



**Comments by Platform members on the draft study
'Formulating and Implementing Sector-wide Approaches (SWAps)
in Agriculture and Rural Development'**

prepared by ODI & commissioned by the Platform

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1. IFAD, East & Southern Africa PF

The problem with donor promotion of agricultural SWAps until now is that the new 'aid architecture' has become a sort of creed. And as with any creed, its evangelists have tended to be uncritical in its promotion, and have been largely unwilling to reflect on concerns or criticisms either of the architecture itself, or its implementation. To this extent, the Report represents the first authoritative critique of agriculture SWAps, and for that alone it is extremely welcome. Hopefully, it will open the door to other such analyses. More than that, though, it raises a number of extremely important points, which have been ignored, or outright rejected, until now. A few examples: "...there are also areas in which donor lack of support for domestic ownership has been at best problematic and at worst disruptive ... The ASDP experience points to the potentially contradictory outcome in which a donor process that champions domestic ownership is, in effect, challenged by the very domestic decision-making processes it seeks to support" (Para. 3.41); "In most instances it is not possible to say whether there has been a significant improvement in the quality of services offered by SWAps" (3.49); "... PROAGRI got trapped on the means (systems and processes) and lost sight of the ends it was supposed to pursue" (Para. 3.50); "... the outstanding problem with sector approaches and the A&H agenda is that it can often be treated as an end in itself rather than a means to achieving stronger country systems and better development results"

(Para. 3.57); and "Evidence of tangible benefits from more coordinated aid management is still weak however. Transaction costs remain high for both government officials and donors" (Para. 3.59).

These sorts of comments are about the real world rather than a conceptual model; and we should use these experiences to learn and improve. Yet a concern with the Report is that, having made these points - and a number of others besides, it then goes on to argue that (in Tanzania): "... the SWAp has provided a platform for systematic policy engagement on the agricultural growth and poverty reduction agenda ..." In a sense, we are left with a feeling that, while there are a few wrinkles to iron out, things are moving forward as they should be. While one would not wish to argue against sector-based approaches: against the principles of government ownership (and leadership), of alignment and of harmonisation (in that order); against a long-term commitment on the part of the donors, and so on. However, it seems to that there are some very serious problems in the way sector-based approaches have been interpreted - particularly by a number of the bilateral donors, and that these have very possibly resulted in the sum of development of assistance to the sector actually having less impact in terms of rural poverty reduction than in the bad old days of projects.

So a key concern is that the Report does not use the ammunition it gathers as effectively as it might. The Report should be more critical, and shake up the donors so that there can be a more honest, open assessment of how best to take forward sector-based approaches, in the profoundly different circumstances found in different developing countries. The recommendations - which are currently the weakest part of the Report and which really do not do credit to the analysis that runs before them - needs to be more focused, and more punchy.

So there is an issue of how to nuance the Report. But there are a few specific other points which are worth making.

1. An interesting point is made in Para. 3.61: "The move in Mozambique is towards a greater complementarity of aid instruments, partly as a way of diversifying risk and partly as a way of exploring complementary entry points into different levels of policy making." This goes against one of the founding notions of SWAps, that projects are 'a bad thing' (Para. 1.4).

This was, of course, a profoundly simplistic position. There is the world of difference between, on one hand, a discrete area-based project, run by a team of expatriates, using poached government staff and the donor's financing and procurement systems, and with minimal linkages to government and its sector policies; and on the other, a project, managed by and within government, on-budget, using national systems and supporting national policies. Yet somehow this very evident distinction has been forgotten (or never understood), and the position has emerged that anything that is not GBS or basket funding is profoundly unhelpful. It is hoped that this Report could provide a more disaggregated view of 'projects', and take the Mozambique argument a little further. Surely the point is that all support should be coordinated, should conform to national policies or support their further development, be on-budget, use national systems, and above all, be managed by government and national stakeholders. All of the rest risks - as the paper rightly states - putting means above ends.

2. SWAPs should make more poor rural people less poor than alternative approaches are able to do. This, above all others, is the central issue. However, other than the statement in Para. 3.49 (shown above) the Report is remarkably silent on this point. The question needs to be posed explicitly, and answered seriously. It is not enough to state that, in the absence of effective M&E, it is not possible to say. If, after 5-10 years, there are no effective M&E systems, this would appear to be a damning indictment. Remember, one of the original criticisms of projects was that they could lead to islands of plenty in seas of poverty. If, today, we do not even have the islands of plenty, then our efforts may be profoundly misguided.

3. Related to the above point, the lack of adequate M&E systems is an acute issue, yet is which is not fully explored in the Report. In the case of PROAGRI, while MINAG has generated agriculture census and survey data, no monitoring and evaluation system has been put in place. Not only has MINAG not been able to gauge performance in the sector, furthermore, no connection has been made between M&E systems and financial management, i.e. there is no connection made between expenditures on particular sub-sector components and the performance of these components. This would seem to be crucially important, especially in countries such as Mozambique, where the World Bank, for example, has chosen to support PROAGRI II through DBS through the Ministry of Planning and Finance (MPF) rather than through direct support to MINAG. It may be similarly relevant in countries such as Tanzania where the Government's preference is for support to the ASDP is through GBS.

4. One of the principal arguments for SWAPs is that it enables the government's development partners to more effectively engage in policy dialogue. The Report is somewhat silent on this issue; it seems to that there are a number of questions that need to be posed and answered. First, it's a term that is used by different people to mean very different things; so what exactly do we mean by policy dialogue? Second, what in concrete terms have been the results of the policy dialogue under SWAPs? Have agricultural and rural development policies evolved, improved, as a result of this dialogue? Have new acts of legislation relative to the real problems faced by poor rural producers emerged from SWAp-driven dialogue?

5. There could be more analysis of the sector donor groups that provide the locus for policy dialogue with governments. The impression is that in many cases they are extremely weak: in many cases the individual members are relatively junior, not necessarily with any specific experience or expertise in the agricultural sector - a problem that has got worse as more donors put more emphasis on GBS, and - most important - they are not accountable. To cite an example, the Government of Tanzania, IFAD-supported, engagement for livestock in support of ASDP was held up by the donor group, because one member of that group wanted to see more emphasis on pastoralists. But like all members of the donor group, s/he would return home after 2-3 years. To take this argument further, few group members ever get out into the field and have any understanding of the concrete realities of what is going on in the rural areas - and here the Report could usefully refer to the very real problems associated with mounting and conducting effective technical review missions. All of this means that there is a real danger of: (a) SWAPs becoming theoretical constructs with minimal linkages to the field; and (b) of the development partners not having any experience-based understanding, on which to base the policy dialogue in which they are expected to engage.

6. A message that could be brought out more strongly is one of pragmatism. As the Report says, focusing on the ends rather than the means - focusing on government ownership rather than harmonisation (the top of the pyramid rather than the bottom); doing things that work, rather than doing them 'in the way they ought to be done'. There is case for advocating an incremental, rather than a big bang, approach to SWAp development. That is, one that as a starting point: (a) looks to ensure that all donor-supported engagements projects are coordinated, on budget and supportive of national policies; and (b) focuses either on a sub-sector or on a relatively limited definition of the agricultural sector, and then is gradually brought together to a more comprehensive approach. One has the impression that, until now, we have risked dismantling the old before making sure that the new can adequately replace it. Although there does appear to be a more cautious approach, in countries such as Rwanda, being taken to the formulation of Rwanda. Could there not be some room made in the Report for casting our view forward by making recommendations for following processes in countries with up-coming SWAps?

7. The issue of private versus public, and the appropriate role of a ministry of agriculture, is mentioned in a number of places, and the importance of private sector engagement in SWAp development is pointed to.

There are two issues that might be worth consideration in this context. First, at a general level, there seems to be an emerging divergence between, on the one hand, continued large scale public sector investments in the agriculture sector, which SWAps are indicative of, and on the other hand, a move towards private sector investments in the agriculture sector. While this issue is probably beyond the scope of the Paper, in terms of SWAps specifically, it would be good to know more about experiences of SWAps engagements in support to private sector development. It would seem that while there are intentions in SWAps, in Uganda and Tanzania, for example, to support private provision of extension services, governments, for one reason or another, have been reluctant to let go of their control over the provision of extension services. Are there any experiences in the countries surveyed of these issues arising in SWAps and what does this say about the suitability of SWAps with promotion and even emergence of private sector service providers? Secondly, if SWAps are to be effective vehicles for rural poverty reduction, surely SWAp processes should involve civil society organisations - not only NGOs (and their presence is important), but also farmers organisations. Giving them a voice in the processes is a prerequisite for a vision of a ministry which is responsive and accountable. Is there not an important role for donors in helping to give those organisations a voice and getting them to the table.

Finally, we may wish to consider to invite Alison Evans (and probably Lidia Cabral and Martin Greeley given they produced the Mozambique and Tanzania reports respectively) to come to spend a day in IFAD and organising a round-table involving all of the CPMs with direct experience of SWAps to provide their experience and views. This could be done in the context of the ODI-IFAD dialogue on that Andrew Shepherd is engaged in.

2. Embassy of Finland/ Nicaragua (plus track changes and comments in the study draft)

1) it is necessary to recognize that the finding a consensus on agricultural and rural development is not an easy task in the context of any developing country. Even if with the donors pressure some - universally well known - principles are agreed upon, the political context can easily withdraw the support of the approach at the government level. E.g. the decision in Zambia to avoid the government subsidies for fertilizers - the political pressure and droughts have created innovative measures to bypass them by establishing food security programmes and other methods to attend the population who is waiting for a government intervention. This is a reality in most of the countries. The measures to promote sustainable development of the sector and the means available go against the political pressure. The Washington consensus have been challenged and there are several perspectives to the sector. Therefore, it would be wiser to acknowledge that there can be an option to start a gradual process when the key features are agreed upon and where there is need to accept a proposal that is not perfect but good enough to be accepted.

2) The donors incentives should be mentioned - they go generally against all the good principles. The coordination and dialogue which require plenty of time and flexibility often mean delays in implementation and disbursements - which is not well seen by the superiors of any aid worker.

3) The situation in Nicaragua is getting more complex and the position of the government towards the civil society and the NGO's is getting rather limited by their political standing. There is need to revise the phrases where there is reference to that. It is also unclear how well the government follows the principles it is promoting - it seems that there is tendency to approve new project in stead of promoting pooled funding.

4) This is not really in the comments but there might be a need to re-analyse how well the medium term expenditure framework really promotes as it is seen at the moment, the result-based management. It seems to be still a wish list where the sector only indicated how much funds it would like to receive from the donors in stead of being used as a tool to allocate the existing funds to implement the policies. There is a need to improve its use at the sector level.

2. Niger EC Delegation

* the report has a (very) high didactic value, not only for what concerns the definitions and concepts (changing paradigm, SWAp, PBA, how PBA relates to SWAp, etc.) but also by the way chapters 3 and 4 have been written and constructed. Although myself I am not directly interested as such in any of the countries concerned by the report, it was very pleasant to discover that its reading permits to easily "translate" the findings, constraints, problems, recommendations, etc. to the Niger situation. Also, in major sections of the text, Mozambique, Tanzania, ... could simply be replaced by Niger.

* the report contains a number of figures and tables that would also be interesting for the atelier we are organising at the end of September. (For example figure 1, box 1, Figure 2 and Table 2). Figure 2 would be a didactic instrument allowing the participants to position Niger's current state of implementation of its Rural development Strategy in the SWAp logic;

Table 2 would be a highly motivating piece of information showing that Niger's SDR is in line with what certain other African countries work on and that Niger, if it sustains its current efforts in this field, figures amongst the few leaders in this field. Therefore: (1) Will there rapidly be a translation available of this report?

* Various tables/figures would be very useful for seminars/training sessions. The DEL asks that the report be forwarded to the Aid Delivery Methods contractor, contributing to a seminar on SWAP in RDA in Niger in Sept; whether the report will be rapidly translated (presumably in FR).

* Recommends that the future executive summary be exploitable (as is the report) in a more general context than the countries reviewed, and avoids being overly "politically correct".

* Recommends a more precise definition of the private sector and avoiding too many acronyms which affect readability.

Some suggestions:

* the Summary section should therefore be written in the same spirit of exploitability outside the context of the 7 countries discussed in the draft synthesis report, and avoid if possible (to my opinion) the usual general but "politically correct" statements.

* Paragraph 3.51: It is important to first define what is understood by "private sector", and to include some examples or a listing. (Are farmers unions part of the private sector?)

* Please, ask ODI to avoid as much as possible acronyms and abbreviations, unless they really have a (international) meaning or are real key-elements in the text (A&RD, SWAp, PBA they are rather few). It is extremely difficult to cope, throughout the text, with the acronyms of local structures from 7 countries.... In fact, it makes certain sections almost not understandable. Also some acronyms are not explained. The time the authors gain by replacing an easily understandable word by an acronym they only are familiar with themselves, is lost a hundred or a thousand fold by the readers who have to look it up each time...

3. Cambodia EC Delegation

There is little reference to Cambodia in the paper thus I will limit my comments to some general remarks. I appreciated the emphasis put on context regarding SWAPs in A&RD (key point paragraph 3.9). As a result it is challenging to come up with global conclusions or recommendations but the authors did it rather well although there would always be room for discussion on such a complex subject.

Under chapter four, messages, the paper acknowledges the complicated relationship between decentralised initiatives and SWAPs by a combination of political, institutional and financial capacity (or lack thereof) at decentralised levels (paragraph 4.10). I found this an excellent but also critical observation which might be worked out somewhat more, if possible, because it could explain donors the need for longer time frames (see further).

Past experience with working at the lower levels of the decentralised chain in Vietnam taught me that local capacities and human resources at these levels are mostly under resourced while responsibilities (often time bound and artificially imposed in the context of SWAPs, etc)

do increase significantly. This does, in my opinion, not necessarily improve accountability in the short term especially within a weak M&E system. It does nevertheless contribute to a learning process subject to good participatory reviews, and more importantly the consequences of such reviews. Good decentralised experiences should be rewarded, bad experiences punished (initially very mildly but later on more severely) which ultimately could lead to improved accountability in the medium term.

In line with the above I also appreciated the paper's recommendation to commit donors to long term processes including clear exit strategies. I agree with the authors that short time frames are not realistic to achieve ambitious SWAps objectives due to the limited absorption and human resources capacities at grassroots levels. It might be useful to contrast this with disbursement and spending pressures from donor side which I found slightly overemphasised in the first part of the paper.

4. Vietnam EC Delegation

1. On paragraph 3.33, it said that "the programme framework of the FSSP&P still remains on the margins of government-led efforts to take control of aid management".

> In June 2006, it was agreed that the FSSP& P (Partnership) would reorient its institutions to more effectively support the forthcoming National Forest Strategy (NFS, 2006-2020). As the NFS will now replace the FSSP Program Framework, the Partnership will henceforth be known as the Forest Sector Support Partnership (FSSP, or the Forestry Partnership). Therefore, the FSSP programme framework has been integrated in to the government NFS. The future support in forestry will focus on supporting implementation of the National Forest Strategy (NFS, 2006-2020). This approach is in line with the original aim for the Partnership to support a programmatic approach, as well as consistent with more recent agreements, such as the Hanoi Core Statement. As there is no longer a separate FSSP Program, the name is now the Forest Sector Support Partnership (FSSP). The main tasks of the Partnership are to: (1) Promote information sharing and policy dialogue on key sectoral issues, focusing on implementation of the National Forest Strategy; and (2) Promote collaboration on mobilisation of resources and conducting activities to implement the NFS

2. On paragraph 3.56, it said that "In Vietnam it is estimated that the private sector, households, state forestry enterprises and cooperatives will account for 60 percent of the investment in the forest sector over the next 15 years". The sources of this statement should be provided.

3. On paragraph 3.64, it said that "The PRSC evaluation notes that budget support has provided a strong platform for supporting development policy, legal and institutional reform and a key mechanism for encouraging harmonisation and alignment with GoV systems at a strategic level, but that this has been less successful in complex sectors such as forestry". It would be useful that the study provides further elaboration on why the PRSC process is less successful in forest sector"

5. Ghana country programme, CIDA

1. With regard to meeting the first objective of the study, the paper confirms the need to recognize the multi-disciplinary dimension of the agriculture and rural development (A&RD) sector which makes it difficult to apply a SWAP through support to a single ministry like MOFA. It appears from the definitions of SWAPs being a specific form of PBAs that the development of a FASDEP by MOFA indicates a first step towards a SWAP. There are key issues that need to be addressed, most of which have been identified in the document attached. Two issues involving the coordination role of the ministry and therefore its ability to effectively implement a SWAP and the commitment of the leadership of the ministry towards all these developments need to be addressed. In Uganda we are informed that the PMA which emerged from the National Plan is being coordinated by the Ministry of Finance. Whilst program implementation may have its own problems, the fact of the Ministry of Finance or the Presidents office having an oversight role of all ministries and therefore able to coordinate various programs for some level of coherency and efficiency needs to be highlighted.

2. We share concerns raised on the need to make decentralization a reality since it probably is the one vehicle through which a SWAP could be applied to effectively reduce food insecurity and attain poverty reduction. The formulation of policies is very important to guide the development agenda. However the ability to develop implementation strategies which will direct the utilization of foreign inflows towards achieving identified objectives is what we gleaned from the study as the real challenge to the application of SWAPS for A&RD. In Ghana, the DWAP (and hopefully later CIFS) have provided enough evidence for program delivery at decentralized levels of decision making. The study also provides adequate examples of how this has proven effective and efficient. It may be necessary for donor partners to vigorously negotiate the actualization of the decentralization agenda.

3. On the issue of the role of M&E in the application of SWAPS, we believe MOFA's ability to develop an M&E system should be lauded. However the ability to use the tool to manage the effective implementation of programs under FASDEP at decentralized levels is yet to be determined. Emphasis on financial reporting by donor agencies as against the attainment of planned outcomes is a real threat to SWAPs. But the fact still remains that donor agencies are obliged to justify the use of tax dollars and financial institutions must show disbursement within projected schedules. It is imperative that donors committed to using PBAs and SWAPs to foster A&RD agenda agree with local agencies on few but realistic common indicators to help track progress towards attaining outcomes even in the short term.

4. We'd like to conclude by commending the study team on the thoroughness of the work done. We're not sure why Ghana was included in the study other than the fact of them having drawn up a FASDEP. The issue of moving towards a SWAP should not be seen merely as another development jargon that must be pursued to attract development funds. Where possible by all means let's apply it but we would be careful in encouraging the use of SWAPs in an atmosphere where there are still many unknowns.

(See also file: SWAP paper ODI - comments from Ghana programme.doc, 5 pages)

6. AIDCO/E/6

General:

- * The structure of the document, particularly in Chap. 3, is not optimal. It is not easy to understand the rationale for it.
- * Due to the structure/lack of editorial features, the reader tends to be dragged into details and, on the way, to lose sight of the bigger picture.
- * Chapter 4 - recommendations: should be expanded, and some recommendations a bit more operationalised.
- * Globally, a more reader-friendly editing (most likely foreseen at a later stage) will enhance the readability of the document and proof-reading will eliminate some inconsistencies in table/figure numbering, cross-references, etc.

Specific:

- * Early in the discussion, a distinction should be made between rural development and agriculture. Any consequence resulting from this distinction should be highlighted throughout the document.
 - * The private sector and civil society (notably NGOs) should be given a more prominent position and discussed earlier in the document. The public-private sector interface is only dealt under implementation issues while the report points at the need for early involvement at various stages. Recommendations on involvement of NSAs should be strengthened.
 - * Table 2 - characterisation of SWAps is interesting and it would be worth highlighting the link between features (as shown in the table) and consequences at implementation and achievement levels.
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7. EC DEV/B/2

- * With regard to the four African countries included in the study, it is interesting to note that they are among the most advanced of the continent in terms of implementing the Paris Declaration commitments and in terms of development assistance delivered as programme or budget support.

And so, through the specific and particular A&RD domain, the study covers the whole panel of conception, implementation and monitoring/evaluation difficulties related to the project v/s programme approaches, and this in a favourable environment in terms of global level of coordination among donors and national public stakeholders.

And even there, the project way of delivering still dominates the global picture within a mix of pool funding (with or without common procedures), general budget support, and sector budget support (with or without any targeting of funds) and this appears as a major constraint with regard to Paris Declaration. It is even reported that donors sometimes withdraw from A&H process to go back to projects (Mozambique case)

In this respect, one important statement in the study is that A&H process is a mean not an end in itself: it should therefore not become a new and additional big burden on donors and beneficiaries shoulders. An important other statement to highlight is the one related to the necessary evolving relationship between SWAP and budgetary support, whose share in global development assistance should largely increase.

* Promoting more A&H of the project component and more use of budgetary support in global country assistance delivery is of course a challenge for both partners but ownership by the beneficiary country (the driver in his seat) remains the "big key" and in this field, the study does not evocate some aspects of the field realities.

Programming and implementing fewer projects, and by the way increasing the internal alignment, is a crucial responsibility of governments, not very often assumed. The study doesn't elaborate on the historical roots of this situation, namely for the highly aid dependant countries. Projects represent supplementary functioning and investment means for sector ministries and this well-known situation is accepted by the Ministry of Finance, even if it has also a great interest in the shift towards budgetary support. A real paradox but on the other hand, the existing projects reduce pressure and demand of the said sector ministries on resources in the framework of the annual budgetary allocations exercise.

In addition, the study doesn't say a single word on corruption systems related to this historical situation of aid delivery through projects.

And the famous burden related to projects management with respect of donors specific procedures is very often transferred to PMUs, creating at the same time short term employment opportunities, but weakening once more the public sector.

The study also doesn't expand very much about the donors' reluctance to use the national procurement procedures, although this attitude is mainly related to governance concerns.

So, the issue of ownership and strong political will towards internal alignment, a key for SWAPs' implementation, is maybe more complex than presented, and the vested interests of public sector actors in "projects industry" should not be ignored, together with the flags obsession of donors.

* It's clear through this study that SWAPs evolve now in a slightly different environment than ten years ago. There is an emerging consensus around the field implementation of Paris Declaration and a strong trend towards the increase of budget support use among donors. This could and should be seen as a real opportunity for sector programmes' implementation. In this respect, the study could maybe elaborate a little bit more on the necessary links to be established between PRSP process, existing MoUs relating to general budget support for poverty reduction and/or to sector budget support (health, education, decentralisation=85).

Because what is first at stake here is finally the quantity and quality of public spending for sectors with strong potential impact on poverty reduction and growth. And as stated in the study, successful SWAPs' implementation implies a close integration with wider reforms such as PFM improvement at central and decentralised levels.

Moreover, a closer integration of SWAPs' arrangements in MoUs and PRSP process in the framework of joint matrix (general, PFM, sector indicators) could easily simplify the management procedures of SWAPs and avoid piling of specific arrangements for

each sector. This approach would also simplify the issue of M&E indicators where donors unreasonable demands are very often far away from the national statistic systems capacities (harmonised and if possible pooled support highly needed here for GBS as well as sector programmes under form of budgetary support or not).

* The findings of the study are also very clear about the central role of the ministries of finance (MoF) with regard to policy coordination, budget guidelines, MTEFs, decentralisation processes, monitoring and evaluation systems. MoF is indeed a key actor for SWAPs as well as for budgetary support and in both cases, the improvement of the traditional top down relationship existing with sector ministries and decentralised entities is very important in terms of quantity and quality of public spending (this relationship being very positively influenced by the introduction of PFM reforms such as MTEFs, various improvements of the expenses' annual cycle, better execution of budgets at central and local levels, regular and on time feedbacks, ...).

This again could advocate for an explicit linkage (which could be a precondition for implementation of sector programmes) of SWAPs with the MoUs signed in the framework of PRSP and budgetary support, which doesn't imply at all that external support would be only delivered through budget support. This should be seen as a component of the National Aid = Policy (an important recommendation of the study) and its code of conduct (national actors and donors).

* An important deficiency is noted about the generally marginal private sector implication in SWAPs and the provided recommendation for the setting up of competitive funds for private sector (farmers associations, firms,) is very much welcomed. It is also interesting to note that private sector and civil society are present as interlocutors of the public actors in the framework of PRSPs. So, trying to promote links between SWAPs and PRSPs could ease and facilitate the involvement of non state actors in agricultural sector programmes, without reinventing a specific wheel.

8. EC RELEX

I read this report with a lot of interest, as it contains relevant and practical information, and many countries could find a number of 'tips' for engaging in that way. As such, this report could also enlight other sectors than ARD.

The few key points I appreciated are:

* it is genuinely about sectoral approach, and does not fall into the pitfall of mixing the approach and the financial instrument: budgetary aid. At the contrary, it sets the relative value of various financial instruments.

* it sets again the role of the State (and consequently of min agric) at the heart of the sectoral approach; in my experience, this is a point that is frequently missed, or progressively eluded, when discussing early stages of a sectoral approach. This debate is different from ensuring government leadership in the sector, and I am concerned that they could be mixed somehow.

* Conversely, the report stresses that determining the role of the private sector in agric and RD cannot be overcome, as we talk of an economic sector.

* Finally, by the nature of the examples that have been taken into consideration, the discussion is very much focused on a sectoral approach centered around the Ministry of Agriculture. The discussions we had in Berlin about separating the productive part of rural development, and the 'aménagement du territoire' component are not well reflected.

* a very useful piece of information that we shall use in Madagascar

9. FAO Investment Center

Input 1:

In general:

Narrating national experiences

More than anything else SWApS are dynamic processes –they have historical roots and are evolving even now-. However, the author has chosen to structure the paper through thematic areas, illustrated by examples from the case studies, hindering the understanding of each of the individual processes. The particular unfold of each SWApS is of interest for practitioners and academics.

I would include one or two paragraphs per country highlighting the main features of the respective SWAp and narrating its “story”, as a complement to the information in table 2. This could also provide a better understanding of the trade-offs between the different components of a SWAp, such as “capacity improvement” vs. “burden on the civil service”, “clear priorities” vs. “narrower participation”. Indeed these illustrate the policy choices faced by a country when embarking on a SWAp.

Some comments on Nicaragua

The term SPAR: SPAR is not the new government sector leadership team, but an acronym for “Sector Público Agropecuario y Rural”, which includes the institutions that have a mandate in the sector.

3.25 and 3.26: More coordinated working

Intra-government coordination was an issue to be dealt with according to the initial guidelines provided for the country reports. Therefore, I was surprised me not to see it mentioned.

Maybe this is because Intra-government coordination was discussed in the Nicaragua report. In the context of many sectors moving to SWApS, line Ministries face similar problems impelling them to work jointly in some areas: An example is the mentioned common request by line ministries involved in SWApS of changes in the Ministry of Finance that would enable accountability by sector goals. Also, SWApS

require a refinement of sector boundaries and definitions to avoid conflicts of competence among Ministries: in Nicaragua, PRORURAL had to undertake dialogue with the Ministry of Environment and the Ministry of Industry which are developing its respective SWAp.

3.45

“Coordination at Regional and departmental levels” is incorrect: the departments are the regions. It should be “Coordination at departmental and local levels”

3.52

All in all, this paragraph is correct, particularly regarding the role of the two large farmers’ unions in the survival of PRORURAL to the change of government. However, two important precisions were made in the country report concerning the degree to which these associations represent the private sector, or rather themselves (i) in Nicaragua only 11% of farmers belong to an association. (ii) Over the past decades, these associations have changed their role from interest representation to counterparts of the international cooperation and with it probably their sources of financing (this is not confirmed). It could be added that (iii) These two large farmers’ associations are highly politicized (one clearly being right wing and the other left wing)

Therefore, the issue is not only the exclusion of NGOs, but also the exclusion within farmers themselves.

Input 2 provided by FAO Investment Center

The report is well written and the Executive Summary offers a short, easily understood overview of what we know about SWAp in A&RD, together with sensible messages and recommendations. The main test, which the report passes, is that it does not contradict facts and knowledge about the countries that I know rather well. The recommendations are modest and, for the most part, align well with the broad thrust of aid effectiveness principles.

Chapter 3 (Main Findings) is a bit fragmented because the analysis is cut up into different themes with reference made to each country under each of the themes. Maybe this is unavoidable, but it would have been helpful to have seen – as my colleague has suggested – a more coherent country-by-country synopsis in the main report.

Surprisingly little seems to have emerged from the desk studies of the countries that were not visited and these country studies appear to have contributed little to the overall findings.

The derivation of policy messages and recommendations is the central purpose of the study. I have no real issue with the messages and recommendations, but feel slightly uncomfortable with the use of terms such as “vision” and “government leadership” as the key drivers of what determine success. To some extent, one recognises “vision” when one sees it, but this does not really help suggest how “strong vision” is achieved. Similarly, “government leadership” – which is a term that

is used rather freely at the moment when talking about harmonization – is also difficult to define objectively. Of course, the “strong leadership” of today often becomes the “wayward disregard of priorities” tomorrow, when decisions are taken that do not immediately conform to donors’ views. Are there any objective criteria that can be applied to determining whether or not government leadership exists?

The question of criteria for judging when a particular government is, in some way, credible to be trusted with sector or general budget support is an issue that is not really tackled. It seems clear that favourite countries (e.g Mozambique, Uganda, Ethiopia) can be deemed eligible for this trust almost regardless of whether they have vision or leadership, let alone good governance, whilst others never make the grade. What can we say about this political dimension?

I did not see origins and justification for the recommendation for a “competitive fund for private sector participation”.

The first recommendation for GDPRD links nicely with its work on the Code of Conduct. I certainly appreciate the comments and recommendation relating to public financial management and budget. It is becoming increasingly clear that one can do little to enhance harmonization or effectiveness of aid unless basic national systems – both financial and M&E – are overhauled.

10. Austrian Development Agency, Dept. of International programs

While the draft certainly contains a *lot of useful information regarding specific experiences and lessons learned within various SWAps in different countries* it has to be stated that the synthesis report (this relates mostly to chapter 3) is *not very easy to read and hard to be digested due to the structure of the document*. Besides many acronyms used (which are not commonly known because quite a number of them is country specific), the numerous country “experiences” are sometimes too detailed leading to loose sight of the overall picture (Anyhow they could appear as annex for purposes of special reference). In this respect, I would recommend a structure that first provides a summary of each country case, refers than to the lessons learned and finally gives recommendations. It would also be interesting to get some ideas on *good / best practices* in SWAps as the report is rather addressing negative experiences.

From my perspective, I am not very happy with the emphasis on *government ownership and leadership* (i.e. as stated in the executive summary). While due to the procedures of a SWAp the national government is certainly having a leading role, the programme itself should *best possibly be owned by all actors* and stakeholders (central and decentralised public sector, private sector as well as the civil society) in the partner country. This is even recognised in the report itself as one can find references to the ownership by the partner country respectively by national stakeholders mentioned.

The report outlines the *necessity of coordination* – for example within the sector but also with others respectively between central and decentralised level – yet without really reflecting on sometimes *diverging interests, priorities, capacities, resources etc. of the various actors on the different levels*. Moreover, a *more*

precise definition of the private sector and its quite distinctive roles and functions in agriculture and rural development would be necessary.

One should also think about addressing the ***concept of different rural worlds*** (i.e. as expressed in the OECD-DAC report on agriculture) and the requirement of diverse approaches, strategies and instruments used to improve the respective livelihood conditions. In this respect, SWApS have to be designed as a ***gradual process*** (due to different settings, challenges, capacities etc.), which requires long-term commitment from government and donors alike, but must also foresee ***flexibility in funding procedures*** in order to address the various challenges and obstacles as well as the needs and priorities of the different actors (i.e. private sector but also civil society). Most likely not everything can be addressed by one SWAp in order to avoid over-complexity, thus complementary, but always coordinated means of funding – which might also include projects, i.e. for testing innovations or specific support to empower the poorer groups of the society to participate in the process – have to be considered.

While the ***challenges and potentials of decentralisation*** in agriculture and rural development SWApS have been adequately addressed in the report (some more work in this respect would be needed in the executive summary), more emphasis should be given concerning ***capacity development*** of all actors at all levels (which is in most countries addressed within sector SWApS and decentralization programmes, but also through specific capacity development programmes). The same is definitely true for ***empowerment*** (especially of the poor and marginalised people) in order to enable participation in decision-making processes on local level and – in a wider perspective – also in policy- and strategy development on national level) as well as for utilisation of existing ***social capital***, which have received little or no attention within the draft report.

The focus of the report is definitely on the realisation of the principles of the Paris declaration, but in my perspective too much concerned with references to the overall harmonisation and alignment procedures. It would be worthwhile to give emphasis not only to coherence and consistency of SWApS with national PRSPs and the MTEF processes, but also reflect on the ***quality and relevance of the documents and procedures in respect to poverty reduction, participation of the poor and pro-poor spending***.

Finally, in respect to monitoring and evaluation processes the challenges and obstacles are precisely described and there is definitely still a lot of work to be done in order to improve the situation concerning ***availability of data and information as well as the adequacy of indicators and measuring of results***. Yet, it should come out a bit clearer in the report that this must actually drive our engagement in SWApS, namely ***to achieve tangible results*** in poverty reduction and achievements within the MDG-framework.

11. Irish Aid – Department of Foreign Affairs

1. This is a very timely and extensive analysis of ARD SWApS. I think it logically put together and has captured the key messages and conclusions.

2. We would emphasis some of the messages – that donors must take a long-term view and be willing to “stay the course” as you say.

3. However, we also note and we certainly agree, that the low impact on the beneficiaries as seen in the PROAGRI programme is very worrying. There is frustration that after all the time and resources that have gone into PROAGRI that little benefit has flowed through to poor Mozambican farmers. Indeed there are questions that PROAGRI is demonstrating a degree of “elite capture”, and that small farmers needs are not being adequately addressed. It is encouraging that a more positive message is coming out of PMA in Uganda.

4. In certain cases ARD SWAPs are seen as a threat in some Ministries of Agriculture as the opportunities for patronage and influence engendered by projects is reduced. This has sometimes slowed the development and implementation of the SWAP.

5. SWAPs have created a “new” influence of Ministries of Finance in agricultural financing and policy development and this must be recognised. A better understanding of the MTEF and more transparent budgeting has led to better resource allocation.

6. SWAPs are likely to curb the fall in financing for ARD, but the window of opportunity will be short for SWAPs unless they quickly produce clear benefits. PROAGRI in Mozambique gives an indication of the time-frame before donors and even Government begin to lose patience. Thus the recommendation for Quick Wins is so important.

7. DP buy-in, support and ownership is vital.

8. Finally it is observed that SWAPs create a good environment for dialogue on the ARD sector and the potential to articulate its importance and ensure it receives the resources needed.