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# 1. Introduction

## 1.1 Background of strategic planning by SNV-Zambia

In 1997 the Netherlands Policy and Operations Evaluation Department (IOB) of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs presented the evaluation of the Netherlands Development Organisation (SNV) activities in Nepal, Bolivia and Benin. One of the recommendations was that SNV should identify their projects on the basis of an integrated analysis at regional level<sup>1</sup>].

Towards the end of 1997 SNV-Zambia started to bring this recommendation into practice. The idea developed to upgrade the existing district programme development plans (DPDPs) for its interventions and to draft new DPDPs for a number of new districts<sup>2</sup>]. Initially, the basic idea was to:

- ! establish an interactive development of the programmes in the selected districts and the SNV programme as a whole;
- ! develop the programmes in a strategic manner and;
- ! integrate the environmental, economic, and socio-institutional aspects in the proposed plans.

SNV-Zambia developed a Guideline for strategic planning at district level, referred to as 'Manual'. It was decided to start with executing the first draft of the Manual in three districts, i.e. Mwinilunga in North-Western province, Nchilenge and Samfya in Luapula province<sup>3</sup>]. On the basis of the lessons learned in these districts, the Manual could be upgraded and fine-tuned. In May 1998 the procedure started in the three districts and it was planned to finalise in April 1999. During its implementation the emphasis shifted from the elaboration of a SNV district programme plan towards a district development plan for the district authorities. The rationale for this shift was that SNV felt, that supporting the district authorities with the development of a district development plan, contributes to a more coherent approach of all development activities within the district.

The SNV approach with respect to development of a district development plan is characterised by the following principles:

- ! local ownership of the process and products of the planning exercise by the district authorities and communities;

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<sup>1</sup> In 1996 SNV choose to start with the implementation of the concept of sustainable area development (Bedrijfsplan - SNV, November 1996).

<sup>2</sup> SNV-Zambia is executing and / or facilitating a wide range of projects in seven different districts in the country, the so-called concentration districts.

<sup>3</sup> Originally it was planned to start also in Sesheke district but they stopped after a few months. It has been desisted to restart in December 1998.

- ! community participation, community-based planning;
- ! stakeholder involvement.

## 1.2 Request for advice to CEIA

SNV-Headquarters by letter of d.d. 13 November 1998 requested the Netherlands Commission for Environmental Impact Assessment ('CEIA') to assess the Strategic Planning Exercise (SP-exercise) developed by SNV-Zambia, and to join a support mission of SNV-BBA, see appendix 1. To that effect, Mr. Arend Kolhoff (CEIA), Dr. Jan Douwe Meindertsma (member Working Group Instruments CEIA) and Mrs. Marjan Wind (SNV-BBA) visited Zambia from 5-12 December<sup>4</sup>], for the programme of the field visit see Appendix 2. The Commission is an independent advisory body, consequently the reporting of the assessment is done on her behalf and presented to SNV-The Hague<sup>5</sup>].

## 1.3 Objective

The objective of the short visit was to make an *appraisal* (Italics are ours) of the Strategic Planning Exercise (SP) on three points: (1) Methodology; (2) Process; and (3) Approach. The three basic tasks formulated for the mission were to assess<sup>6</sup>]:

- ! the strengths and weaknesses of the SP-exercise as an integrated tool for sustainable economic development at district level;
- ! the approach followed in stakeholder involvement and community participation in relation to medium-term district development planning;
- ! the pros and cons of using district teams in which SNV plays a facilitating role.

Furthermore, SNV headquarters added a number of specific questions which are addressed by the Commission, see Appendix 1. The most important question was if the instrument could already be applied in other countries.

## 1.4 Set-up of the planning process

In order to implement the strategic planning process a 'Guideline for Strategic Planning at District Level', which came to be known as 'the Manual' to the district teams (May 1998) has been elaborated describing the procedure of the process. Furthermore, district teams have been established consisting of four to six persons (each team consisting of at least two representatives of SNV and representative of the

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<sup>4</sup> Dr. Meindertsma joined the team on December 9 and attended a two-days workshop on the SP-exercise.

<sup>5</sup> A draft of this advice has been discussed by the Working group of Instruments of the Netherlands Commission for EIA.

<sup>6</sup> See TOR, Appendix 1.

government and / or non-governmental members). The co-ordination of the implementation is entrusted to a National Team, consisting of a gender expert, a development economist and a rural development planner (the latter being the co-ordinator).

## 1.5 Outline of the advice

In chapter two the main findings and recommendations with respect to the SP-exercise will be elaborated. In chapter three the applicability of the instrument in other countries will be dealt with. In chapter four the methodology, process and approach will be assessed more in detail. Recommendations are presented for SP-exercises in new districts. Specific comments and recommendations with respect to the improvement of the guideline for strategic planning are made in Appendix 3.

## 1.6 Acknowledgements

The Team participated in the National Workshop (2 days) and discussions were held with members of the district team of Mwinilunga, the National Team, the co-ordinator and the staff of SNV in Zambia. The following documents and papers were consulted:

- ! Guideline for Strategic Planning at District Level (May 1998);
- ! Additional information to the guideline prepared by the national team;
- ! Rationale paper prepared by the national team;
- ! Paper on decentralisation prepared by Dennis Chiwele of the national team.

The Commission would like to thank Marian Wind for her fruitful co-operation and constructive ideas that were included in the Commission's advice. Furthermore, she would like to thank SNV-Zambia, in particular the Director, Piet van Ommeren, Jan Vloet the co-ordinator of the Strategic Planning exercise, Sara Longwe and Dennis Chiwele of the National Team and the district planning teams for their co-operation and the open-minded discussions that were held during the visit to Zambia.

## 2. Main findings of the appraisal of the **Zambian SNV-SP- exercise**

With respect to the main findings of the assessment of the SP-exercise the Commission distinguishes two main issues. First, an assessment of the feasibility and usefulness of starting strategic planning at district level and second the assessment of the on-going SP-exercise in three selected districts.

## 2.1 Conditions for strategic planning

The Commission is of the opinion that the conditions for starting a strategic planning process at district level in Zambia are far from optimal because:

- ! Ownership of the planning process by the district authorities is hard to achieve due to the limited authority of the district authorities. Decentralisation of power towards the districts has not yet taken place. Not all district authorities are functioning well due to lack of funds. In one district the Council hardly meets. The District Development Coordinating Committee (DDCC) has no experience, limited capacity and not all parties are interested to conduct strategic planning.
- ! Funds for financing activities at district level are hardly available for the district authorities.

On the basis of an evaluation of the results of the started SP-exercise in the three districts it should be decided if the proposed strategic planning process is desirable and feasible in other districts in Zambia. It should be kept in mind that the situation differs between districts.

## 2.2 Assessment of the SP-exercise

Concerning the on-going SP-exercises the Commission is of the opinion that SNV-Zambia has made enormous efforts in bringing about a strategic planning process at district level. SNV-Zambia is very much motivated to the SP-exercise and has spent a relatively large part of their own funds<sup>7</sup>]. The strength of the Zambian exercise is that local staff in the districts is involved in the practical planning and this is a low-cost flexible approach, which can best be characterised as planning by doing.

It is still premature to assess if the planning exercise, as started by SNV in the three districts, will result in the required and expected output. At least one complete cycle is required to do so<sup>8</sup>]. The Commission is of the opinion that the whole exercise is still a fragile experiment for the following reasons:

- ! It seems difficult to achieve ownership of the strategic planning process by the district authorities for the reasons mentioned above. On the other hand one team succeeded to get commitment from the Council to start strategic planning. Other donors active in the district are hardly involved in the SP-exercise, whereas this is necessary to achieve a coherent policy for all donor-funded activities.

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<sup>7</sup> The national co-ordinator (Mr. Jan Vloet) spend about 80% of his time on the SP-exercise.

<sup>8</sup> The Commission thought that SNV-Zambia already had completed one or more cycles and that their manual was synthesizing the SP-exercise conducted in the districts.

- ! According to the manual the final output of the SP-exercise is a district strategic plan. The preparation of action plans (programmes and projects) are not part of the SP-exercise but considered as a separate activity raising uncertainty if SNV will facilitate these action plans and ensure implementation. This is a rather strange situation because the SP-exercise will raise expectations for programmes and projects at governmental and community level. Starting such a planning process means that ultimately activities should be started and SNV should involve donors.
- ! The manual is not guiding the process. The district teams mentioned that they hardly used the manual, because it is not easily accessible, contains inconsistencies and a number of deficiencies. A brief summary of the manual is used to get insight in the overall process.
- ! The shift in objectives of the SP-exercise from a focus on planning for SNV activities towards planning for the district, which occurred after the district teams started, hampers the on-going process.
- ! The SP-exercise aspires to be an integrated planning exercise but it is doubtful if all district teams will succeed in achieving the integration of all aspects. This observation is based on discussions and presentations during the national workshop and the absence of guidelines in the manual concerning integration. The integrative concept of sustainable development is for example not operational. The economic and environmental perspective is not adequately addressed in the manual or in supplementary information. An environmentalist in the national team, who could assist the district teams, is lacking. Other relevant disciplines are represented in the national team.
- ! The outcomes of the SP-planning exercise are strongly dependent on the composition of the district teams, their time involvement and previous experience of the individual members.
- ! Community participation and stakeholder involvement is filled in differently by the district teams. It seems that the community is willing and enthusiastic if they get the opportunity to participate in the planning process. On the other hand expectations with respect to follow up activities will raise. Therefore it is necessary that funding agencies / donors should be involved in the process and funds for executing activities should be looked for from the start.

Starting the procedure in three different districts seems to be valuable because the conditions differ among these districts in terms of composition of teams, their interpretation of the manual, and the institutional setting. This generates a lot of learning points on the basis of which the procedures and guidelines contained in the manual can be improved. However, if the approaches followed by each team will differ too much from each other and from the manual this undermines the rationale of the latter.

Initially, the time frame for the whole exercise was set at 8 months; this has been extended to one year now (April 1999). The process is now about 7-8 months underway and the district teams were so far unable to make the first anticipated output, the District Profile. The selection of the development issues for further analysis is still

ahead. It is therefore, not possible for the Commission, to assess the quality of the output of the SP-exercise.

It has been observed that for the preparation of the guideline little use has been made of experiences of SNV with (strategic) planning at district level in other countries like e.g. Nepal and Benin. In a haphazard way use has been made of the Manual on Strategic Environmental Analysis developed by SNV/AIDEnvironment (SEAn, January, 1997) and little use has been made of experiences with applying of SAEn. It is recommended to make full use of these experiences and they could be documented and made accessible by SNV headquarters.

Finally, it is recommended that the ongoing SP-exercises in Zambia, the process as well as the products, should be evaluated with the district authorities and on basis of these experiences the guideline should be rewritten.

### **3. Use of the Zambia SP-instrument in other countries**

The strategic planning instrument is not yet applicable in other countries. By now, the guideline is hardly playing the guiding role for the district teams in Zambia, and need to be rewritten. In its actual form it does not merit the denomination of being an instrument, it is confuse and it needs a lot of screening. It has more the characteristics of a position paper, explaining the type of planning that is aimed at, with an added mix of parts of existing approaches, *rather than providing direct guidance on how to do planning*.

On the other hand, the district teams are gaining experience with planning at district level and are finding solutions for encountered problems. It is important that these experiences are being documented.

In conclusion, it would require at least 2 complete planning cycles for SNV-Zambia to be able to write a functional guide: an instrument that is based on practical experience and proven use in the field. Therefore, SNV-Zambia should scale down its aspirations in 'selling its manual' to other SNV-offices and learn more of other experiences elsewhere.

## 4. Appraisal of the process and approach

### 4.1 Changing objectives of the SP-exercise

There was and there still is confusion about the objective of the SP-exercise. Initially, the main initiator and user of the output of the SP-exercise was SNV. According to the guideline (page 10), the SP-exercise fulfils a double function:

- ! to provide SNV with a strategic plan to identify and justify its interventions in a district, and
- ! to serve the wider purpose of guiding other development activities, increasing the understanding of issues and problems and to create joint action plans.

The problem with such a double objective is that it is implicitly assumed that these two objectives can be achieved simultaneously, but is not realistic. Each of the objectives requires a specific approach and the objectives are, to a great extent, exclusive. This refers to crucial issues such as ownership, stakeholder involvement, mandate of the district team, and type of output.

In the TOR of the district teams the objectives are reformulated such, that the SNV-focus is strengthened<sup>9</sup>]. The primary goal of the SP-exercise is to provide SNV with a strategic plan that serves the identification and justification of its interventions in a district. As a spin-off it hopes to serve the wider purpose of guiding other development activities, increasing the understanding of issues and problems, and to create action plans. According to the TOR, the first of the two objectives is given priority, strengthening the role of SNV as initiator and beneficiary of the SP-exercise. The second objective is much less important now: it is called a ‘spin-off’ (of the first objective) and the inclusion of “it hopes” and the exclusion of “joint” as an adjective to “action plans” further reduces the importance of the second objective. However, a few months after the District Teams started the SP-exercise, the national team “had worked to enlarge the conceptualisation of the process”, which entailed SNV support for community-based district planning<sup>10</sup>].

The district teams were told that they should not conduct “SNV-Programme Planning”, but “District Planning” and fulfil an “enabling and facilitating role”: the emphasis became more on “District Planning”.

Whereas, the guideline still states that the documents prepared as a result of the SP-exercise “do not replace any documentation (to be) produced by the District Plan”, the Report of the National Team (August, 1998) adopts a new approach by saying that “ the SNV supported strategic plan should be as inter-sectoral as possible, in

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<sup>9</sup> Memo. TOR Districts teams involved in Strategic Exercise. SNV-Zambia, June 1998.

<sup>10</sup> Quoted from the visit report National Team, August, 1998, page 5.



order to serve the (de facto) role of a District Development Plan” (page 5). The implications of this shift in focus are that:

- ! the SNV team (the District Team is financed by SNV only) should strive for integration with the local government institutions, particularly the DC and DDCCs;
- ! the strategic plan should cover all sectors and not only those of interest to SNV;
- ! financing of the programmes and projects became open-ended (SNV could not support all) later the formulation of programmes and projects was excluded from the SP-exercise (see above);

But a number of issues remain unsolved and consequently leads to confusion. How to reconcile, on the one hand, an approach of the SNV-team to the District Council and DDCC and, on the other hand, the teams role of enabling and facilitating community-based planning? Or the same question phrased differently, how can the SNV-team reconcile a top-down government planning with the development of a “collective understanding and action by the communities themselves to develop the district”?

As the District Team is (minimally) financed by SNV and other donors, governmental or non-governmental organisations give no support, how can the impression by others be avoided that, despite sayings of the opposite, they remain *de facto* SNV-teams?

In the reorientation towards a community-planning approach, the role of stakeholders become much more important than it was envisaged in the first (still uncorrected version of the manual). Whereas, the so-called First Stakeholder Meeting is the *last meeting* (italics is ours) of Step 1 (initiating strategic planning) aimed at initiating a dialogue on the strategic planning exercise and obtain commitment from actors to the proposed strategic planning for the district, in community-based planning such a meeting should be the starting point of the process. However, the SNV teams in 2 of the 3 districts held this Stakeholder Meeting to present the main findings of the District Profile.

It is not surprising that a large part of the workshop discussions centred on the institutional setting of the SP-exercise and stakeholder involvement.

Section 4.2 looks further in the relations of the Planning Team with the District Authorities, whereas Section 4.3 discusses the participation of local stakeholders.

## 4.2 Institutional setting and ownership by district authorities

In Zambia the process of decentralisation from national to district level has not yet been executed<sup>11</sup>. The District Council has very limited decision making power and no means to execute their own activities and projects. The Council meets a few times a year, if at all. The DDCC is the co-ordinator of development and planning activities in the district but in practice this committee is not functioning well in all districts due to limited capacity, means conflicting interests and low motivated workers. The DDCC does not conduct a planning for the medium and long term. The line ministries represented in the district do have their own limited means to execute projects but these projects are implemented in isolation of each other. In 1997 ODA initiated strategic planning in a number of districts such as Mwinilunga but activities were stopped in 1998 when the authorities did not contribute financially, as was decided upon at the start.

A number of donors are active in the three districts but they have their own planning and activities. A coherent approach at district level means that those projects that are funded by donors should also be incorporated in the strategic planning exercise. Therefore, donors should be involved in the strategic planning process from the start. Together with SNV and the district authorities responsibilities could be agreed upon for the different tasks.

Ideally, the Council should own the planning exercise, the DDCC should be a main partner and the line ministries should be involved, most likely through the DDCC. In such a situation SNV can become the facilitator of the planning process with one or more donors and work towards the ownership of the SP-exercise within communities. What might be the role of SNV in case the Council and / or the DDCC are not functioning or are not interested? Than SNV still can do the planning but mainly for their own purposes.

The Commission is of the opinion that starting such a planning exercise means that guaranteed funding should be available for the execution of projects which will be identified in the last stage of the planning exercise. The district authorities have no funds and no authority on the funds of the line ministries. There are a few opportunities to get funding for these projects. The first opportunity is funding by the line ministries and therefore it is recommended to involve all the line ministries in the SP-exercise in order to achieve commitment. Another opportunity is funding by SNV and / or other donors.

The reorientation towards district planning, away from SNV-planning raises much more expectations and without committed funds for implementation of plans it

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<sup>11</sup> The status on decentralization in Zambia: Implications for district strategic planning. Briefing note by Deniss Chiwele, 1998.

endangers the whole exercise. Financially it is not supported sufficiently, it may lead in the end to more frustration, and this is certainly not the result that is expected.

The institutional step-up and ownership of the SP-exercise are closely related to the objective of the exercise, as will be looked at in more detail in the next section.

*Recommendations:*

In case of new strategic planning exercises it is recommended to give due attention to the institutional setting of the SP-exercise. This does not take much time and will save time afterwards, as more clarity will be obtained on what different actors are expected to do and how they can co-operate with each other. The following points should be taken into consideration:

- ! Communication with the district authorities on the idea of strategic planning (including the principles of participatory planning) and the opportunities that SNV becomes a facilitator of the process.
- ! Communication with other donors on the concept of strategic district planning, their interest to become involved and / or facilitate this process and funding of the projects which will be identified in the action plans.
- ! The results of planning of activities by the district authorities and / or planning of the activities over the last 5-10 years should be evaluated. On basis of this evaluation commitment of the district authorities for the implementation of strategic planning could be achieved. Even if planning of activities is non-existent evaluation of the type and impact of activities is useful to determine learning points / bottlenecks with respect to future desired activities/developments. Starting with this evaluation could have the advantage that the district authorities become convinced of the necessity to start a SP-exercise. If the authorities are not convinced SNV can either stop or reorient the focus towards planning for SNV.
- ! An institutional analysis of the capacity (number of skilled workers) and motivation of the district authorities and in particular the department / people responsible for planning should be executed prior to the start of the planning exercise.
- ! Guidance of the planning process is necessary and therefore it is recommended to set up a reference group in which DDCC members, councillors, donors and key stakeholders are represented. A representative of the provincial authorities should have a seat in the reference group.
- ! With respect to the ongoing SP-exercises it is recommended to involve the donors in the process and SNV should start looking for funding of activities which will be identified in the action plans.
- ! Inform the Ministry of Local Government on the strategic planning experiment, which started in the three selected districts.

### 4.3 Participation of stakeholders and local ownership

The SNV initiated strategic planning process can be characterised as a participatory approach due to the introduction of the concepts of stakeholder involvement and community participation in order to achieve local ownership of the process and the outcome. It has been observed that each of the different district teams elaborate the above mentioned concepts in their own way. None of the teams followed the approach as provided in the manual. It is observed that the teams differ in the way the stakeholders are selected but all teams try to involve a representative group of relevant stakeholders in the district. Especially, the way the district team in Mwinilunga district selected the stakeholders is an innovative and promising approach, see the box below.

**Box 1: Stakeholder involvement in Mwinilunga district**

The Mwinilunga district has been divided and mapped in areas on basis of the most important secondary activity (livelihood component) next to subsistence agriculture (secondary information provided by key persons). The district team visited (altogether a five-day trip) the distinguished areas and executed a SWOT analysis focussing on the specific activity and made a report of each SWOT. The reason for this is to overcome the well-known shopping list if you enter the communities and start a needs assessment. For each selected livelihood component e.g. crafts, honey, hunger, etc a representative was selected. It is said that part of the detailed analysis (stage 4) has been executed already. A strong point is the participation of the people and the approach provides insight into local opportunities and underlying causes of local problems by executing an actor in context analysis.

The district teams observed that the involvement of the stakeholders and communities is very much appreciated, but raising expectations cannot be avoided. According to the manual the (three) stakeholder meetings are important steps in the process. It is said that on the basis of these meetings commitment and consensus decisions should be taken. It is difficult to imagine how this can be reconciled with the authority of the District Council.

*Recommendations:*

- ! The different ways the district teams are operationalising the concept of participatory planning should get the chance to be developed in the on-going process. On basis of the evaluation it can be decided which approach is preferred.
- ! In preparation of the first stakeholder workshop, local workshops should be organised. Because there is a risk that there are predominantly conflicting interests at the local level and these conflicts will not come out in the central workshop or will be dominated by certain stakeholders.

#### 4.4 The Planning Teams

In the present set-up the district teams have a central role in the planning exercise. They 'do the actual job', initiate and facilitate the process and prepare the products, which will be the outcome of the process. This means that they play a crucial role. The CEIA thinks that it is of the utmost importance that there is a commitment of the district authorities with respect to their role and tasks. Appointments regarding communication, authority/responsibilities and reporting between the district team and the district authorities should be clear at the start of the planning process.

The composition of a district team is important (present size of the teams is four to six persons) The CEIA is of the opinion that the team should consist of representatives of the district authorities (preferably the council secretary and a councillor) should be gender balanced, the majority of the members should speak the local language(s) and the following disciplines should be represented preferably: economics/ agriculture, ecology, sociology/gender.

One district team works with a separate (temporary) field team. Important insights may be lost if those involved in data gathering and working directly with the communities are not involved in the analysis.

The consequence of a participatory approach is that information will be gathered in an interactive way through PRA methods. This way of data gathering requires high expertise and skills. Analysis of information is another step, which needs a lot of expertise and skills and for an integrated analysis it is necessary that all members from each discipline can contribute substantially to this integrated analysis. Expertise and skills are conditions for a qualitative good outcome of the process. There is certainly a need for training of the district teams in the mentioned aspects.

Experience with this type of integrated studies showed that expert judgement by outsiders can substantially contribute to the quality of the analysis. The National Team has expertise in certain fields and can fulfil this role for certain disciplines/fields. Unfortunately, few of its members have previous experience in conducting integrated planning .

All planning teams work on a part-time basis. The estimation that the members of the district teams would spend 30% of their time to the SP-exercise and 70% on their proper job is not realistic in most cases (as expressed during the workshop). The workload is high and most team members find it difficult to combine their responsibilities and tasks in the SP-exercise with their other duties. One team suggested that full-time involvement of the members during relatively short periods, instead of the more or less 'permanent' part-time maybe more efficient.

SNV-Zambia is thinking of modifying the ad-hoc and temporary character of the district teams into more institutionalised forms (as an example may serve the writ-

ten formal agreement with the DDCC in one of the districts). However, such is only possible if more funding is forthcoming.

Teams with a full-time SNV planning advisor can make much more progress in community-based planning than teams can do with only part-timers and no previous experience in planning processes (this was evidenced by the district team presentations during the work shop).

The SP-exercise is new for all participants, including the National Team. The coordinator of the SP-exercise admitted to have started without fully recognising all the possible problems the District Teams and subsequently the National Team would encounter. To start such a complicated exercise with relatively few funds and with relatively unskilled team members is a choice and one can agree or one can disagree with it. From the positive point of view it can be considered courageous to get things moving. The decision to start requires high motivation, willingness to take risks and make mistakes and self-confidence that corrections and modifications can be made during the process that will give the expected results (and SNV-Zambia has this all). However, when one takes a more critical position, one should question if SNV-Zambia, that is the national team, is in sufficient control of the SP-process and if the expected strategic planning outputs are really forthcoming.

The team observed that:

- ! an incomplete pre-made guideline that -as said before- contains a number of deficiencies and inconsistencies, and may not be effectively used by the district teams;
- ! a number of important issues are not fully thought through before embarking on the process or introduce 'new' elements in the approach, consequently, district teams find their own ways in solving these problems (which may not have the blessing of the national team) and the national team may have to redirect district teams which leads to irritation, inefficiencies and confusion (see changing objectives).

Due, to the above there may be a number of valuable field experiences in the field, but with little relation to the guideline that was meant to guide the SP-process.

During the workshop the national team and SNV-management were unable to bring about a consensus on common issues and they did not give clear decisions on which road to follow or delayed them until the very last moment of the workshop. It also remained unclear to what extent district teams were willing to adapt the approach to viewpoints of the national team.

*Recommendations:*

- ! All the members of the district team should be involved in data gathering and data analysing and they should be trained in data gathering and analysis.

- ! The working conditions of the district teams should be improved (SNV-Zambia is trying to do so within their financial possibilities, but without an enlargement of funds little can be done).
- ! The National Team fulfils the role of bringing in expertise and train the district teams. The National Team should focus on training on the issues of sustainable development that otherwise maybe be left out (think of gender, environment, economic analysis). As the present National Team is not covering all subjects it is recommended to include specialists in fields that are currently insufficiently dealt with, such as an environmentalist.

#### 4.5 Phasing of the SP-exercise and analysis

The SP-exercise is divided into 5 Steps, and described in 5 Chapters of the guideline. The guideline is unclear about which, to which extent, when and where analytical tools have to be applied (and this is a serious omission for a document that claims to be a manual). There appear to be two rounds of analysis, one in Step 2 “taking stock”, which should result in a District Profile, and one after the selection of development issues, the so-called “detailed analysis”.

The national team explained that the first analysis is a more general one and the second more detailed (the wording “in-depth” would then be more appropriate). However, the manual is not clear at all in this respect. According to the guideline during Step 2 (first round of analysis):

- ! the data collection is not restricted to secondary data collection, but also primary data collection is mentioned explicitly (albeit discouraged due to limited resources and time);
- ! livelihood system analysis and not less than three very specific and detailed tools<sup>12]</sup> on the district economy are suggested for use in Step 2, while these clearly would fit better in Step 4 “Detailed Analysis”.

Asking district teams to conduct in two times an analysis of secondary data and primary data is not only inefficient and confusing, but is making things unnecessarily difficult, taking into account that analytical skills are scarce. Furthermore, the proper prioritisation of key development issues may need a thorough analysis.

Using a community-based approach and involving the community in planning means adopting action-research. The strong link between data collection in interaction with communities and analysis of the information makes the distinction in two analytical rounds artificial and unpractical.

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<sup>12</sup> Settlement pattern analysis; sector mapping; market centre analysis.

### *Options and recommendation:*

There are two options:

- ! Write a district profile without doing primary data collection and do the in-depth analysis afterwards.
- ! Merge the detailed analysis of Step 4 with Step 2, and do not make a separate District Profile and a separate Strategic Plan, but make one District Planning Document.

The CEIA recommends the second option. It makes the process much more transparent and it is not difficult to do: like chapter 2 (Taking Stock), chapter 4 (Detailed Analysis) makes reference to PRA-tools. It can not to be expected from the authors of the guideline that PRAs be conducted two times.

## 4.6 Sustainable development of the district

The long-term aim of the SP-exercise is sustainable development of the district, which means, to improve the living conditions of the people in the district taking account of needs of future generations. To prepare such a plan an integrated analysis of the major problems / development issues and opportunities will have to be executed according to the guideline. However, it has been observed and it is expected that on the basis of the guideline studied, such an outcome cannot be taken for granted. For an integrated analysis to take place, a better insight in the economic, environmental/ecological and socio-cultural/gender/institutional issues has to be provided. As a consequence, the guideline should be rewritten integral. From this point of view the CEIA is aware that providing recommendations for improvement of the guideline in this section and in appendix 3 is riskfull.

### *Recommendations:*

- ! The concept sustainability or sustainable development should be operationalised. In appendix 4 an example of operationalising this concept is provided. This means achieving a quality of life that can be maintained for many generations because it is:
  - economically viable, paying for itself with costs not exceeding income;
  - ecologically sustainable, maintaining the long-term viability of supporting ecosystems;
  - socially desirable, fulfilling peoples cultural, material and spiritual needs in equitable ways.
- ! District teams should be trained in operationalising the concept of sustainable development.
- ! The action plans should be reviewed on basis of the framework of sustainability.



! As requested by SNV the CEIA provides lessons learned from an evaluation of three integrated studies executed on behalf of the CEIA (see box below) which could be helpful for the process of strategic district planning<sup>13</sup>].

Box 2: Lessons learned from an evaluation of three integrated studies executed in India, Uzbekistan and Cape Verde.

- During the preparatory phase consensus of all members involved in the study is necessary with respect to the conceptual framework to be used. This should preferably result in one ToR for the study team.
- Maintaining a high frequency of interdisciplinary interaction seems to be beneficial for the process.
- A heavy time constraint has a negative effect on the interdisciplinary process.
- To promote a proportional and equilibrated influence on the study of all disciplines and visions it is advisable to: undertake the study in a setting that has no relation to one of the participating disciplines and commission the editing of the study report to an independent professional secretary/editor.

#### 4.6.1 Economic focus of the SP-approach

The guideline apparently stresses the importance of the economic dimension. The word economic figures on the title page, although this seems superfluous. On page 6, it is stated (Quote) “This strategic planning exercise takes as a starting point the economic dimension for the simple reason of the plight of rural people in remote marginal areas. Nevertheless, by taking rural resource management as the focus of (economic) investigation, both ecological and socio-institutional dimensions are taken aboard of the strategic planning at district level”.

However, nowhere in the guideline it becomes clear what this means for the approach followed. On the contrary, economic analysis is not worked out in the document. In the sections on “using analytical tools” and in the appendices the economic dimension is only used in a geographical context, whereas the opposite is the case for gender analysis. This is to be attributed mainly to the national team composition in which there was not a person looking into economic aspects.

There is no point in stressing at the start of the SP-exercise the importance of the economic dimension and then neglecting it to a large extent. Neither, there is a need for prioritising the economic dimension above other dimensions (environment, socio-institutional).

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<sup>13</sup> Post, A.M. e.o (1998): Integrated assessment. Towards integration of assessments, with reference to integrated water management projects in third world countries. In: Impact assessment and Project Appraisal, Vol. 16 No 1, March 1998.

The CEIA supports the need to look into the economic dimension, particularly within the context of livelihood systems and the management of natural resources, where people fulfill multiple tasks in collecting and generating goods, food and cash, which cannot be captured in a traditional sector approach. This is the case for districts in Zambia.

*Recommendations:*

In the SP-exercise a number of ‘down-to-earth’ economic analytical tools should be included such as:

- ! simple profitability analysis of small-scale productive activities (revenues-costs of production);
- ! labour analysis (availability of household labour, exchange labour versus labour demand of productive activities; seasonal shortages, oversupply);
- ! commodity-chain analysis (market margins);
- ! opportunity analysis.

Rather than including such tools in an appendix, they could be worked out in the main text, using a number of clear definitions, parameters and formats (such as matrices and scoring methods).

In this context it is not clear at all why the guideline should include an appendix on Settlement Pattern Analysis (number 4), Sector Mapping and linkage studies (a type of input-output model, number 5) or Market centre analysis (number 6).

#### 4.6.2 **Environmental focus of the SP-approach**

The environmental perspective is not adequately addressed in the manual. In fact an environmental analysis is not executed. An analysis of the way natural resources are used and managed is crucial in an area where the primary sector (agriculture, live-stock, forestry and fisheries) is the main economic sector. Environmental issues are mainly interpreted in terms of their economic use. Reference is made to natural resources, but not to e.g. biodiversity, ecological processes, aesthetic values and the regulation functions of the ecosystem. An insight in the regulation functions of natural resources and the way they are affected is necessary to guarantee that the production functions remain intact for the long term in and outside the district. The environmental issues should be linked to other issues.

*Recommendations:*

- ! It is recommended to execute a complete environmental analysis as part of the integrated analysis. A limited environmental analysis is risky because underlying causes of present and potential environmental problems will not

become clear and should be studied in depth to solve the problems in such a way that activities contribute to a sustainable development.

- ! For the set up of a proper environmental analysis it is recommended to make use of the experiences with the application of the planning instrument Strategic Environmental Analysis developed by SNV/AIDEnvironment.

#### 4.6.3 Social focus of the SP-approach

With the social focus is meant attention for poverty, gender and equity aspects, and the cultural situation. It is observed that gender is elaborated adequately in all different stages in the guideline and presented boxes are informative. Guidelines for the execution of a poverty assessment are provided in section 2.2.8 of the guideline but these are too limited to include poverty aspects sufficiently. The social/cultural setting such as the value system which influences the behaviour of people is not studied.

##### *Recommendation:*

- ! According to the CEIA<sup>14]</sup> poverty and gender aspects should be integrated as much as possible throughout the whole process. In the present guideline only two major socio-economic groups are distinguished; men and women. It is recommended to distinguish at least two more groups of people on basis of economic criteria; poor and rich households and / or people.
- ! The social/cultural situation should be studied as far as relevant to understand the identified problems.

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<sup>14</sup>

Commission of EIA (January 1999): Advies over het gebruik en bruikbaarheid van instrumenten voor planning van projecten, programma's en plannen.