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ANALYSING POLICY DELIVERY SYSTEMS

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The group objectives included establishing the policy delivery system (PDS) as an important component of the policy process, and therefore a subject of critical analysis in its own right, and suggesting a structured way of thinking about the PDS as a basis for analysis. The PDS is the total modality of implementing a given policy, that is, the unique set of institutions, individuals, processes and rules that together deliver the benefits of a policy to a target group and enable control to be exercised to ensure adherence to the rules of access.

Robin Johnson (NZ) set the context for the ensuing discussion. To bring the methodology of economics to the analysis of PDS, the suggested framework is derived from public choice economics, agency theory and transaction cost economics, with some borrowing from organization theory. Government decision makers (politicians), policy advisors (bureaucrats) and the people representing pressure groups (interest groups) are the principal actors, and are generally assumed to be motivated by self-interest. For example, politicians seek re-election, bureaucrats protect their budgets and interest groups seek advantage (rents) from the political process. A general move towards market orientation with a changing role for governments, public and private institutions, a tendency to separate policy formulation from policy implementation, and the assumption of self-interest have increased the importance of policy delivery systems in the realization of policy objectives.

Frances Sandiford-Rossmiller sketched a structure–conduct–performance approach to studying policy delivery systems. The analytical framework consists of, first, defining the agreed policy objective, second, describing the structure of the PDS (institutions, instruments, processes) and analysing the functions that are apparently intended to be performed, that is, *the system as designed*, third, analysing the conduct or behaviour of the system as it actually works – how it deviates from the original design and intentions, that is, *the system as it operates*, and, finally, assessing the performance of the system in terms of achieving the original policy objective.

The top-level criterion for performance assessment is *effectiveness*, or ‘doing the right thing’: is the system operating so as to produce the desired outcome? Given effectiveness, there are three subsidiary criteria: (a) *efficiency*, doing the thing right, which concerns the cost of delivering the policy (in this context, efficiency has no meaning if effectiveness is not fulfilled); (b) *enforce-*

ability, whereby benefits reach the target group whilst others are excluded; and (c) *equity*, assurance of equal opportunity of access to the benefits under the rules.

Assessing PDS performance is a complicated process producing a wealth of information that must be assimilated purposefully, so the reason for studying a particular PDS should be clearly understood. For agricultural policies, probable reasons are the following:

- an existing PDS is believed to be inadequate and options are needed for improving its working or establishing an alternative;
- the government wishes to change the PDS for reasons unconnected with its performance, for example, to comply with GATT/WTO commitments or to reduce the policy costs, and needs to identify and examine alternatives;
- for ideological or budgetary reasons, changes to an existing PDS are under consideration, for example, the privatization of a parastatal marketing organization or a reduction in the number of public sector extension personnel; and
- a new policy is being introduced and a PDS must be designed to accommodate it, perhaps requiring substantial institutional change.

The structure–conduct–performance paradigm is just one way of structuring our thinking about policy delivery systems to enable a formal analysis of implementation options to be carried out.

Helmut Albert (Germany) articulated the German technical cooperation agency (GTZ) view of the relationship between the delivery of agricultural policy and agricultural services for rural development within the broader framework of international cooperation. Economic and social pressures are everywhere driving public sector reform. Governments cannot afford to finance and deliver the range of public services demanded; public institutions are not always benevolent in intent; highly centralized provision of public services tends to favour the urban middle classes; and centralization excludes local policy makers and users from the decision process. Policy reforms aim to increase reliance on the private sector, to decentralize control of a reduced public budget, to improve the selection of services for rural development, and to move from universal to more selective service provision. The consequential privatization and public management reforms radically shift political power, interest and authority to include civil society, with far-reaching implications for policy and service delivery systems, and hence technical cooperation. GTZ's support of partner governments and organizations is oriented towards sustained and sustainable capacity development, of individuals and institutions, so that people are able to take responsibility for improving their living conditions by their own efforts. This type of capacity building requires a long-term donor commitment, which has happened in Asia but has not yet been forthcoming in Africa.

Numerous policy implementation problems, analyses and solutions emerged during the discussions. Douglas Hedley (Canada) contributed an excellent example illustrating the initial unworkability and unintended consequences of

the farm support PDS in Canada before it was revised and connected to the national income tax collection system. Additional problems have yet to be solved, showing that PDS analysis needs to be viewed as a process.

The discussions showed that many of the policy review and monitoring procedures established within, or by, governments focus on the budgetary accounting and regulatory aspects. By neglecting policy implementation (PDS) as an area of study, economists have failed to ensure that a broader range of socioeconomic factors are included in the assessment criteria. Economists have much to contribute through the development of tools such as the structure–conduct–performance approach. Unless they take this role seriously and ensure that their voices are heard, they, and civil society as a whole, will lose out to the fiscal bureaucrats, regulators, lawyers, accountants and auditors. This would be an unfortunate state of affairs for all concerned (except, of course, for fiscal bureaucrats, regulators and the rest).