré* (integrated regional development plans).<sup>16</sup>

Accessibility planning can make a significant contribution to participatory local development planning if used at the stage of external pre-diagnostic, for shaping the collective situational analysis. There would however have to be a trade off between the longer time IRAP requires in comparison to the 2 weeks presently devoted to the pre-diagnostic phase, and the quality of the information, and sound basis for prioritisation, that IRAP permits. IRAP in the context of participatory local level planning would yield the best scenario of all, informed participatory local decision-making, the basis of enlightened regional planning.

#### **5.4 Scope of advisory services**

To summarize therefore, the introduction of the accessibility concept and the IRAP methodology can make a useful contribution to most planning situations, with the exception of those in which no action is possible at the local level. Advisory services can usefully be provided in a variety of planning situations.

In countries where decentralization has not taken place, and the local level so to speak does not exist from a planning perspective, IRAP can be introduced only under special circumstances to be determined on a case-by-case basis (in conjunction for example with a mature Participatory Rural Appraisal initiative). At the other extreme, where decentralization has led to the existence of a local level planning function, staffed with "warm bodies" and provided with funds for training and for implementing recommendations but, however, lacking a methodology, IRAP (in its present form) can be exploited to full capacity, particularly if the context is participatory.

There are intermediate situations where a certain extent of decentralization exists alongside a planning capacity: in such situations, training in the accessibility concept and IRAP can assist local planners either to replace an existing methodology, if this is cumbersome and less accurate, or to complement it, if it is simply weak.

Ideally, IRAP would be part of a participatory local development planning process, and the countries where this is already happening could be targetted for the introduction of IRAP, along with other forms of support if necessary.

## **6. Regional and national development planning and IRAP: perspectives**

The strengthening of the local level is to be seen as part of a process, which has as its immediate objective a realistic and responsive multi-level planning function, and ultimate aim, the socio-economic development of the whole population. The next step in this process would

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<sup>16</sup> *Planification du développement local, op. cit.*

be the strengthening of the regional level of self-management, more specifically the regional planning function.

At the regional level, planning addresses the needs of rural and urban populations sharing the same area, and the interrelationships between them, as well as the relationship between large centers in the region and other large centers in the country. A number of sectors and subsectors, e.g. higher level education, industry, roads, water, require additional planning at the regional level for optimal allocation of resources. The regional planning function is as important and as much of a precondition for sustainable development, as the local level.

The regional level is also a vital link between the central or national level and the local level. When functioning correctly, it channels relevant and accurate information received from the local level, suitably consolidated, and the results of its own regional level information-gathering, to the central level. This enables the center to do realistic country level planning, target setting, budgeting etc. For instance, information on the actual number of primary schools needed may be consolidated from local level accessibility/development plans, and transmission of this information helps in determining the number of teachers to be trained region/country wide. The information contained in local development plans enables the central government to know the different development paths that have been charted by populations in the different parts of the country, from which it can infer the overall orientation of the development path of the country as a whole.

For the regional level to function in this way requires, as at local level, an enabling environment and a suitable methodological tool. The required enabling environment is again participatory, providing for participatory decision-making at the regional level, making available the technical capacity to prepare decisions and the resources with which to implement decisions taken. Mechanisms for participation at the regional level will need to bring the usual representatives of the state together with those of all concerned actors of civil society, and of the private sector. At the regional level people may be represented by elected officials but their participation will be made most effective through their local development plans, when the planning process has been participatory. The methodological tool(s) will need to adopt a systems approach to identifying the needs of regional centres, as well as those needs arising from the relationship between regional centers and their rural areas, as well as between regional centers. It will be required to serve the purposes of:

- (a) regional and national target setting;
- (b) identification of inter and intra-sectoral priorities for investment;
- (c) consolidating local development plans, incorporating national concerns and devising a regional strategy of intervention, to produce a regional plan; and
- (d) monitoring and feedback of the impact of regional/national plans and programs<sup>17, 18</sup>.

As it stands, accessibility planning is already capable of fulfilling a), b), c), and d). In the Philippines where there is presently enough data from the local level to provide a statistically significant set of national averages, this information can be used to set realistic targets for different sectors. It makes it possible to identify the sectors that need attention on a regional level - for

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<sup>17</sup> *Guidelines on Integrated Rural Accessibility Planning*, G. Edmonds, C. Donnges and N. Palarca, ILO/DILG, Manila 1994

<sup>18</sup> *Planification du Developpement Local*, op cit

instance the general trend observed in the Philippines is that the top three priority needs in the villages are for water, education and health<sup>19</sup>. Further, it permits sectoral investment choices between different areas: for a given sector, investments should first be made in those areas which fall below the regional or national average.

The IRAP methodology can be used to monitor access at all levels, and in particular may be used to monitor the impact of specific programs in the different sectors, if it has been used to conduct a baseline survey at the onset of the program. The detailed information provided by the Accessibility database makes it possible to start answering questions such as “is the level of infant mortality correlated with access to a village health center, or to midwives?”, thus explaining specific poverty indicators<sup>20</sup> and permitting precisely the required action - access or non-access - to be undertaken.

Incorporating a wide range of the sectors that influence local development, IRAP puts a very powerful planning tool at the disposal of the bottom-up planning process. It is not however, or at least not yet, a comprehensive development planning tool. Where rural development is concerned for instance, it does not as yet deal with irrigation, non-farm employment, natural resource development, credit, rural banking and taxation (though these are progressively being introduced: IRAP Lao will tackle irrigation, postal services and agricultural support services in its second year). And IRAP is only recently being explored by cities in the Philippines as a means with which to assess urban access needs<sup>21</sup>, and the relationship between the city and its rural area. The methodology does not for the time being extend to investigating the relationship between major urban areas.

Nonetheless, as has become apparent with its widespread use in the Philippines, its application to a large section of the country does set the scene for realistic and responsive regional planning to become a reality. The Malawi and Lao PDR IRAP projects are aiming for nationwide application at all levels. (In Malawi, UNDP is considering the incorporation of IRAP into its 6th Country Programme as part of an overall national strategy of having IRAP integrated into district level planning; and WFP will be using the methodology for the planning of its Quick Action Program.) Provided the desired mechanisms for decentralization and participation are set up at the local and regional levels, with a tool like accessibility planning it becomes possible to conceive of a truly viable self-development process.

## 7. The Way Ahead

Development of accessibility planning and the IRAP methodology needs to continue, to fully realize their potential as tools in the service of local and regional development. Topics for further investigation include:

- impact assessments of IRAP;
- IRAP and gender-sensitive interventions;

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<sup>19</sup> *Post Evaluation, Technical Assistance to Local Government Units, IRAP, op. cit.*

<sup>20</sup> *Guidelines on Integrated Rural Planning, op. cit.*

<sup>21</sup> *Improving Rural Accessibility in the Philippines, PHI/94/MO4/NET, Third Progress Report, IRAP Project, Local Government Academy, DILG, ILO, Manila*

- target setting;
- participation and empowerment through IRAP;
- extension of IRAP to economic activities;
- extension of accessibility planning to urban planning; and
- extension of accessibility planning to regional planning.

### **7.1 Assessing the impact of IRAP**

To date, the first evaluation of the effect of IRAP has been on the planning process: this has revealed that two years after being trained in AP, local planners in the Philippines succeeded in getting 73% of local projects identified through the planning process funded and implemented with local funds. Whilst this in itself is already a major achievement, there are more fundamental questions for which answers are required, namely:

- has IRAP made any impact on the levels of access of the populations concerned, and how significant is this, objectively, and in the view of the populations? Where data showed that this was considerable, is women's transport burden being reduced?; and
- to what extent do the interventions identified through IRAP contribute to local employment creation and poverty alleviation?

A follow up to the first partial evaluation in the Philippines is required to provide a first answer to these questions. In all programs, the monitoring and evaluation functions of the methodology need to be applied systematically as implementation of projects it identifies starts to come on stream to provide definitive answers to these questions for the range of development scenarios.

### **7.2 IRAP and gender-sensitive interventions**

IRAP makes it possible to say whether levels of access and transport burdens are influenced by gender and in what way. In the Philippines for instance, there is high ownership of intermediate means of transport and rural transport services are readily available: the load-carrying work tends to be shared more equally between men and women. This is not the case in the African countries in which the methodology has been applied, where there are few means of transport and rural transport services are virtually inexistent. In these countries women, and to a certain extent children, hand-carry, head-carry, back-load and shoulder the larger part of the transport burden, since they have the responsibility for fetching water, firewood, transporting the harvest, taking grains to the grinding mill, and so on. Single-parent families, usually headed by women, are the most isolated and have poor access to virtually everything.

The work done to date shows that when levels of access are improved through interventions such as better siting of services, or improvements to footpaths, women do benefit. It makes their work easier, and, particularly if they had been overworked, they spend the time and effort saved on the family's welfare and/or in getting some rest. The effect is less so when intermediate means of transport (IMTs) are introduced: these tend to be used by men, and for lucrative activities, though it has been observed that the men sometimes take over some female tasks after purchasing a means of transport.

IRAP has demonstrated unequivocally that the transport and mobility aspects of accessibility can be a very weighty issue for rural women, but it has not yet been successful in promoting intervention strategies that effectively and systematically reduce the transport burden on women. More work needs to go into promoting the reduction of women's transport load as an important priority, and defining interventions that achieve this, in the countries where this is

relevant. In doing so, it must be kept in mind that the household itself is a system, usually in a fragile state of equilibrium, and that IRAP's objective is to reduce women's transport load, not to create more female-headed households as a result of couples fighting over who gets the project donkey, wheelbarrow or bicycle. Where planning is participatory, the issue will necessarily be raised and creative solutions found which effectively address the problem to the satisfaction of all concerned parties. Where local planners play the leading role, raising awareness during training as to the benefits of alleviating women's transport burden and designing gender-sensitive interventions would be the first step.

### **7.3 Target setting**

Targets are useful in guiding the prioritization between areas with respect to different sectors. Rarely are national targets available with which to guide this exercise and enable the local planning entity to relate its local level of accessibility to a national or regional target. Research is starting to provide indicative figures that can help target setting: the distances beyond which households stop sending their children to school, or beyond which people will not walk to find safe water<sup>22</sup>. Further research in health, education and water programs is required to identify the maximum acceptable distances or transport times.

### **7.4 Participation and empowerment through IRAP**

According to the planning environment provided by the country's decentralization process, IRAP lends itself to planning that is fully participatory, in which people make the planning decisions, as well as to planning in which planners and the people's representatives make these decisions on behalf of the people. The very existence of IRAP however is an encouragement towards fully participatory planning in situations where this does not as yet apply. The key issues here are participatory data collection, and participatory analysis and prioritization, which implies restitution of the information to the community. Methods for undertaking these abound in Participatory Rural Appraisal.

IRAP programs in Malawi and Lao PDR are (on their own initiative) aiming for full participation of the population in the planning process and can serve to experiment suitable techniques for informed participatory local planning. In Lao PDR, ESCAP is financing a pilot project in which priorities will be identified with the villages through a participatory workshop, the methods and findings of the pilot project are intended for dissemination throughout the ESCAP region. A mechanism for the technology transfer is an integral part of the project, with interested countries to participate in the various stages of monitoring<sup>23</sup>. In conjunction with the work being done in these two countries, it might prove worthwhile for the responsible project team members to approach experience-rich PRA practitioners, institutions, programs and projects in different countries, to introduce IRAP to them, to familiarize themselves with appropriate PRA techniques, and to imbibe PRA attitudes with which to develop techniques perhaps even more ideally suited to participatory analysis and decision-making with information as structured as IRAP presents. The projects/organisations linked to the former ILO PORP may prove a good starting point.

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<sup>22</sup> *Rural Transport, Accessibility and Poverty Alleviation*, op. cit.

<sup>23</sup> *Participatory Planning of Rural Infrastructure: Initial Outline of Project Document*, Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, Informal Meeting of the Task Group on Transport and Communications, Bangkok

## 7.5 Extension of IRAP to economic activities

Accessibility planning holds an as yet unexplored potential for local development. Presently it is to be seen as one of the instruments with which to undertake rural development planning, since the determination of people's level of access it provides enables the definition of a wide range of access and related non-access interventions pertaining to a large part of the rural development process - but not all of it by any means. Accessibility planning as it is currently implemented does not as yet provide the accessibility angle to the planning of economic sectors, for instance, employment and income-generation, natural resource management, credit and (rural) banking, post and telecommunications, energy, etc. - though the newer IRAP projects (e.g. Laos) do envisage its extension to these areas. (In the Philippines, such areas do not fall under the mandate of the Ministry for Local Government, host ministry for the implementation of IRAP.) Neither does it directly tackle issues such as reduced burden on women, reduced pressure on urban areas, though it has the means to do so.

Extending the scope of coverage of IRAP has become timely, as the original objectives of introducing accessibility as a concept and developing and demonstrating the accessibility planning methodology's potential to vitalize local planning processes, are now very much achieved. Certain that accessibility planning provides a cost-effective way of lifting access constraints particularly in relation to social services, it can now be turned towards the task of enabling communities to access economic opportunities<sup>24</sup> - the two approaches being of course mutually reinforcing.

This implies IRAP linking up with sectoral and other multisectoral planning tools for local development. For instance, much has been achieved in natural resource management (e.g. land conservation and development, forestry, village resource management planning) through Participatory Rural Appraisal. The sectoral approach to small/micro enterprise promotion<sup>25</sup> adopts a systems approach to the promotion local resource based industries, and in synergy with IRAP could have a significant impact on planning for employment and income generation. Approaches and methodologies having demonstrated that they are "best practice" in their field should be investigated for their potential to complement accessibility planning and lead to the most effective interventions.

The new emphasis - opening up access to economic opportunities - can be attempted in the different IRAP projects, as soon as experience has been gained in the basic methodology and implementation of its outputs. The introduction of accessibility planning to existing multi-sectoral programs can also be undertaken, for instance ILO Public Works programs. The new emphasis will of course require additional methodological development. The training of planners will need to be extended to designing multi-sectoral works as a result of the planning process - presently project proposals are sectoral. Data on agricultural potential, marketing systems, labor supply and availability would need to be fed into the analytical process: this will require

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<sup>24</sup> *Rural Transport, Accessibility Planning and Poverty Alleviation*, op. cit.

<sup>25</sup> Developed by the Groupe de Recherches et d'Echanges en Technologie, (GRET), Paris. The sectoral or marketing approach considers a whole industry, e.g. beer-making, and looks at the way in which it functions, including the part played by small, informal businesses. The industry will source raw materials from a location (e.g. rural areas), transform these at other locations (e.g. local breweries and the national brewery), and deliver to the market at yet still other locations. The methodology looks to act on specific bottlenecks in the processes of sourcing, production/transformation and distribution/sales for the given industry. Because it makes clear the vertical, horizontal and spatial linkages at all stages, it introduces the notion of accessibility (e.g. access to market), which may be one of the bottlenecks for a particular process.

improved data storage and elaboration systems, as well as strengthened data management capabilities. The challenge will be to develop these whilst at the same time keeping IRAP as a simple, user-friendly and effective tool for local level planning.

### **7.6 Extension of accessibility planning to urban planning**

The 3rd Progress Report of the current IRAP project in the Philippines describes attempts by interested city planning authorities to apply IRAP in 8 cities. The results reveal that the IRAP procedure is easily applied in the outlying rural communities of the cities, but that difficulties in the analytical procedure are experienced for data from built up areas with higher household densities, a better distribution of facilities and higher mobility. Resolving these difficulties would be a priority in the development of accessibility planning as a local level planning tool for both urban and rural areas.

The report goes on to impart that the Philippine League of Cities is presently pursuing metropolitanization as a reaction to the growth of cities and the outlying municipalities. It gives the example of an understanding signed between Naga City and the municipalities that relate to it for services such as secondary and tertiary education, health care, markets, information and communication, etc.; and quotes the city Mayor, presently president of the League as saying that IRAP would represent "a significant input for cities as it documents even at barangay (smallest administrative unit) how the rural areas relate to a major service center influencing them". If IRAP is further developed to process urban data smoothly and more cities adopt it, it could make a substantial contribution to the metropolitanization policy and to regional planning. A body of knowledge and experience about urban accessibility and rural-urban linkages in developing countries that is as rich as the growing one on rural accessibility, could start to be constituted.

### **7.7 Extension of accessibility planning to regional planning**

Once the accessibility planning methodology has evolved to incorporate planning for urban areas and for economic sectors, it will have acquired the potential to become a useful tool for regional planning, if and when the appropriate participatory institutional framework for this exists. In the meantime, IRAP-generated information can be fed into the sectoral planning processes at the regional level, as is already being discussed in the Philippines.

## **8. The coming of age of accessibility planning**

Many institutions, individuals and organizations have been involved in developing and applying IRAP and many more could be. Currently, there are a number of initiatives being undertaken by the ILO's EIP at the research level, the program level and in collaboration with educational and training institutions, in collaboration with a wide number of organisations, institutions and programs.

At the research level, studies are being commissioned to develop the information and knowledge base needed for making sound investment choices and promoting the awareness and acceptance of accessibility as an essential issue in local development. At the program level, advisory services are directed towards building capacities at the local, regional and national level, assisting local government, rural development projects as well as conventional transport projects. The aim is to help them help communities to access the needed goods and services effectively and efficiently, emphasizing local resources and the local economy, in order to tackle the problems of employment and poverty alleviation. Collaboration with national and international educational and training institutions is spreading, producing the curricula,

educational programs and training modules to put the accessibility concept and IRAP within ready reach of those who most need to use it.

Accessibility planning and IRAP are new contributions to development thinking and action. They are suited to and demonstrate great potential for application to today's development context: accordingly, interest in their possibilities, coming from all quarters, is increasing at a remarkable rate. IRAP will come of age when it becomes public domain and is no longer identified with a particular organization or group; when its approach and methods will have been appropriated by local planners (technicians and communities) in a wide variety of circumstances; and it will have demonstrated that it is one of the essential components for the success and sustainability of locally-decided development action. □