

*Building from Below*  
Local Initiatives  
for Decentralized Development  
in Asia and Pacific

Volume 1

Anil Bhatt • Ledivina V. Cariño • Khalid Shams  
Heinrich Siedentopf • Gaudioso Sosmeña, Jr.



Konrad Adenauer Stiftung



Asian and Pacific  
Development Centre

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## FOREWORD

Societies and peoples in developing countries are passing through a period of turbulent change. They are confronted with not only global economic pressures which operate from outside, but also new dynamic forces which have been unleashed from within. As we approach the end of this century, the under-development of our vast rural population and, in particular, the inequities in distribution of public and private resources, will continue to be a priority concern. In spite of four decades of development efforts and even high growth rates experienced by some of the countries of the region, problems of poverty seem to be intractable. While many poverty alleviation projects have been undertaken, new delivery systems installed and massive resources invested, most of the development has effectively bypassed the poor. As the critics rightly point out, there has been much development of the bureaucracy, but very little of the people. Administrators out of their keenness to perfect delivery systems, have grossly ignored the key actors of the development process. The conscientious amongst the economic planners have admitted their "seven sins"; the development practitioners and professionals in public administration must also be candid about their follies.

Awareness of some of the harsher realities, has prompted the Konrad Adenauer Stiftung and the Asian and Pacific Development Centre, to assess the outcome of recent decentralization trends in the region. Through its project network comprising national research and training institutions and some of the leading professionals in the field, a series of case studies were undertaken to look at decentralized development experience, not from the top of government structure, but from below. These were relatively recent experiences which focused on local-level initiatives for development. They were based on the premise that to be meaningful, development must be not only for the people, but also has to be carried out by them. To do that, people have to be empowered out of their own consciousness and resources - it is logical that such a process should begin at the local-level. The case studies as well as the country reports attempt to analyse some of the underlying factors of success as well as failure of local-level endeavours and draw out the implications for the more traditional approaches to decentralization. New assertive voices of people in thousands of little villages, barangay, tambon and kampung all over the region, are increasingly being heard.

They clamour for local-level development, protection of their environment and a greater say in determining their own future. It is important that our planners and administrators should pay heed to them. They must consider what are the alternatives for more meaningful decentralization that allow development of people and not the bureaucracy. It is our genuine expectation that this APDC-KAF study would provide new insights for this purpose.

I am very pleased that the Konrad Adenauer Stiftung (Konrad Adenauer Foundation) - which is deeply concerned about people's development in the Third World - has joined its hands with ours, in carrying out the study. I am thankful to the Foundation for its generous support, without which the project could not have been completed. Khalid Shams, Programme Co-ordinator, APDC and Professor Heinrich Siedentopf, Post-Graduate School of Administrative Sciences, Speyer, Federal Republic of Germany, undertook the task of co-ordinating this research study - to them I extend my deep appreciation.

However, our immediate concern is with the aftermath! I hope the publication will be widely circulated in this region and will be useful for those who think about development management systems for the future and an alternative vision of decentralization that transfer government power to people's organizations -- below.

M.A.J. Shahari  
Director  
APDC

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We appreciate the contributions made by the researchers from various institutions in the region towards completing this study on decentralization and rural development. Anil Bhatt, Ledivina V. Cariño and Gaudioso Sosmeña, Jr. prepared overview papers and assisted us in reviewing and editing the reports in addition to their writing country studies. To them, we are grateful.

APDC staff assisted in many ways (editing, proofreading and typing the papers) in seeing the publication through its completion. In particular, we acknowledge the hard work put in by Yap Chin Yean, Selina Chan and Caridad Tharan.

Kuala Lumpur  
1987

Khalid Shams  
Heinrich Siedentopf

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Du Xiaoshan

**Farmers' Participation in BIMAS Rice Intensification  
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Philippines**  
Ledivina V. Cariño and Wilfredo Carada

**Community-Based Village Health Centre in Sri Lanka**  
Asoka S. Gunawardena

## DECENTRALIZATION FOR RURAL DEVELOPMENT: GOVERNMENT APPROACHES AND PEOPLE'S INITIATIVES IN ASIA AND THE PACIFIC

Heinrich Siedentopf\*

### Objectives of the Research Project

In the countries of the Asian and Pacific region, 'Decentralization for Rural Development' is not a completely new theme, either in terms of governmental practice or scientific research. Some countries have a historically grown and indigenous tradition of decentralization in public administration. In other countries, these experiences were interrupted or overshadowed by the centralizing structures of colonial administration. Asian and Pacific countries retained centralization as a heritage of colonial administration, even after their independence, because the difficult process of nation-building seemed to require a strong central administration or an authoritarian government. Nation-building and development seemed to require highly centralized structures of planning and administration.

Centralization tendencies also characterized the political process that was striving for development of rural areas. Local government became more and more an extension of the central administrative structures, thus altering traditions and hindering local autonomy and self-determination. This political and spatial distance between the centralized administrative structures of the state and the self-determination potential of rural population, as well as the local administration structures, is known by the term 'organization gap'. But rural development is a field of politics which is defined by the needs of the rural population: the process of political, social and economic development making use of the natural and human resources as well as the local institutions, to improve the quality of rural life towards self-sustenance and economic growth in rural areas. Rural development, therefore, is a field of politics where central control and local autonomy relate to each other in a rational and well-balanced symbiosis.

Decentralization is the rational distribution of competence and resources within a political and administrative system to lower regional or local levels. The limits to central control and implementation have become apparent not only in industrialized countries, but also in developing

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\* I am grateful to Wilfredo B. Carada, Researcher at the Local Government Center, University of the Philippines and to Norbert Huber, Researcher at the Speyer School for their assistance.

countries. Decentralization has the objective of partially relieving the central state level of decision-making tasks which are becoming more and more difficult, and transferring decision-making powers partially to lower levels. The whole political administrative system in the process becomes more adaptable and responsive towards local demands and situations. From this perspective, decentralization in Asian countries is to be seen as a process where local institutions need to be encouraged and supported from above, that is the level of central state administration. So far, this process has generally met with only limited success.

The most important objective of this research project is to analyse and compare the concepts and results of recent decentralization trends in the region. The different approaches to decentralization in Asian countries will be presented and evaluated in a "state of the art" study. The conviction is gaining ground in the region that the process of top-down decentralization must be complemented by a reverse process of acknowledging and supporting local autonomy and self-organization. Local initiatives, and resources - in terms of personnel, materials and institutions - are being activated in a process of participatory development which is based on varying degrees of self-reliance. This does not release the government and the state administration from their responsibility for rural development, but bureaucratic forms and behavioural patterns are being replaced by new forms of local initiatives for self-organization.

The second major objective of the research project is to examine some of the conditions and strategies for self-organization. This could only be done through case studies capable of analysing the processes involved in autonomous initiatives for rural development at local levels. This part of the study did not intend to offer blueprints of successful self-organization with universal applicability. Frequently, the specific local conditions are decisive for success or failure of such organizations. Nevertheless, a limited generalization of the experiences should be possible: strategies, methods as well as personal, material and institutional elements of successful self-organization were described accordingly in the case studies.

With this twofold approach, the state of the art in decentralization and the case studies in local initiatives for development, this research project aims to make a specific contribution to the discussion on decentralization for rural development. The project itself was a joint venture between the Asian and Pacific Development Centre, Kuala Lumpur, and the Konrad Adenauer Foundation, Federal Republic of Germany. According to the research plan, scientists and practitioners from the regional countries have firstly studied the decentralization concepts at

national level through thirteen country papers; secondly, they have examined the conditions for success or failure of local initiatives through twenty-one case studies.

The list of country papers and case studies written for this project which was carried out over a period of two years (1985-86) is shown in Table 1.

These reports and case studies contain quite comprehensive and detailed information on various aspects of decentralization for rural development. It can be used for formulating new decentralization concepts as well as for training purposes in universities and administrative training institutions. The first two volumes of this report contain selected case studies, illustrating positive as well as negative experiences and results of local initiatives and five overview articles which present the aggregated results of the study. In the first article, the term 'decentralization' is being defined (Siedentopf) in an authoritative sense in the context of the research project. This was considered necessary because given the extensive literature on this topic, terms often carry different meanings. Often not all aspects of these terms are clear. Two synthesis articles (Bhatt, Sosmeña) summarize the decentralization experience in respect of the sub-regions of a vast continent: South Asia, South-East Asia, East Asia and South Pacific. The overviews, however, must be considered in the context of significant differences in socio-economic and historic milieu of the countries covered by the studies. This is supplemented by a sectoral survey (Cariño) which compares some of the notable experiences in participatory health programmes in various countries. In spite of the contextual differences, primary health care has provided a significant point of entry both in terms of community-based initiatives for all round rural development and government or non-government (NGO) efforts for mobilizing community's own resources. Finally the results of local initiatives are summed up (Shams) because the case studies clearly indicate that institutional and procedural arrangements are an essential condition for the continuity and success of autonomous organizations.

By their work the authors and editors of this volume want to contribute to emerging concepts of decentralized rural development, which correspond to people's dignity, expectations and self-reliance and which in turn also represent their potential for development.

Table 1

Regional Research Project on Decentralization  
for Rural Development

List of Country Reports and Case Studies Undertaken

<u>Researchers</u>	<u>Studies</u>
<b>Bangladesh</b>	
Akbar Ali Khan	Country Report on Bangladesh
A.T.M. Shamsul Huda	Non-Government Initiatives for Rural Health Care: A Case Study of Ganoshasthaya Kendra in Bangladesh
<b>China</b>	
Zhang Liuzhen	Country Report on China
Du Xiaoshan	Jasmine Joint Units: New Farm Initiatives in China
Gu Xiulin	Country Livestock and Poultry Development: A Reform Programme
<b>India</b>	
P.R. Dubhashi	Country Report on India
B.M. Verma	District Rural Development Agency
Anil Bhatt	Community Initiative for Development and Social Justice
<b>Indonesia</b>	
Buchari Zainun	Country Report on Indonesia
A. Rifa'i Husein	BIMAS Rice Intensification Programme in West Java, Indonesia
Sunyoto Usman	District/Village Mechanism for Planning and Development

## Republic of Korea

Chung-Hyun Ro

In-Joung Whang  
and  
Young-Sup Kim

Country Report on Korea

Community-based Integrated  
Rural Development in Sanbuk,  
Korea: A Participatory  
Approach

## Malaysia

Gloria Leong

Gloria Leong

Mavis Puthucheary

Country Report on Malaysia

Farmers' Organization in  
Tanjung Karang, Selangor

A Case Study of Community  
Development in Sabah

## Nepal

Govind Ram Agrawal

Sunil Thapa

Govind Ram Agrawal  
and  
Prakash Dev Pant

Country Report on Nepal

Evaluation of District Level  
Development Programme

The Gajuri Mini Hydel Project  
in Nepal

## Pakistan

C. Inayatullah

Afzal Neseem

Seemi Waheed

Country Report on Pakistan

Sherabad-Roshanabad Village  
Organization in Pakistan

Shamke Bhattian Social Welfare  
Society

## Philippines

Gaudioso Sosmeña, Jr.

Ledivina V. Cariño

Filoteo V. Delfin

Country Report on Philippines

Participatory Decentralization  
and Primary Health Care:  
Governmental and Non-  
Governmental Approaches in the  
Philippines

Integrated Estates Development  
Programme for Land Reform

## Singapore

Lee Boon Hiok

Country Report on Singapore

Lee Boon Hiok

Decentralization for Urban Development: The Residents' Committees in Singapore

## South Pacific

Bikenibeu Paeniu

Overview Paper for the South Pacific

## Sri Lanka

C.T. Elangasekere

Country Report on Sri Lanka

A.S. Gunawardena

The Vedagedara : An Innovative Approach to Community Organizations in Health Care

G.R. Tressie Leitan

Community Participation and Fisheries Development

## Thailand

Thavan Vorathepputipong

Country Report on Thailand

Chartchai Na Chiangmai

People's Participation and Rice Bank Project

Surapol Kanchanachitra

Community Participation: Child Development Centre

## Tonga

Rosemary Anne Dillon

A Participatory Approach to Rural Development in the South Pacific: Use of Village and Regional Workshop in Tonga



## Origins of Highly Centralized Political and Administrative Systems in Asian Countries

Most of the political and administrative systems in developing countries are characterized by their excessive centralization. This reality may be attributed to (1) the experience of colonization and monarchical rule, (2) the task of nation/state-building during the post-colonial period, and (3) the centralist theory of development in the 1950s and 1960s.

### THE COLONIAL PERIOD

Highly centralized governments in some Asian countries trace their origins to the traditions of colonial administration or monarchical rule. Pre-colonial Asia was a fragmentation of small family-group villages, tribes or chiefdoms and kingdoms, with their own forms of social organization and ways of interaction or integration appropriate to their needs. Colonization provided only the administrative integration of traditional Asian societies along national boundaries. They also led to the establishment of centralized colonial administration.

The highly centralized and tightly controlled administrative structures manned by expatriate civil servants or resident-commissioners had the principal tasks of (1) maintaining law and order at any cost; (2) prompt collection of revenue; and (3) facilitation, exploitation and extraction of the country's resources. Although the British system of administration provided for local government, allowing an element of local representation, its autonomy in the sense of local self-government was restricted by a central control system. The latter was manifested through strict legislation and the steelframe of district administration. In general, the colonial government is 'an administrative state, adaptive and incremental and not geared to be responsive to popular pressures nor an innovative and a dynamic agent of change' (Luke, 1986). Thus by its very nature, it is centralized and control-oriented and not decentralized and development-oriented.

### THE TASK OF NATION-BUILDING

The end of the colonial rule did not witness the end of the highly centralized systems which the colonial regimes had installed. Instead, the centralized system continued and formed the foundation for new development policies and programmes of newly independent government. Centralization was pursued, as the administrative systems of new nations were manned by bureaucratic elites who during the colonial