What Makes Inter-Agency Coordination Work?
Insights from the Literature and Two Case Studies

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Executive Summary[1]

The multiple and interrelated causes of underdevelopment have often led experts to propose interventions that tackle these problems in a multidimensional and integrated way. This approach involves the contribution of different sectoral agencies towards common goals, a condition that is not natural for institutions. The purpose of this report is to discuss some of the key aspects involved in achieving Interagency Coordination (IC) that come out from the academic literature as well as from two case studies of ongoing operations funded by the Inter-American Development Bank. Four general questions that are addressed here:

   a. What are the arguments in favor and against IC? Where does the consensus lie now?
   b. What are the coordination tools and strategies available for public managers?
   c. What are the conditions that favor or hinder effective IC?
   d. What practical recommendations policymakers need to bear in mind when designing and implementing programs that involve IC?

A Controversial Issue: Field work and literature research in this topic has led to the realization the interagency coordination is a difficult and controversial issue. While some scholars and policymakers are strong advocates, others see it with high skepticism. There are three common rationales for pursuing interagency coordination and integrated programs: (a) the causes of poverty are multiple and interrelated, and therefore attacking them requires an intersectoral approach; (b) coordination can generate economies of scale; (c) the fragmentation of multiple and overlapping targeted programs requires coordination at the service delivery level.

Despite these rationales in favor of IC, the poor implementation record of integrated anti-poverty programs in the US and in developing countries led many experts to be skeptical about the possibilities of this approach. The main concern is with the difficulty of making agencies to work together. The **obstacles to coordination** stem from fundamental properties and motivations of organizational systems:

   ▪ each agency seeks to preserve its autonomy and independence.
   ▪ organizational routines and procedures are difficult to synchronize and coordinate;
   ▪ organizational goals differ among collaborating agencies;
   ▪ constituents bring different expectations and pressure to bear on each agency (Weiss 1987)

More recently, however, a new optimism seems to be taking hold in the US and in international development circles. In the US this optimism is based on the dynamism that interagency relationships have had during the 1990s in the country, particularly at the state and local levels. This dynamism appears related with the emergence of a new results-oriented management approach in which coordination and collaboration are a necessity. The international development community also appears to be increasingly interested in bringing the issue of interagency coordination back to the center of its discourse and practice given the requirements for effective development programs.

The consensus on the need to embrace IC, however, is not uniform. Coordination is not good per se and it is important not to oversell the benefits of coordination. It should be pursued only if it produces better organizational performance or lower costs than without the effort. The alternatives to interagency coordination are: (i) **sequencing** of activities (coordination along the cycle of activities necessary to complete a task); (ii) **reorganization** (merging or restructuring agencies); and (iii) **competition** (creating incentives for agencies to compete for leadership or resources).

Enabling Conditions for Coordination: Since cooperation is not a natural behavior for organizations, incentives must be in place to achieve this goal. The following six types of incentives may contribute to overcoming this natural resistance:

- *Financial advantage*. Obtaining extra resources, especially financial resources and staff, is often a strong incentive to break the resistance for cooperation among other agencies.
- *Political gain*. Public administrators try to gain political prestige for themselves, their projects, and their organizations. Relationships with other organizations that can bring prestige, power or other gains offer an obvious incentive for cooperation.
- *Professional values***.** Some agencies may cooperate with each other because their staff members hare professional values that would be advanced trough their cooperation.
- *Problem solving*. Agencies may choose to cooperate when by doing so they can improve their performance, be helped or assert their leadership role in solving common problems.
- *Uncertainty reduction*. Cooperation will happen when it helps the agency to reduce some uncertainty that comes from its resource dependence from the environment.
- *Legal mandate* (or cooperating because the law instructs agencies to do so). This is often a motive but rarely a sufficient incentive to generate coordination, much less in countries where accountability for bureaucratic mandates and is weak.

Empirical studies suggest that **solving a pressing problem** is the most important incentive to coordinate provided the problem is framed in a way that leads to a coordinated solution.

After getting agencies to agree to coordinate, the next big challenge is creating the conditions for coordination to work well. Effective coordination requires seeing this relationship as an ongoing process rather than an outcome per se. Some of the **conditions that facilitate the good management of a coordinated process** are:

- Effective leadership
- Flexibility and discretion
- Building a common sense of purpose
- Clients and beneficiaries participation
- Replacing a culture of bureaucracy with one of pragmatism
- Emphasizing negotiation and conflict reduction among partners
- Minimize political turbulence
- Limiting membership to the smallest possible number of participants

Strategies for Coordination: Some of the methods and strategies used to promote and strengthen coordination processes are:

Communication and decision-making strategies:
- Interagency task forces / Cabinet councils
- Single council for several programs

- Interagency liaisons

Planning Strategies
- Joint programming and planning
- Common objectives and geographical boundaries

Strategies for Operational Coordination
- Cooperative (nonfinancial) agreements.
- Joint funding.
- Joint purchase of services
- Joint administration

Coordination at the Service Delivery Level
- One-stop Shopping or Collocation
- Case-management
- Shared Information Services.
- Universal eligibility and referral mechanisms

Case Studies

Two on-going operations funded by the Inter-American Development Bank that have an important interagency coordination component are studied here. Performance assessment should be taken as preliminary because these programs are ongoing processes that may still improve or deteriorate in later stages of implementation.

1. Women Heads of Household Plan (Plan Jefas de Hogar) – Argentina

The Program "*Plan Jefas de Hogar*" (PJH) is a pilot experiment that the Government of Argentina (GOA) started in the year 2000. The core of the program consists of providing a "social income" of US$150 to unemployed female heads of households with children younger than 14 years-old in exchange for attending school until they complete their next unfinished level of education (primary or secondary) or working for "socially relevant projects" for those with a complete secondary education. In addition, the program provides day care services for beneficiaries' children younger than 5 years old.

PJH was able to successfully coordinate across sectors and jurisdictions. In terms of intersectoral coordination, the biggest challenge was the local coordination between the provincial government's Education and the Social Development Ministries. The Department of Permanent Adult Education (DPAE) which was initially reluctant to participate in the program, finally came around and made a number of significant adjustments in its traditional modus operandi to accommodate the program's requirements. In terms of interjurisdictional coordination, the success of the PJH had been to demonstrate that a different federal model of managing social programs in Argentina is possible. A model where the role of the nation is normative and monitoring, the role of the province is to manage the program delegating at the same time as much implementation responsibility as possible to the local governments. The program also succeeded in reorienting social spending priorities from the three levels of government, directing provincial/municipal social spending towards a better structured and coordinated program, instead of the ineffective temporary employment projects that existed before.

There were a number of conditions that helped the program to overcome initial problems and difficulties and achieve a good level of coordination. The most important were: (1) framing the program in a way that addressed a pressing need of every partner; (2) building a common sense of purpose; (3) relying on existing institutional capacity; (4) building mutual intelligibility, trust, and negotiation skills; and (5) employing clients inputs and participation.

2. Darien Sustainable Development Program (Desarrollo Sustentable de Darién) Panamá.

The program is a comprehensive set of interventions to develop the poorest province in the country (Darien), while preserving a fragile ecosystem, and indigenous rights. The program has 5 components: (i) highway resurfacing and improvements in transportation infrastructure, (ii) land use planning, natural resource management and environmental protection; (iii) institutional strengthening; (iv) support for sustainable production; and (v) improvement of basic public services.

In its initial two years of operation, the program's performance has been mixed. One of its successes is to have survived the transition to a new administration, initially reluctant to continue the program. Coordination with Ministries has been very difficult, especially at the national level but less so at the local level. Coordination with local and civil society actors, however, has worked better.

There were a number of conditions that influenced the coordination performance of the program. It's initial obstacle was to *generate a common sense of purpose* among the different agencies regarding its objectives and strategy. The difficulties in this regard were the way it was presented to the agencies, without consideration to their particular concerns or priorities, the lack of central government's sense of priority, since change of administration took the momentum out of the program, staff turnover problems and the excessive number of agencies involved, among other factors. On the other hand, the *strong leadership* by the Ministry of Finance, the *possibility of funding* and the pressure from several partners (international NGOs, local political and indigenous actors, the donor) worked in favor of keeping the program working. Even though these factors have helped to generate a certain level of coordination among the participating agencies, they have not yet generated the enthusiasm and commitment that the literature suggests is necessary for coordinated programs to perform well. Results in the field, however, are slowly improving.

Summary of Recommendations: The lessons that can be derived from the literature and case studies review on factors that affect the outcome of IC efforts can be summarized as follows:

A.   Incentives to Coordinate:

- Avoid *strong-arm tactics* to coordinate agencies from the top, or imposing coordination by authoritative fiat. Rely on incentives to reward collaboration.
- Frame the effort as a means to solve problems that the participating agencies perceive as *demanding an urgent solution* that demand their participation.
- Exploit existing *professional values* that emphasize interdependency and cooperation.
- Do *not rely only on financial incentives* for coordination. It is often either ineffective, insufficient, or unsustainable.
- Promote a *negotiation process* to help the coordination process. Use facilitators, organizational development specialists, professional mediators etc.

B. <u>On the Design Stage</u>

- *Start the process early* preferably during project design. Preparing integrated programs may take longer than non-integrated ones. Involve main stakeholders in the process..
- *Make the program as simple as possible* and involving at its core only the essential agencies that clearly contribute to its implementation. Avoid excessive complexity resulting from a large number of sectors brought to bear in the program.
- There are no a priori best coordination structures or tools. Participating agencies should design, install and implement the structures and tools they believe will suit their mutual purposes.

C. <u>Managerial Practices</u>

- *Leadership* is critical at the different levels of government (political, managerial, service delivery) for a collaborative effort to succeeed.
- Line-level staff and field operators should be given adequate degrees of autonomy and discretion in decision-making since they are responsible for forging working-level links across agencies. Staff from the collaborating organizations should be encouraged and empowered to cooperate and share technical and other resources with other agencies.
- *Build a common sense of purpose or ownership* about the program among the participating agencies, by stimulating working relationship among professionals from the different agencies, improving teamwork, using collocation, and problem-solving training workshops.
- Coordination can be helped by *active beneficiaries or client participation* since they put pressure on agencies to deliver, and because they perceive problems more holistically than sectoral agencies.
- Reward pragmatism instead of bureaucratic behaviour.

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A Controversial Topic

Interagency coordination is a highly controversial issue. While some scholars and policymakers are strong advocates of it, others see it with high skepticism—to the point of comparing it with the medieval search for the "philosopher's stone." (Seidman and Gilmour 1986). The skepticism that followed the failed attempts of IC during the 1960s and 70s, however, has given rise during the 1990s to a new optimism about the potential of IC for improved government performance.

Why is Coordination Needed?

There are three common rationales for designing coordinated programs:

1. ***To address problems with multiple and interrelated causes.*** Social programs try to achieve goals that due to the configuration of the problem are not achievable by only one organizational actor. Since "the causes of poverty are multiple and interrelated, attacking them requires an intersectoral approach." (Kliksberg 2001, p.130-1). An example of this would be how to approach the problem of school dropout:

   "Increasing the number of kids that finishes primary school in a municipality, for instance, does not mean only working in the realm of the school. Even though that is key, the causes of dropout exceed them. It will be necessary to use an approach that intervenes at the family unit, creating incentives for it to strive to keep the kid at school, nutritional conditions should be improved, being the cause of dropouts in many cases, facilitating school transport, sensitizing parents about the advantages that will bring finishing studies, as well as other factors. It will be necessary a collaborative effort from different kind of institutions that operates over these factors, related to health, family support, housing, transport. (p. 130, my translation)"

2. ***To generate economies of scale***. Interagency coordination can happen within the same sector, for instance, between school districts (Weiss 1987). The rationale could be to achieve economies of scale in the provision of special needs services that are too expensive for small districts to provide on their own.

3. ***To reduce policy fragmentation.*** Too much earmarked funding leads to policy fragmentation, which can be reduced by local-level coordination. The existence of multiple targeted programs means that the target population for one program often overlaps with the target population for another. In the US, for instance, single mothers are the targets of work programs, nutrition programs, medical assistance programs, and they are involved as parents in programs targeted on their children. Some families that receive Food Stamps will also be eligible for Medicaid. Teen mothers in high school completion programs may also be eligible for WIC programs with their children. Such overlapping programs create serious problems for both program managers as well as program participants. When the offices that run these programs are in different locations, when participants are required to meet different eligibility requirements from different programs, and when program benefits vary depending upon participation in other programs, it can make eligibility and benefit determination a nightmare for both caseworkers as well as recipients. Coordination in terms of eligibility rules, or the site where services are provided is often needed to address these problems. (Blank 1997).

These rationales for IC have been applied to design of numerous interventions both in developed and developing countries, from Integrated Rural Development Programs (OED 1987, Tendler 1993), child and welfare services (Kagan and Pritchart 1996), Integrated Urban De-

velopment Programs (www.worldbank.org/urban/poverty/sector.html), resource management (Thomas 1997), etc. The emphasis on the need for coordination varies according to the current trend in each sector as well as the political and institutional country context.

Despite these rationales in favor of IC, the poor implementation record of integrated anti-poverty programs in the US during the late 1960s/early 1970s and in developing countries during the 1970s and early 1980s led many scholars and practitioners to be highly skeptical about IC. The main concern was the realization of how difficult it was to make agencies to work together. Indeed, there is consensus in the literature that coordination occurs infrequently (Weiss 1987, Thomas 1997, Bardach 1998).

Obstacles to Coordination

The obstacles to coordination among agencies or institutions are significant and must be well understood in order to be addressed. They stem from the fundamental properties of organizational systems:

- Individual agencies seek to preserve their autonomy and independence.
- Organizational goals differ among collaborating agencies.
- Organizational procedures are difficult to synchronize.
- Constituents bring different expectations and pressure to bear on each agency.
- Managers try to minimize the uncertainty of their environments but are less concerned with minimizing uncertainty for others. (Weiss 1987).

As Van de Ven (1976) summarized it: "From an agency's point of view, to become involved in an inter-agency relationship implies (a) that it loses some of its freedom to act independently, when it would prefer to maintain control over its domain and affairs, and (b) that it must invest scarce resources and energy to develop and maintain relationships with other organizations, when the potential returns on this investment are often unclear and intangible." (p. 28)

The difficulties of interagency coordination have even led some scholars to compare the search for coordination with the medieval search for the philosopher's stone:[2] "In ancient times alchemists believed implicitly in a philosopher's stone which would provide the key to the universe and, in effect, solve all of the problems of mankind. The quest for coordination is in many respects the twentieth century equivalent of the medieval search for the philosopher's stone. If only we can find the right formula for coordination, we can reconcile the irreconcilable, harmonize competing and wholly divergent interests, overcome irrationalities in our government structures, and make hard policy choices to which no one will dissent." (Seidman and Gilmour 1986, p.219).

The difficulties in embracing IC are often highlighted by development writers. Two leading institutional development specialists Bernardo Kliksberg (2001) and Arturo Israel see interagency coordination as an essential condition of an improved institutional framework for the social sectors in Latin America. Kliksberg points out that:

"Coordination is often desirable in management, but it is *essential* in social management. [...] Coordination in social management is mandatory if efficiency is to be achieved, since there is a structural dependency between actors. The best programs will be, in many cases, imaginative programs in terms of *heightening these interdependencies*, and *transforming them into common externalities.* [...] Programs should be designed so that several ministries, diverse public agencies, municipalities, and different expressions of civil society participate" (p. 130-131, italics added).

Arturo Israel, nevertheless, in an IDB-commissioned report, acknowledges the difficulties involved in sectoral interdependencies, recommending caution in this approach:

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[2] A funnier, though not less pessimistic, image is represented by an apocryphal definition according to which interagency coordination is "an unconventional act between non-consenting adults" (Corbett 1993, p161).

"Nothing is more difficult in management than achieving coordination among different agents and agencies. If institutional capacity is weak, coordination is practically impossible, or perverse. Simplifying the original design is one way of reducing coordination requirements. *Another is to reduce the need for it as much as possible.* If different components of a program are implemented by separate entities, the operating rules should be designed in such a way that units can operate independently and at the same time work toward the achievement of the program's objectives. Convergence and integration rather than coordination should be the aim. Still, a *minimum coordinating mechanism* must be in place, but it could be consultative and a basis for information exchange rather than a decision-making mechanism." (1997, p. 26, italics added)

How to reconcile these perspectives? Should programs be designed to heighten or minimize interdependencies and coordination? The answer will depend to a large extent on contextual issues such as the level of institutional capacity, the nature of the problem, etc. Neither a completely negative nor positive approach to the issue of coordination is the appropriate one. Seeing coordination as something to be avoided as much as possible would prevent managers from promoting innovative solutions in contexts that are favorable for coordination. The literature shows that when interagency coordination and collaboration works well its fruits are, indeed, improved service delivery and increased public value (Jennings and Krane 1994, Bardach 1998). Thus, collaboration is something to be pursued *if additional public value* will be created and the conditions are favorable. However, experience also shows that coordination among agencies should be approached cautiously. When needed, coordination structures should keep the level of interdependence among the components of a system to a minimum. Greater interdependence requires greater agreement across a broad range of issues and the solution of more complex organizational problems. Instead, it is better to use the "rule of the lowest common denominator:" use the minimum mechanisms necessary to achieve a satisfactory level of coordination. (Chisholm 1989).

A New Optimism?

The failure of the integrated antipoverty policies implemented in the US during the late 1960s and early 1970s left scholars and policymakers disillusioned and pessimistic about the possibility of effective interagency coordination—a view which Seidman and Gilmour's summed up in their metaphor of the quest for the philosopher's stone. Two of the major initiatives of President Johnson's War on Poverty (the Community Action Program and the Model Cities Program) as well as Nixon's Administration SITO Grants (Services Integration Targets of Opportunity Grants) represented interagency attempts to deal with poverty in the US. The performance of all three initiatives was deeply hurt by the difficulty of agencies to work together.[3] These difficulties provided the basis for a growing skepticism about IC, which remains prevalent in a large section of the academic community.[4]

In the international development community, a similar story unfolded during the late 1970s and early 1980s. A clear example was the Integrated Rural Development (IRD) approach. In the 1970s, the World Bank tried IRD as a new approach to reducing rural poverty and stimulating agricultural growth. One of the distinct features of the strategy was that it "integrated" several interventions in one project, instead of focusing on just one or a few sectors or activities. Such interventions included a variety of agricultural production services (micro-credit, agricultural extension, research, marketing, seed distribution, business assistance), physical infrastructure (roads, irrigation, drinking water, rural electrification), social infrastructure (education and health), and sometimes land distribution or regularization. By the mid 1980s despite some successes the IRD approach had largely fallen into disfavor due to its poor implementation results. One of the key problems identified was the difficulty to coordinate the many different agencies

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[3] There is huge literature on these experiences. For a succinct review see Best (1996).

[4] UC Berkeley's professor of public management, Eugene Bardach, illustrates this perception in his 1998 book with the following anecdote: when he told a colleague that he was writing a book about interagency cooperation, her response was "Short book, huh?"

required to the projects' implementation (Tendler 1993; OED 1987). A review of IRD concluded: "Behind the concept [of IRD] there are theories of complementarity and synergism that demand implementing several improvements in parallel. In practice, such a utopian scheme has not often succeeded, to the extent that experience suggests that IRD should now largely be sidelined as inappropriate and unattainable in most rural development situations" (OED 1987, p. 6).

More recently, however, a **new optimism** seems to be taking hold both in the US and in international development circles. In the US this optimism is based on the dynamism that interagency relationships have had during the 1990s in the country, particularly at the state and local levels (Bardach 1998, Page 1999). This dynamism appears related with the emergence of a new cadre of public administrators who driven by a results-oriented management approach see coordination and collaboration as a needed tool of their practice (Bardach, 1998). Bardach finds that building interagency collaborative capacity demands many of the strategies developed by the recent public management theorists such as flexibility, teamwork, high involvement, empowerment, training (Barzelay 1992, Osborne and Gaebler 1992). For the US, he finds that "because many people are concluding that this post bureaucratic and reinvented way of doing governmental business is good on its own merits, the additional creativity required in building ICC capacity may be more within reach today and in the future than it has been in the past." (p. 307).

The international development community also appears to be increasingly interested in bringing the issue of integrated programs and interagency coordination back to its agenda. Two examples drawn from recent IDB strategies are:

- One of the main pillars of the new IDB's Social Development Strategy is **the delivery integrated services with a territorial focus**. Its rationale is that "to provide effective responses to the multiple disadvantages of the poor and excluded and the many risk factors behind social ills, the Bank will assist countries in the implementation of inte-

grated interventions in specific territories. Poverty is commonly concentrated in spatially segregated territorial areas – in either low-income slums or rural municipalities with high levels of unmet basic needs. A spatial focus facilitates diagnosing specific community needs, tailoring services, executing actions and doing impact assessments."(2003, p. 24)

- In the area of Disadvantaged Children and Youth, two out of nine "best practice" recommendations were: "[a] The multiple and interdependent needs of early development programs call for effective collaborations among diverse actors, including families, communities, various levels of government, and international agencies. [b] There is great potential for synergy between ECCD [Early Childhood Care and Development] programs and activities that focus on women's status, health, basic education, urban development, indigenous peoples, and the reduction of violence. Coordinating disparate efforts of different sectors is a major challenge that must be acknowledged and addressed." (1999b, p. 24).

IC Alternatives: Sequencing, Reorganizing, and Competition

Coordination is not good per se and it is important not to oversell the benefits of interagency coordination. The rule is to require coordination only if it produces better organizational performance or lower costs than can be had without it. There are alternatives to coordination as a means of achieving multi-sectoral goals: **sequencing, reorganization and competition**.

Sequencing of interventions is the alternative to simultaneous/integrated approach. Program designers should think deeply whether it is essential to address issues simultaneously and within the same project or whether *sequencing* of interventions to deal with various constraints is possible without ignoring crucial linkages or scarifying critical goals.

Reorganizing means creating or merging organizational units (ministries, departments, secretaries, etc) and/or changing the assignment of func-

tional responsibilities to those units. Governments can also try to improve service integration by redefining the division of labor among agencies.[5] Even though reorganizing is a tool that under certain conditions can help reduce unnecessary duplication and make government more efficient, the consensus about its effectiveness is mixed. Not all authors, however, agree on its virtues: "If there is one proposition on which consensus among students of public administration is firm and widespread is that reorganization normally produces little of value at a high cost in time, energy, and personal anxiety" (Thomas 1993). Other examples from the development literature show that under certain conditions some forms of reorganizing can be effective. In Northeast Brazil's Integrated Rural Development programs, for instance, service integration sometimes worked well when instead of relying on interagency coordination, it relied on one agency taking over some components from other agencies. (Tendler 1993). Taking over was one way of reorganizing the traditional division of government functions.

Competition: Creating incentives for agencies to compete for leadership or resources is another approach. This can be used when there is a certain degree of redundancy or overlap between different agencies. Rather than try to reduce redundancy, or to force cooperation, an alternative to consider would be to promote competition for either leadership in program implementation or in access to program resources. Local governments have increasingly utilized this approach to improve internal efficiency and to motivate managers and staff. There is a significant literature on how healthy competition between programs is the source of much innovation in the public and private sectors (the seminal contribution is Landau, 1969).

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[5] For instance, the state of New Jersey consolidated 64 separate employment and training programs into 15 distinct program areas, and reorganized responsibility for these programs among three departments (or ministries) instead of the six departments previously involved (Jennings, Tracy and Wimer 1993, pp. 100-101).

Options for Coordination

Before discussing the conditions that enable or hinder IC, it is important to get a more concrete understanding of the IC phenomenon. A useful way of doing this is by identifying the menu of coordination options that are available for managers. In this section such menu is presented, without pretending it to be comprehensive.

IC is understood here[6] as *"any joint activity by two or more agencies that is intended to increase public value by their working together rather than separately"* (Bardach 1998, p. 8). This joint activity is based in some form of interdependence between organizations.[7] Any joint activity needs to have some structure or form of organization.[8]

There are no apriori best coordination structure or tool for a specific situation. Alexander did not find evidence of this neither in his review of the literature nor in his own case analysis. No single structure reviewed by Alexander showed a higher proportion of successes to failures than the others. Each of the structures has been more effective in some situations and less effective in others. What the literature suggests is that the conditions that favor coordination cut across the different structures and tools (these conditions are reviewed in section IV).

Knowing the different structures and tools for coordination is useful, though, in that agencies wishing to work together can have the repertoire available for discussing which one they think would suit best their goals, resources, and constraints. Indeed, effective coordination requires mobilizing agencies to design, install and implement *the coordination structures and tools they believe will suit their mutual purposes*. (Alexander 1995).

There are many ways to classify the different features and manifestations of coordination. One such way is to classify according to: (i) the degree of formality/informality, (ii) the type of actors involved, and (iii) the type of strategies and tools that are used.

Formal and Informal Structures

Coordination devices vary according to their degree of formality/informality.

- *Informal coordination mechanisms* include interpersonal contacts and informal channels of communication that may be effected through ad-hoc meetings, telephone contacts, or correspondence, including the increasingly popular electronic mailing lists. Informal communication may be the most commonly used coordination tool there is, and it often complements more formal coordination mechanisms (Alexander 1995). Membership in a network or community is normally voluntary thus this form of coordination is appropriate only for a limited number of tasks. When two or more agencies are interdependent and there are no formal coordination mechanisms or they fail, informal coordination mechanisms can appear to compensate for this fallure.(Chisholm 1989).

- *Formal coordination mechanisms* include organizational structures and job definitions as well as managerial instruments such as plans, agreements, contracts, budgets, etc.. I will explain in more detail some of these

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[6] The terms cooperation, coordination, and collaboration are used here interchangeably.

[7] Some scholars differentiate forms of interdependence according to its origin: (i) n*atural interdependence:* when a variety of forces beyond the control of the organizations immediately involved come together to cause them to become connected; (ii) *artificial interdependence:* interdependence may result from deliberate efforts of an outside party to link two or more organizations for some purposes of its own (which may have little to do with the goals or interests of those two organizations); and (iii) *voluntary interdependence:* organizations voluntarily enter into arrangements to realize some array of mutual benefits, as when one operator seeks to have another perform services on a contractual basis. (Chisholm 1989).

[8] As any social structure a coordination structure consists of "a system of enabling or constraining rules and resources which are recognizable over a period of time" (Alexander 1995, p. 69-70).

mechanisms in the subsection on strategies and tools. Examples of formal coordination formats and strategies are:

➢ The official <u>liaison</u>, a person whose formal role is to coordinate the actions of two or more interdependent organizations.

➢ The <u>inter-organizational group</u> is one of the most common ways in which IC is structured. They have many names: ad-hoc committee, interagency task force, cabinet councils, etc..

➢ <u>Coordinating Unit</u> is an organization or organizational unit that is established with the purpose of coordinating decisions and actions among units of a system. It has greater autonomy and a more formal structure than the interorganizational group: generally, the unit will have its own offices, separate operational budget, if not control over other funds, and be staffed by its own personnel. Often it does not implements any of the tasks it is charged with coordinating (Alexander 1995), specializing instead in planning, managerial and administrative activities.

Local & Central, Public & Private Actors

Coordination formats can also be classified according to the type of actors involved.

▪ ***Intergovernmental or Vertical Coordination:*** involves the joint action of agencies belonging to different government levels. The mix of government levels and the assignment of responsibilities can vary significantly across coordinated programs. The common recommendation is for higher levels of government play a normative, funding, and monitoring role while lower levels of government play a design and implementation role.

▪ ***Intersectoral or Horizontal Coordination***: involves the joint action of agencies from different sectors.

▪ ***Public-Private Coordination:*** partnerships between public, non-profit and for-profit organizations have grown considerably in the last decade. This is an area where there is significant experimentation going on around how to combine these three actors.

Conditions and Tools for Coordination

The natural tendency of organizations is not to coordinate or cooperate with others. Scholars of organizational behavior have identified many reasons for this resistance, some of which I mentioned before. Getting agencies to cooperate requires, then, overcoming first these barriers for coordination. What are the incentives that make agencies break this inertia and coordinate with others? The first part of this section discusses the most important incentives mentioned in the literature. After agencies have agreed to coordinate, however, there is a second barrier related to managing the coordinated program to make it work well. The second part of this section discusses key principles for good management of coordinated efforts.

Incentives to Coordinate

The literature on interorganizational relations has identified a set of six factors that can explain why agencies engage in cooperative or coordinated relationships with other agencies: *financial advantage, political advantage, professional values, problem solving, uncertainty reduction, and legal mandate* (Weiss 1987). While the first three factors have to do with voluntary cooperation, the other three have to do with constraining forces from the organization's environment that pushes an agency to coordinate.

Based on the case studies presented here and the literature review, it appears that: (i) some of these incentives (e.g., financial and political advantage) are good to spark the interest in coordination but are not enough (and may be even create risks) for coordination to work well; (ii) other incentives, however, appear to address both motivation and performance issues (e.g., problem solving and professional values).

Financial incentives. Obtaining extra resources, especially financial resources and staff, is often a strong incentive to coordinate. As Van de Ven proposes "the first reason why interorganizational activity emerges is the rational response to a lack of resources for attaining self-interest goals" (1976). These extra resources can come from external grants or free money, or from the savings produced by economies of scale. An example of economies of scale would be when a number of poor local governments get together in an association to buy and manage cooperatively equipment or professional services. External grants is also a powerful incentive to coordinate. Advocates of integrated programs in the US coined the saying that "Nothing coordinates like cash" (Bardach 1998).

Financial incentives, however, does not always work. The agency may feel it has already enough resources, or that the extra funds does not compensate for the efforts of coordination. Even more important is that money does not buy the commitment that is often required to make coordination work (see next sub-section). Furthermore, if financial incentives are the only incentive for interagency coordination, when the program money stops coming the same will happen to their cooperation. This is especially relevant in the case of development programs funded by multilateral organizations, which usually mount well funded programs for short periods of time.

Problem solving. Empirical studies suggest that *solving a pressing problem* is the most important incentive to coordinate. Functional theorists propose that agencies choose to cooperate when by doing so they can satisfy demands to improve their performance on particular problems. Once these demands have been met, agencies are not interested in further cooperation, even if it would yield clear net benefits. In Jerald Hage's analysis, "there is a certain desire to cooperate whenever there is a clear technological imperative or functional necessity for this" (Hage 1975). For instance, cooperation might follow from the demands of powerful groups within the agency or outside it for new or different programs, for budgetary reductions or for increased effectiveness.

Political advantage. Public administrators try to accumulate political advantage for themselves, their proposal, and their organizations. Relationships with other organizations offer an obvious vehicle for this accumulation (Benson 1975). By joining forces with other agencies an administrator might want to raise the profile of her agency within government, either to advance her own career, and/or to be better able to defend the agency's budget, or pursue the agency's mission. As I later show for the case of Panama, one of the risks of political advantage is that if it is capitalized by only one agency within the set of participating agencies, the others may feel alienated from the process and lose some of their commitment.

Professional values. Some agencies may cooperate with each other because their staff members believe that cooperation is desirable. The psychological gratification of cooperation may grow out of professional values about service, for example, that agencies working toward the same ends should work together rather than at cross purposes or that cooperation improves service to constituencies (Rein 1983). The gratification may stem from the comfort of sharing experiences with others in the same boat, or from developing shared interpretation of emerging demands. The case of resource management in California (below) gives a clear illustration of this source of motivation for coordination.

Uncertainty reduction. Proponents of theories of resource dependence argue that "organizations strive to reduce dependencies and uncertainties stemming from environmental actors." (Pfeffer and Salancik 1978). Cooperation will happen when it helps the agency to reduce some uncertainty that comes from its resource dependence from the environment. To a certain extent, uncertainty reduction and problem solving may appear to be the same factor. A problem to solve creates an uncertainty that the focal agency needs to reduce. However, the opposite is not necessarily true. Uncertainties are usually more structural forces that do not necessarily become or are perceived as a pressing problem. The link, however, is an important one since uncertainties are opportunities that could be exploited to turn them into problems that needed to

be addressed through coordination. A very good example of this is the role of law in California's biodiversity case presented below.

Legal mandate, or cooperating because the law instructs agencies to do so, is rarely sufficient to generate coordination, much less in countries where law enforcement is very weak.

Managerial Conditions for Effective Coordination

After getting agencies to agree to coordinate, the next big challenge is creating the conditions for coordination to work well. Unfortunately, the literature has been more concerned with explaining why coordination happens than with understanding what makes coordination deliver public value. In this subsection I will present some of the key principles that the literature highlights as conditioning the good management of integrated or coordinated programs.[9]

Effective coordination requires seeing **coordination as an ongoing process** rather than a fixed outcome. In this process there are some key conditions that facilitate good management of a collaborative effort. Some of these are:

- Effective leadership.
- Flexibility and discretion.
- Building a common sense of purpose.
- Participation of clients.
- Bureaucratic culture of pragmatism.
- Negotiation and mediation skills.
- Minimize political disturbance.
- Small memberships.

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[9] This sections draws extensively from Eugene Bardach's 1998 book "Getting Agencies to Work Together", where he presents his theory for creating Interagency Collaborative Capacity (ICC). Bardach's goal is to highlight managerial practices required to overcome the barriers for cooperation and to build more collaborative capacity into agency relationships. Bardach's study is based on an analysis of 19 cases of interagency collaboration selected among winner programs awarded by the Innovations in American Government Program of the Ford Foundation and the Kennedy School of Government at Harvard.

Effective Leadership

Most scholars stress the importance of leadership in producing effective coordination (Jennings and Krane 1994, Bardach 1998). Leadership is not limited to top management but can also be found in middle managers, front line workers, politicians or community advocates. The importance of these leading practitioners is to bring the extra effort, energy and creativity that is required when things are done differently, that is, in collaboration rather than isolation. Leadership should not be understood as a product of individual will alone but as a product of the interaction between individual will and certain conditions in the surrounding environment (Bardach 1998).

Flexibility & Discretion

Since an IC process has to confront more novelty and variety than in the usual routine of governmental agencies it needs flexibility to confront an unusual task environment. It is unusual in three senses:

"First, it is created explicitly in order to look at social problems through different lenses and to look at the broader menu of solutions than have been attempted by the existing set of organizations. Second, it has to deal with not just a broader menu of solutions but also a more complicated one in that the involvement of other organizations almost always guarantees new constraints, which the ICC will have to learn to overcome. Third, its first efforts are bound to be full of mistakes. It must operate in a trial-and-error mode. Hence it is its own source of novelty and variety" (Bardach p. 116).

A collaborative program should be designed to operate in ways that are appropriate to this relatively unusual task environment. This means:

- Instilling the spirit of teamwork into the line-level workers who manage the cases and the implementing network.

- Whenever possible, loosening controls such as narrow categorical restriction on budg-

eted expenditures and on agency-level reprogramming authority.

- Giving an unusual degree of flexibility to the line-level staff and implementing network. It is the staff level that need to take responsibility for forging working-level links across agencies since they are the ones responsible for getting positive action going in their agencies.

One "smart practice" to achieve this flexibility is the use of what in the business sector are called *self-managing teams*. At the line level, operatives from the collaborating organization need to work out ways of taking advantage of one another's expertise, access to their home agencies' resources, and whatever else it is about the collaborative that stimulated the emergence of collaboration in the first place. The more they can do this for themselves, the more likely they are to come up with good solutions. There is no ideal internal organization of such a team (Bardach 1998).

Building a Common Sense of Purpose

- One of the conditions which several scholars referred as crucial for managing an effective coordination process has to do with "building a common sense of purpose" (Alexander 1995), sharing "a community of interests" (Seidman and Gilmour 1986), or "fostering mutual intelligibility and trust" (Bardach 1998). "Making participants aware of their interdependencies, and revealing to them the mutual objectives they could achieve through interorganization coordination is more likely to generate the common knowledge needed to stimulate effective coordination and to initiate the development of an appropriate [coordination] structure" (Alexander 1995).[10]

To build a common sense of purpose it is important to foster mutual intelligibility and trust

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[10] The biodiversity and resource management case from California mentioned before is a clear illustration of how a common worldview that values interdependency can improve the chances of effective coordination.

among professionals from the different agencies. "Working relationships at all levels are improved by staff from collaborating agencies getting to understand one another's agency-professional worldviews. The process takes time and experience. This is often not easy. Differences in perspective cause them to focus on different aspects of a problem and to rely on different intervention strategies. Differences of linguistic usage, often unnoticeable at first, can grow, for a time at least, into a lethal source of misunderstanding and frustration. There may also be differences in regard to social values. At bottom, the problems of mutual unintelligibility, misunderstanding, misperception, and mistrust are wound together in one knot, the strands of which, though often distinguishable and even capable of being disentangled, are mutually reinforcing." The nature and scope of the communications problem varies considerably by policy domain. The more technical the nature of the task—that is, based on predictable cause-effect relationships and free of contested values—the more limited is the likely scope of trouble." (pp. 131-133)

Some practices that ICC promoters can use to try to solve problems of mutual unintelligibility and potential mistrust are (Bardach 1998):

- *Human relations approaches* to improving teamwork can take advantage of natural propensities toward reciprocity. Consensus building techniques can structure conflict to clarify points of agreement and disagreement.

- *Training*. There are many approaches to using cross-agency training to build mutual intelligibility and trust. Two possibilities are: interagency trainings in the conceptual underpinnings of the integrated approach (managing resources to preserve biodiversity for the array of agencies involved in resource management). Another possibility is to provide training to improve the personal and inter-personal skills that interagency team members typically use in managing their work and themselves. As a general rule, training would be best conceived as an intermittent stream of relatively focused

problem-solving workshops over the long period of ICC development.[11]

Clients Involvement and Participation

Involving the program clients in the management and/or service delivery of the program is a good way to help coordination work well. Involving clients helps "to offset the bias of professionals and bureaucrats to think too abstractly, too narrowly, and too unimaginatively about the real needs and desires of the individuals they are serving" (Bardach, p. 213) Clients pressure operate also as a key accountability mechanism of coordinated efforts. Depending on the nature of the program, clients participation can range from identifying problems to giving advice to making decisions.

Bureaucratic vr. Pragmatic Cultures

One of the key barriers that collaborative endeavors have to overcome is the culture of bureaucracy, which venerates hierarchy, stability, obedience, and procedures. This culture is the opposite of what collaboration requires, namely, equality, adaptability, discretion, and focus on results. The culture of bureaucracy needs to be replaced by a culture of results-oriented pragmatism, where purpose dictates structure rather than allow structure to dictate purpose. They must think about bureaucracy pragmatically (Bardach, p. 232).

One possible smart practice is to use the culture of bureaucracy to cure its own problems: have interagency teams of experienced bureaucrats

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[11] An important observation for training that Bardach draws from private sector research on dealing with teams in trouble is that: "Teams can make no greater mistake than to try to solve problems without relating them to performance. Broken interpersonal dynamics, for example, often trouble stuck teams. Clearly, it is a mistake to ignore such issues altogether. But it is a mistake to try to get people to 'work together better' as an end in itself. Instead, the parties involved must identify specific actions they can take together that will require them to 'get along' in order to advance performance. Otherwise, the values associated with teamwork or getting along just will not stick for very long." (Katzenbach and Smith 1993, p 152, cited in Bardach, p 141, footnote)

exercise their bureaucratic skills to design a simpler, less bureaucratic approach to accomplishing the same ends as some existing but too cumbersome system. The idea is to help bureaucrats to hold on to the forms of bureaucracy while encouraging them to be creative with its substance (see Bardach, p. 237, for the Oregon examples).

Negotiation

Collaboration is always a matter of exhortation, explication, persuasion, give and take. To collaborate is to negotiate. Negotiations in coordinated programs "often demand a lot of effort—and creative effort at that. They involve complex role playing in order to present one's own case persuasively and to try to get into the minds of the other participants. Those involved have to speak—and listen—in their capacities as individuals, representatives of bureaucratic or political organizations, and would-be interpreters of the public interest" (ibid, p. 240-241). There are two practices that help the negotiation process: mediation and building trust.

- The assistance of neutral third parties, or mediators, is a smart practice to improve the negotiation process. In the public sector, however, agencies hiring mediators to facilitate negotiations can be criticized as spending money on frills. It is more common in government, then, to see certain kind of leaders playing the mediators role. For these government leaders to play effectively their mediation role it is necessary that they are perceived as legitimate mediators. This usually means not only that the leader has a high political standing but also that he or she is impartial, that is, perceived as being equitable and trying to allocate the burdens of participation according to the neutral and legitimate principle of what would best serve the program cause (Bardach, p. 248).

- Another approach to the problems that arise among negotiating partners is to improve the ties between the partners by is hiring professional organizational development consultants and trainers in collaborative efforts.

Minimize Political Turbulence

Coordination efforts are very sensitive to general turbulence in the political environment. This turbulence can come from new governments in power, personnel turnover in leadership positions, or the emergence of a political agenda that competes for the attention and resources of the same people and institutions that are building the ICC. Some measures to minimize this turbulence are:

- Work as early as possible in the political cycle.

- Build a broad and, if possible, external consensus behind the coordinated effort that persists in the face of electoral changes. Involve stakeholders in the private sector and civil society.

Keep Membership as Small as Possible

A number of scholars coincide on suggesting that coordinated programs should try to keep membership as small as possible. The larger the number of agencies involved the more complex becomes managing agencies' interactions (Gilmour and Seidman 1986, Tendler 1993, Alexander 1995, Chisholm 1989). Evidence of this is that the coordination performance of the second generation integrated rural development programs in Northeast Brazil improved with respect to the first generation due to a reduction in the number of agencies involved in the program (Tendler 1993, p. 24). Reviews of the second generation programs also noted that coordination worked better when the number of tasks involved in the coordinated effort were fewer (ibid).

Strategies for Coordination

Coordination tools or techniques can be classified in four basic approaches or strategies (Table 1). Many of these tools are complementary.

Table 1. Coordination Approaches & Tools

Type of Approach	Tools & Techniques
Communication & Decision-making	• Interagency task forces • Cabinet councils • Interministerial liaisons • Use common geographical boundaries
Planning	• Plan review • Joint Planning • Uniform planning periods • Common definitions and quantifiable outcomes
Operational Coordination	• Joint funding of programs • Joint administration of programs • Joint purchase of services • Cooperative (non financial) agreements—e.g., division of labor.
Service Delivery	• One-stop shopping/collocation • Case-management • Using clients as purchasing agents • Shared Information services • Universal eligibility and referral mechanisms • Shared credit mechanisms • Shared staff

Source: own adaptation from Jennings (1993, 1994) and Kagan and Pritchart (1993)

Communication and decision-making strategies:

For agencies with diverse missions to coordinate they need to interact, to find ways to communicate effectively and develop shared goals. At a minimum, they must find out how their goals interrelate. Communication and decision-making approaches to coordination include a variety of structures, procedures, and policies for insuring that effective communication develops, and shared goals are identified and pursued. Some of these tools are:

• Interagency task forces / Cabinet councils are inter-organizational bodies that vary according to how specific their purpose is. Interagency task forces tend to be more specific and project oriented than cabinet councils, which usually address more general policy issues.

• Single council for several programs allows joint or consolidated planning to take place and centralizes authority for policy recommendations for separate programs.

• Interministerial liaisons and Information sharing among several agencies involved in joint programs.

• Using common geographical boundaries facilitates coordination across agencies by making it easier to integrate planning and other activities.

Planning Strategies

Planning strategies to coordination involve the use of planning processes, techniques, and plans

themselves to foster coordination among agencies. Some of the tools are:

- Joint programming and planning is conducted by coordinating committees and other intergovernmental entities that enable the generation of agree-upon priorities, administrative guidelines, and programmatic proposals. Participatory municipal planning processes can be structured to generate intersectoral and intergovernmental planning (see Box 1).

Box 1. Participatory Municipal Planning as an example of Joint Planning

One of the rationales for decentralizing power and resources to lower levels of government is the promise that at the local level is easier to generate intersectoral synergies and integrate sectoral logics around the solution to local problems. Participatory Municipal Planning processes can be structured in ways that allow to have a forum where citizen representatives, local government and sectoral agencies can exchange information and agree on funding for local investments.

- Common definitions and quantified objectives across similar programs facilitates joint action and makes it possible to share credit and compare accomplishments.

Strategies for Operational Coordination

Agencies must do more than plan and communicate if coordination is to take place. They must also develop mechanisms for operational coordination. These mechanisms typically formalize relationships among programs or organizational units or create particular operational patterns. Operational coordination can involve a variety of activities, each providing some degree of integration of programmatic operations:

- Cooperative (non financial) agreements. They might specify the particular activities to be undertaken by each agency, the division of labor between or among agencies, activities to be coordinated and ways in which activities will be coordinated.

- Fiscal linkages, through this strategy funds are coordinated in order to strengthen links among providers, to develop and expand services, and to allow for more comprehensive service delivery. Three of the most common types of fiscal linkages are the:

- Joint funding. Two or more agencies share the costs of implementing a program which both are responsible for implementing.

- Joint purchase of services is when two or more agencies jointly purchase the services of a third party. This third party can provide the same service to all agencies—i.e., small school districts jointly hire specialists in education for children with severe physical or mental impairments (see example in section IV,A); or can provide different services to each agency—i.e., a contractor that builds sewerage and water services for the water agency, paves the roads for the transportation agency, etc. (see box 2).

- Joint administration of a program involves joint decision making about and oversight of a program.

Tools for Coordination at the Service Delivery Level

Coordination performance depends to a large extent on what happens at the point of service delivery. There are a variety of tools to promote and facilitate coordination at the local level.

- One-stop Shopping or Collocation is designed to coordinate programs by uniting them within a single, all-purpose facility, and thereby enhancing service visibility and accessibility (see box 3). In the US a number of states have made major strides in coordinating services for AFDC women, by placing their AFDC, Food Stamp, and employment offices in the same location. (Blank 1997). Collocation, however, is not an automatic form of improved coordination. If concerted efforts to combine and coordinate services are not make, little can be gained from just physical collocation. One observer said of the several agency staff who had collocated welfare-to-work services at a community college facility: "They were all practically on the same hallway. But their doors were closed. And they might as well have been at opposite ends of the city for all they talked to each other" (Bardach 1998, p. 138).

- Case-management is a process in which an individual or unit is assigned to assist a client (individual or family) in developing and executing a coordinated plan of services. Though characterized by a number of different approaches—management via an individual or an interdisciplinary team, for example—case management typically involves five main functions: assessment of client need, development of a cross-program service plan, arrangements for service delivery, service monitoring and assessment, and evaluation and follow-up. The case manager tracks the progress of the client, makes sure that the appropriate mix of services is provided, and addresses problems in the coordination of services.

- Shared Information Services. This implies developing electronic information systems that allow the full mix of service providers that work with a client to share information about that client. These information systems will reduce duplication of effort, make it easier to track clients as they move through the system, and facilitate service delivery.

- Universal eligibility and referral mechanisms, as well as consolidated application forms are mechanisms devised to overcome one of the biggest barriers for coordination in very fragmented sectors—i.e., disparate and contradictory eligibility criteria and information requirements for different programs. This is a critical problem in fragmented sectors such as children, family, and youth services in the United States.

Case Studies

Three Illustrations

Empirical studies suggest that *solving a pressing problem* is the most important incentive to coordinate provided the problem is framed in a way that leads to a coordinated solution.

School districts in the U.S. In a study of cooperation between school districts, Weiss (1987) tested these six pressures showing that none of them alone was sufficient to explain cooperation or the lack of it. Instead, Weiss took these six pressures and integrated them in a process model of why agencies cooperate. This model specifies three conditions that need to be met in order to move toward cooperation. Although the model makes room for elements of all six pressures, it highlights performance pressures as the major factor pushing agencies to explore cooperative solutions.

- The process starts with all the *agencies perceiving a problem that demands an urgent solution, and with cooperation being one possible way to ease the pressure.* Lacking urgent demands to manage performance problems, the prospects for cooperation grow dim. (p.112). A key performance problem, in the case of local districts, came when a federal and state law was passed requiring local districts to provide every child, no matter how handicapped, with a free appropriate education in the least restrictive environment possible. Before the laws, school officials could turn away children with severe physical or mental impairments. Now these children had to be served. Many school districts, especially the small ones, needed help to fulfill their new obligations. In part they found it in regional cooperation—for instance, by hiring specialists to serve small numbers of students in each of several districts. (p.105).

- Once strong performance demands push districts to consider cooperation, other factors

then influence whether the cooperation becomes a feasible or preferred strategy. One set of factors relate to the *availability of resources to address problems through cooperation.* These include developing a feasible operational scheme, identifying and mobilizing resources to develop and carry out joint operations, money has to be raised, staff located, and expertise developed. Energy to overcome the inertia of non-cooperation has to be found and used. If no initiative, energy, money, or staff becomes available for explicitly cooperative activities, the process grounds to a halt.

- Another set of factors relate to the need for *institutional capacity* to mount the cooperative program. Depending on the nature of the activity, this could range from a trivial matter of reliance on existing mechanisms to a major undertaking of building new infrastructure. Unless a legal, workable way can be found not only to begin but also to sustain the cooperative program, the effort to cooperate goes not further.

Integrated Rural Development (IRD) in NE Brazil. As mentioned before, the IRD approach of the late 1970s failed partly due to the difficulties experienced with interagency coordination. Despite this general problem with IC, however, there were instances when coordination worked well. A study of 23 IRD projects in Northeast Brazil (Tendler 1993) identified some agencies that had striking instances of success at coordination despite a poor overall performance record at coordination. The reason was that the successful episodes had a different underlying structure than the failures. Not only were these better moments episodic and ad-hoc, but they shared two other key conditions.

- First, all participating agencies felt a *strong sense of urgency* because of (i) disaster-type circumstances that threatened the economy of the state and its social fabric (drought, epidemics of crop disease)—or (ii) an "order" to coordinate at a particular moment

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from a strong authority, usually the governor, who held power over all the agencies, including the project unit itself.

- Second, *coordination was the only way to carry out a particular task*. For instance, effectively combating disease in the orange groves of Sergipe could be done only with a combination of subsidized credit and extension. In order for projects to capture coordination of this variety in their design, they would have to focus on narrower tasks that were considered more urgent, and or concentrate the power over a project within a single agency.

Biodiversity & Resource Management in California. Thomas (1997) research tried to explain why federal and state resource management agencies based in California that lacked a tradition of interagency cooperation started cooperating very actively during the 1990s.[12] As a result of these efforts ten state and federal agencies signed in 1991 an interagency agreement known as the Memorandum of Understanding on Biological Diversity (or MOU on Biodiversity).[13] Thomas found two main factors to explain this case of interagency coordination.[14]

The first factor had to do with *problem solving*. Not all the ten agencies were equally interested in coordinating, some of them acted as the engines of the agreements. Variation in participation in the interagency coordinating body depended on how pressured was each agency to

address biodiversity issues to protect itself from legal challenges. In this case, the agency most interested in coordinating (the Bureau of Land Management-BLM) was the one that felt most threatened by the possibility of lawsuits against the agency. The BLM had seen how a lawsuit against the Forest Service for violating the Endangered Species Act had had devastating effects on the Forest Service (it had to shut down timber operations on federal land in the Pacific Northwest for three years). Like the Forest Service, the BLM had long been sued by environmental groups, and the BLM's Director wanted to prevent being sued for infringing conservation species issues. Since BLM land provided habitat for roughly half of California's endangered species, and since this land was fragmented into many parcels and intermixed with other ownerships, preserving species to avoid lawsuits necessarily entailed interagency cooperation. In contrast to the BLM, the National Park Service did not fear lawsuits and therefore was not interested in interagency cooperation. On the one hand, environmental groups had very rarely sued the Park Service. On the other hand, the size of their parks and their consolidated shape (with no inholdings within their boundaries) allowed its managers to believe (rightly or wrongly) that they controlled sufficient habitat to manage associated species independently, within their own jurisdiction. In sum, while potential lawsuits were a problem or threat that BLM had to respond to, the Park Service did not perceive it as a problem and thus lacked incentives to do coordinate.

The second factor that explained interagency cooperation had to do with *professional values*. The vision about biodiversity expressed in the MOU and in the multiagency planning activities, which constitutes the platform for interagency coordination, was not developed by the directors of these agencies but by the staff ecologists present in the different agencies. This network of ecologists conforms what Thomas calls an "ecological epistemic community." Epistemic communities are like-minded networks of professionals whose authoritative claim to consensual knowledge provides them with a unique source

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[12] Not only they lacked a cooperation tradition but also protecting noncommodity species had never been a priority for resource management agencies because they have consumption-driven constituencies to please, from loggers and ranchers to hunters and tourists.

[13] The MOU stated that maintaining biodiversity would be a preeminent goal of the agencies and that this goal would be achieved through "improved coordination, information exchange, conflict resolution, and collaboration among the signatory parties." Although the MOU on Biodiversity could not be used to hold the agencies to account for their actions, it was symbolically and administratively influential in prompting multiagency planning activities, and most of the signatories routinely attended the quarterly meetings of the new Executive Council on Biological Diversity.

[14] These factors correspond to and illustrate well two of the above explanations provided by Weiss.

of power in decision-making processes.[15] Staff ecologists offered a logic of interdependence and of interagency cooperation. Since ecological systems transcend agency jurisdictions, ecologists view interagency relationships much differently than agency officials. Ecologists accept interdependence among public agencies, and even welcome it. Ecologists make up an epistemic community distinct from those in other life sciences because they study systems of relationships in the natural world rather than analyze biotic parts in isolation from the whole.

Though most of the directors in this case study did not belong to the ecological epistemic community, they became increasingly dependent on staff ecologists to provide solutions to their collective dilemma. Faced with the very real possibility of losing broad decision-making discretion and management autonomy to the narrow cause of species protection, the directors turned to staff ecologists to develop plans to manage the habitat of listed (and potentially listed) species to maintain viable populations of these species before their agencies could be sued under the Endangered Species Act. Without this act and court interpretations of it, ecologists would have continued to gather information about the declines of species but they would not have been sup-

ported by directors and middle-level managers who had line authority and thereby controlled agency resources necessary for designing and managing preserve systems.

IDB Case Studies

Further evidence of the motivations and difficulties of achieving interagency coordination are provided by two on-going operations funded by the InterAmerican Development Bank. These are examples of programs that rely heavily on coordination and cooperation among governmental and non-governmental organizations. The analysis employs the conceptual framework drawn from the previous literature review.

The assessment of the performance of these two programs should be taken as preliminary since both programs are on-going processes with only a couple of years of implementation. The literature on interagency coordination shows that coordination is a very dynamic process that can either take years to consolidate or fail to occur altogether. Thus, a program that may have strong coordination problems in its initial two years of implementation may perform very well on this dimension two or three years later.

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[15] The members of an epistemic community have similar normative values, believe in the same causal relationships, and have a common methodology for validating knowledge, all of which shape their formulation of best management practices.

Plan jefas de hogar (Argentina)

The Program

The Program "*Plan Jefas de Hogar*" (Female Heads of Household Plan, PJH) is a pilot experiment that the Government of Argentina (GOA) started in the year 2000. It is implemented by the Secretaria de Tercera Edad y Accion Social (Secretariat of Third Age and Social Action) of the Ministry of Social Development. The core of the program consists of providing a "social income" equivalent to US$150[16] to unemployed female heads of households with children younger than 14 years-old in exchange for completing the level of education that they have unfinished (primary or secondary) or working in "socially relevant projects" for those with a complete secondary education. In addition, the program provides day care services for beneficiaries' children younger than 5 years-old.

PJH was designed as a pilot of what its designers thought could be a future social income policy that guaranteed a minimum income to any unemployed citizen. It seeked to present al alternative approach to the social programs that previous administrations had been implementing. In contrast to he emphasis on social funds and civil society strengthening programs of the late 1990s, the administration that started in the late 1999 diagnosed that the country's high increase in unemployment levels demanded the design of a comprehensive social income policy. PJH was a pilot that started with unemployed female households they were identified as one of the most vulnerable groups among the poor.

PJH enjoyed both external political and internal technical support within the Secretariat of Social Action and was managed by a highly motivated management team. The proposal to move towards a social income policy was something that the then Secretary of Social Action, Aldo Isuani, had been working on for a long time as an intellectual (Isuani is one of the leading sociologists in Argentina working on welfare policy issues) and as a member of the Alianza coalition that won the elections by the end of 1999. When he was appointed Secretary in January 2000, his team had already developed a proposal for a "social income" program. PJH was his "pet" project.

PJH represented a strong and conscious departure from the mainstream approach the GOA has taken against unemployment by:

- Allowing universal access instead of quotas of beneficiaries. All eligible citizens should have access to the service. In the case of PJH, there is a register opened in each province at the beginning of the program where all women that meet the profile criteria can register for the program.

- Reconceptualizing the notion of work to include the activity of education.

- Introducing a management framework based on intersectoral and interjurisdictional coordination, instead of the typical bypass of provincial or municipal governments.

In each province, the national government committed funding for at least three years, period that took to graduate the first batch of women entering the program. By 2001 the program was reaching more than 7,000 heads of household in the metropolitan areas of five provinces: Mendoza, Chaco, Río Negro, Tierra del Fuego y Corrientes. The national government has transferred more than 9 million dollars to these provinces since March 2000, with co-financing from provincial and municipal governments. Mendoza and Chaco started in 2000 and the other provinces in 2001.

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[16]   Exchange rate US$ 1 = $ 1 (November 2001).

Coordination Structures and Tools

PJH's institutional arrangements were designed with the intention of generating an integrated and coordinated approach to social policy that could remedy the fragmentation and duplication of programs and services that characterized the Argentine social policy environment. The designers of PJH characterized such environment as follows:

"There is a high fragmentation and overlap at the management level due to the existence of multiple executing units of similar programs in the same territory (from the national, provincial and municipal levels, from different national ministries, from different private and non-governmental institutions). For instance, at the national level there were 76 social programs, most of which duplicated administrative structures, had inefficient scale, and a strong tendency to be managed clientelistically" (PJH, chapter 1, p. 8-9).

Based on this diagnosis, the program strategy was to define a management structure based on integration and coordination of functions among jurisdictions and across sectors by working in partnership and sharing responsibilities for program implementation with provincial and municipal governments. The implementation arrangements varied but in one province (Mendoza) it worked as follows:

Division of Labor in the PJH in Mendoza

The *Secretary of Social Action (STEyAS)*, through National Unit must:

- Prepare the normative and operational framework of the Program and discuss it with the provincial authorities.

- Monitor and evaluate implementation.

- Finance a percentage of the "social income" on a decreasing basis (75% the first year, 50% the second, 30% the third, and then 0%)

The *Provincial Ministry of Social Development* must:

- Manage the Program in the province. It is the provincial counterpart of the STEyAS. Has a three member Provincial Executing Unit (UEP, Unidad de Ejecucion Provincial) paid by the national government.

- Manage the relationship with the local governments and eventually NGOs. This includes selecting the local governments that will participate. In Mendoza, four municipalities of the six forming the metropolitan area were chosen. These four municipalities (two from the official party and two from the opposition) were selected because there was a previous instance of cooperation between them and the province around a program for street children, called Pacto Metropolitano.

- Finance a percentage of the social income on an increasing basis (inversely proportional to the national government share).

- Provide the meals for day-care centers.

The Provincial Ministry of Education (called Direccion General de Escuelas), particularly the *Direction of Permanent Adult Education (DPAE)*, must:

- Guarantee all the needed slots in the adults educational system for those beneficiaries whose counterpart is the completion of their formal education, and for those who had to take training courses dependent from the MOE.

- Provide the educational staff for schools (teachers, directors) as well as the supervision.

Each of the four *Local Governments* must:

- Provide the education infrastructure (both schools and day-care centers) and their maintenance.

- Define the local priorities for the Socially Relevant Projects.

- Follow-up the implementation of the program.

- Responsibility for the program falls in a Local Executing Unit (UEL, Unidad de Ejecucion Local) in each municipality formed by three to four persons. UEL's coordinator is paid by the national government, while the municipal government supports UEL's staff.

- Integrate the program with other initiatives that the local government or other local, provincial or national actors are implementing in the municipality.

Coordination Performance

Despite initial problems, PJH was able to successfully achieve a reasonable level of coordination across sectors and jurisdictions.

In terms of intersectoral coordination, the biggest challenge was the relationship between the provincial government's Education and the Social Development Ministries. The Ministry of Education is known as a very hierarchical and rigid organization, with strict lines of authority and detailed operation regulations. The PJH demanded a non-traditional structure to which the Education Ministry would have to adapt. The Department of Permanent Adult Education (DPAE), which was initially reluctant to participate in the program, finally came around and made a number of significant adjustments in its traditional modus operandi to accommodate the program requirements. Some of these were:

- Although the education system was adapted for adults, it was not adapted to the situation of female heads of households, the majority of whom were poor. Female heads of households are a much more vulnerable group than the average adult that was in the system and therefore required special considerations. This adaptation implied being more flexible about the number of absences al-

lowed, increasing the number of exams dates, etc. Initially, directors and teachers resisted making these kinds of exceptions saying that the rules of the adult education system had to be the same ones for everybody. It was only after many meetings between PJH's provincial unit and the DPAE that these conflicts were resolved and new rules were created that took into account the special situation of this group.

- DPAE also had to open new schools dedicated only to the program. Since the adults system in Mendoza works mostly at night, DPAE has always used the existing schools of the formal system that are not occupied during the night. The PJH, however, required women to attend school during the *day* when the schools of the formal system were occupied. Thus, to participate in the program the DPAE had to find new space to act as schools. Actually, DPAE's role was to authorize that the new schools met the minimum standards; the agency responsible for providing the new buildings were the local governments. DPAE had to be flexible in this authorization process. Since some of the local governments had very limited resources to find good infrastructure they either found infrastructure that wasn't in the best condition or presented unorthodox alternatives such as four dispersed "satellite classrooms" instead of one building with four classrooms. This meant more work for the director and supervisor who had to travel from one classroom to the other instead of being in only one place. Since the fiscal reality of local governments did not allow for other options, the DPAE accepted these arrangements and was flexible in the application of the minimum standards.

- DPAE supervisors had to increase their workload since new schools were added, without additional remuneration. They also had to extend their work schedule since now they had to work during the day and not only at night.

- Directors, teachers and supervisors resisted the presence of PJH's municipal coordinat-

ing units in the educational activity. Municipal units were responsible for following-up the performance of the beneficiaries, whether they were assisting to school or not, the problems they were having at home that could affect their studying, etc. Directors, teachers and supervisors, however, resisted having these units intervening in school-related matters, and did not want to share any information or respond to any claim made by the municipal units. The intervention of PJH provincial unit was crucial to improve communication between schools and municipalities and work out a better relationship and understanding of each other's roles in the program.

In terms of interjurisdictional coordination, the success of the PJH had been to demonstrate that it is possible to implement a different model of managing federally funded social programs in Argentina, in which the federal level is in charge of regulating and monitoring performance, the province is in charge of managing the program delegating at the same time as much implementation responsibility as possible to the local governments. Most previous social programs in Argentina have fallen either on the extreme of disregarding provincial governments by the creation of separate administrative structures that responded to the national government or on the opposite extreme of delegating all responsibility to provincial governments without any control from the national government. PJH combines nicely delegation to provincial governments with control and monitoring by the national government.

The program also succeeded in coordinating social spending from the three levels of government, redirecting spending away from ineffective and clientelistic temporary employment programs towards a better-structured and coordinated plan. PJH implied a reallocation of the social program's resources transferred from the province to the municipalities. In Mendoza, municipalities implement almost all provincial social programs. Almost 40% of the annual transfer to these municipalities had to be earmarked as the provincial/ municipal counterpart for the PJH. For local governments this meant losing

the discretion and flexibility they previously had to allocate temporary employment benefits. It is widely known that political criteria weighted heavily in decisions to allocate those funds. Convincing local governments to designate resources for the PJH was in itself a great accomplishment for the program, particularly taking into account that the four municipalities involved are quite powerful, and two of them governed by the opposition party.

Explaining Performance

There were a number of conditions that helped the program to overcome initial problems and difficulties and achieve a good level of coordination. The most important were: framing the program in a way that addressed a pressing need of every partner; building a common sense of purpose; relying on existing institutional capacity; building mutual intelligibility, trust, and negotiation skills; and clients participation.

Addressing a Pressing Need of Every Partner

The designers of PJH succeeded in framing the program in a way that addressed a pressing need of each of the agencies involved. For the social development agencies (at the three levels of government) the program represented a way to ease the social pressure caused by unemployment. The steep increase in joblessness in Argentina and the increased demands and activism of unemployed people made any relief program a top political priority. Provincial governments were very interested in working together with the national government given that in the past the national government had bypassed them in the implementation of temporary employment programs (see, for instance, TRABAJAR). All three levels of government acknowledged that unemployment was a critical problem that concerned them all, which required a concerted effort for its solution. Political support for the program was clear at all three levels of government: from the Secretary of Social Development to the provincial governmor and the four mayors involved, who made clear to their staff the priority they attributed to the program. This political pressure was key to facilitate the coordination

process since everybody was interested in making it work.

Developing a Common Sense of Purpose

The central government team that worked in design played a key role in pushing the coordination process by facilitating the generation of a consensus or common objective among the participants. The Secretary of Social Action gathered the political support and interest from the governor and the mayors, the technical team developed an outline of the program concept and brought the different actors to discuss it, and the program also provided the largest contribution of resources for the program (starting with 75% of the resources for "social income").

All the provincial actors agreed that the role of the national unit in charge of the PJH was crucial in the coordination process. Provincial and municipal actors also highlighted that the nation had not used its leverage to impose coordination but instead to generate a consensus around the program concept, and that it had been flexible to accommodate the changes suggested by the different parties. The main instrument to generate this consensus was the "Mesa de Coordinacion," an instance where key representatives from municipal, provincial and national actors attended weekly meetings. In five months, from March to August, this Mesa made the basic agreements, designed the operating procedures, and marshaled the resources for the program to start. Classes began in August.

The energy and motivation that the national team brought to the Mesa was an important engine of the process, mentioned by several interviewees. This team was convinced that it was building a different model of social policy, of central importance to their political superior (the Secretary), and where interjurisdictional and intersectoral coordination was a key component of the model. This has to do with "professional values" mentioned by Weiss and also present in Thomas' case study. It is important to note that the technical coordinators of PJH had participated in a training course on public sector management at IDB's INDES. They reported that they have learned not only about key public management principles and instruments but also about the importance of coordination among

different level of governments and across agencies.

Relying on Existing Capacity

Program implementation relied mostly on the existing institutional capacity. This facilitated the start-up of the program was an important factor to in its smooth implementation. All the participating actors had a relatively high level of institutional development. Mendoza has one of the top four adult education systems in the country, they have a special curriculum for adult education, procedures to hire staff, to create new establishments, a system to supervise the provision of education, etc. Most provinces do not even have a Direction of Permanent Adult Education within their Ministries of Education. The four local governments are highly urban, relatively wealthy municipalities. They provided their social development staff for the program and instead of building new schools to accommodate all the students they used existing infrastructure.[17]

PJH only increased institutional capacity in areas that were lacking and absolutely essential to make the program work. Initially, PJH tried to delegate implementation responsibilities to the provincial and municipal governments (as it had been during the design stage). However, it soon became evident that the provincial and municipal levels needed to assign full time staff solely dedicated to the program. Basically this meant creating three small (three to four persons) Provincial Executing Units (UEP, Unidad de Ejecucion Provincial) and Local Executing Units (UEL, Unidad de Ejecucion Local) in each participating municipality.

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[17] It used the afternoon shift of schools that only operated during the morning, used schools that for some reason had been abandoned, made agreements with churches—particularly the mormon church—that willing to do some kind of community work ceded their establishments during the week, rented community centers for satellite classrooms, etc. [Bardach mentions this as a "smart practice" for creating public value].

Although the program financed these executing units, their respective governments selected the candidates for their staff positions. These were then tested and trained by the central executing unit. This was important for two reasons. One it avoided the creation of executing units that worked isolated from the rest of the government structure since provincial and municipal administrations saw them as part of their structure. Two, provincial and municipal coordinators saw themselves as having two bosses (the nation that pays them and the provincial or municipal government that has proposed them for the posts). This situation, instead of complicating their job, gave them a role of liaisons among the two levels and forced them to search for positions that accommodated the interest of both parties.

Negotiation Skills: Building Mutual Intelligibility and Trust

Building what Bardach calls "mutual intelligibility and trust" across frontline workers from the Ministry of Education (teachers, principals, and supervisors), local government social development units, and the social development ministry was crucial for good coordination. The initial stages of the program were ridden with conflicts between the MOE front line workers and the social development side (both municipal and provincial). The conflicts centered around the resistance of Education to adapt its procedures for service provision to the realities of poor, unemployed female heads of household [see section C]. This is an illustration of how professional views and values can get in the way of interagency collaboration.

The key factor that unlocked these conflicts was the hiring by the Provincial Executing Unit of an Education Liaison. According to many interviewees the role of the Education Liaison was crucial in getting the DPAE, the Social Development Ministry, the municipalities and the schools to working together. She was committed to the program (which was paying her salary) but also had the trust of the DPAE which had proposed her for the position, and also knew how to communicate with school staff given that for several decades she had been herself a director and teacher in the adult education system.

She was the person that negotiated with the DPAE authorities the need to make the rules more flexible and adapted to the situation of the female household heads, and the person who worked out the problems between schools and municipalities. Her interpersonal relations, particularly her ability to speak the languages of the different actors was something that many interviewees mentioned as a critical ability. Gradually, she earned the trust from the different sectors that allowed her to play an effective mediation role.

Collocation also helped to have good communication between the social development and education ministries. Mendoza has the particularity that all its provincial ministries are housed in the same building. According to the program's staff this feature facilitated communications. The Education Liaison said: "every time I had a problem to solve with both ministries I just went back and forth from one floor to the other trying to mediate between the different parties."
Even though in this case mutual intelligibility and trust across sectors were built by the Education Liaison, it is not the only way to do it. Collocation can also contribute or The important and larger point is that for coordination to work well during the implementation stage there have to be ways to break down the miscommunication and misperceptions that will inevitably come up.

Clients Participation

A final element that also contributed to good coordination was the high level of client participation that the program showed in Mendoza. Women were very vocal in pressing their local government whenever the provincial government delayed sending its share of the funding to the local governments. To avoid these problems, local governments were then very alert to demand the provincial government to deliver its funds on time. Women also elected representatives at each school that participated in meetings of the municipal executing unit, and some of them also participate in the provincial-level meeting between the provincial unit and the four municipal units.

Programa de desarrollo sustentable de Darién (Panamá)

The Program

Darién province is the largest and poorest province in the country with a total area of 16,600 km2 (22% of the country). It is also the least populated province with 60,000 inhabitants (3.6 inhab/km2) (IDB 1998). Darien is located at the southeastern end of Panama. Its southern border is with Colombia and is the point where the Central American land bridge meets the South American continent. In February 1997, IDB's president Enrique Iglesias led a special mission to the Darien Province in response to an invitation of then Panama's President, Ernesto Perez Balladares, to visit the area and discuss IDB's interest in financing the resurfacing of the Panamerican highway section that goes from Bayano to Yaviza.[18] The resurfacing of the highway was a strong political demand from the province to the national government. Since the stretch of highway to Yaviza was completed in 1984, maintenance efforts had not kept up with weather and traffic-induced damage. The road surface had deteriorated to the point that in some places the road was only passable during the dry season months of January to March.

The resurfacing of the highway, however, was a highly controversial initiative given its potential negative effects on three areas:

- Ecological concerns: the province was a region of extremely diverse and irreplace-

able ecosystems.[19] Many of these ecosystems were already at risk due to deforestation,[20] extensive cattle raising practices, and unsustainable fishing volumes. The highway could accentuate these trends by attracting more people from outside the province, pushing the agricultural frontier and increasing unsustainable exploitation practices.

- Indigenous ethnic groups: the province had three important ethnic groups that were engaged in disputes over land adjudication, caused to a large extent by the absence of land titles (only 4.5% of the 5441 agricultural properties had a property title (IDB 1998)). Without mitigating measures, the greater influx of population and real estate speculation caused by the highway would only worsen this situation. The ethnic groups are: three indigenous groups—Emberá, Wounaan and Kuna—(30%), the afro-darienita population (25%), and the immigrants from other parts of Panama (called colonists or interioranos) (45%). Three areas within the province have been set aside for the indigenous groups. This protection has been provided to support traditional property rights against the encroachment of colonists from other parts of Panama. Protecting the integrity of the reserves was an important concern.

- Impact on Poverty: Darien was the poorest province in the country and the resurfacing of the highway alone not only did not guarantee an improvement on poverty levels but risked to worsen them by pushing poor people to marginal areas of the province and destroying the natural resource base of the province.

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[18] The Pan American highway was originally intended to extend from Alaska in North America to Tierra del Fuego in South America passing directly through the province, and what is now Darién Park. Construction of the highway in the province began in the 1970s and reached Yaviza, about two thirds of the way south of the northern provincial border, in 1984. The highway was not completed, with a portion in Darién province from Yaviza south, the Darién Gap, never begun. The reasons for this omission include a concern that foot and mouth disease would enter Central America from South America and the high costs of completing the stretch through rugged territory. (Nelson et al., 1999).

[19] It contains a wide range of habitats ranging from sandy beaches to palm forest swamps and lowland and upland moist tropical forest. The Darién National Park, located in the southernmost portion of the province, is a major world environmental resource. The park has been designated both a World Heritage Site and a Biosphere reserve.

[20] The deforested area went from 159,563 to 396,508 hectares between 1980-1997. (IDB 1998).

Faced with this situation the IDB team proposed the Government of Panama (GOP) to finance the highway resurfacing as part of a larger, comprehensive Sustainable Development Program for the province. This program would (a) mitigate the potentially negative environmental, cultural, and social effects of the road resurfacing, and (b) provide a set of resources to promote a balanced development of the province. The program had five components (Box 3)

Box 3. Components of the Darien's Sustainable Development Program

1. <u>Land use planning, land titling, management and protection of natural resources</u> (US$13.4 million). Establish the instruments to improve resource management (land use regulations, resource management regulations, land demarcation and titling). The goal is to reduce deforestation rates, conflicts over resource use, and stabilize the agricultural frontier:

2. <u>Strengthening of institutional capacity to enforce land use and resource management administration</u> (US$ 13.6 million). This component aims to improve the capacity to manage the new regulatory framework effectively, incorporating local communities. Includes: (i) strengthening of national institutions (Ministries of Agriculture, of Environment, etc); and (ii) strengthening of provincial, *comarcal* and municipal governments and NGOs.

3. <u>Support for sustainable production.</u> (US$ 3 million). Includes: (i) transfer of farming, forestry and fishery technology to promote diversification away from low-productivity farming activities; (ii) management of critical areas, involving development of a plan to provide incentives or direct grants to small farmers to compensate them for the opportunity cost of conserving and protecting the forest; (iii) strategic activities, including feasibility studies, to help improve the productive structure through support for small community projects.

4. <u>Rehabilitation of the transport infrastructure, in particular, the resurfacing of the Pan American Highway in the province</u> (US$ 33 million). Provides for rehabilitating, improving or constructing small ports, airports, feeder roads and sections of existing highways. It includes staged implementation of the Intermodal Transport Plan.

5. <u>Improved access to basic services</u> (US$ 5.6 million). Aims to stabilize land settling in production areas by improving basic services needs identified by communities. It funds preinvestment and investment in new works, and in expanding, upgrading and equipping existing facilities. Projects will be included in: (a) water, sanitation and electricity; and (b) health, education and urban planning.

Source: own elaboration based on IDB Project Report (1998).

The program was approved by IDB in December 1998 (1160/OC-PN), with a budget of US$ 88 million (70.4 by IDB and the rest as local counterpart) and a timeframe of six years of implementation. The IDB awarded the design team a prize for program design, and a similar program is being currently designed in the region of Bocas del Toro.

Coordination Structures & Tools

There are six ministries involved in the program's implementation: Ministry of Finance (MOF), Ministry of Agricultural development (MIDA), National Environment Authority (ANAM), Panama's Maritime Authority (Autoridad Marítima de Panama—AMP), Ministry of Public Works (MOP), Ministry of Justice and Government (MJG). Within each of these ministries more than one Direction (and up to four) has implementation responsibilities.

The <u>coordination structure</u> used to achieve coordination had six basic components:

- *International Advisory Committee* (Comite Asesor Internacional—CAI) formed by representatives of: the indigenous population, the afrodarienita population, and the "interioranos" population, MEF and ANAM, the Vicario Apostolico de Darien, and International NGOs.[21] The main purpose of this Committee was to ensure that a broad section of interests were represented during the conceptualization and design of the program.

- *Program's Executive Committee* (Comite Ejecutivo del Programa—CEP), formed by the President's Special Representative, who presides the Committee, ANAM's Administrator (equivalent to Minister), two representatives from civil society (one representing the private business sector and the other the non profit sector), the governor of the province of Darien, and the cacique of the Comarca Embera-Wounaan. The executive secretary of the CEP is UCP's Director. The roles of the CEP are to norm and supervise the Program's implementation, to approve the projects, support and supervise the UCP, channel local governments' political participation, and CAI's recommendations among others. It meets every three months.

- *Program Coordinating Unit* (UCP-Unidad Coordinadora del Programa). The UCP depends directly from the Minister of Finance, and it is responsible for the direction, supervision, coordination, and evaluation of the program. The UCP is the agency that controls the budget and pays the other agencies for the implementation of the different program components.

- *Inter-Ministerial group*. The Secretary of Interinstitutional Coordination (SECOIN-Secretaria de Coordinacion Interinstitucional) formed by representatives of all the Ministries participating in implementation, is the body responsible for coordinating the activities of the implementing agencies as well as other donors working in the Darien region. SECOIN should be a body where the different actors exchanged information about their annual plans and budgets for the Darien region, and searched for ways to complement their work. The UCP is the chair of SECOIN. SECOIN meets every six months.

- *Ministerial Liaisons*. These are persons that are based in the line ministry and whose function is to facilitate that the responsibilities assumed by both the ministry and the UCP are met. In some cases it is paid by the program (as in the case of ANAM) and in others it is a staff from the Ministry (as in the case of Health). Not all Ministries have one.

- *Consultative Local Committee (CLC—Comite Local Consultivo).* This is a Committee formed by the two provincial governors (one for the indigenous districts and another for the provincial districts), and two representatives from each of the 29 co-regimientos of the province. The purpose of this structure is to coordinate with local political and indigenous authorities and the local population the programming of the Annual Operational Plans (POAs- Planes Operativos Anuales), and to serve as a participation and accountability mechanism.

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[21]   The NGOs are Nature Conservancy, Smithsonian Institute, and International Union for the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources.

There are four basic coordinating instruments:

- *Bi-lateral agreements* between the UCP and the different line ministries. These were general agreements were the different parties committed to participate in the program, share information about their Annual Plans, etc..

- The *Strategic Plan* and the *Sequencing Matrix* (Matriz de Secuenciamiento) represent the macro instruments to coordinate the temporal and spatial order in which the elements of the five program components will be combined. The Strategic Plan defines the global activity schedule according to three geographic work fronts (and within each front according to sub zones) indicating the semester where the activity will be executed. Based on this Plan the Sequencing Matrix defines the social, environmental, and institutional conditions that need to be completed before initiating the major works investments (mainly the sections of the Pan American highway).[22]

- *Land Use Management Plan* (Plan de Ordenamiento Territorial- POT) the master tool for regulation is a land use management plan.

- *Annual Plans* (POAs) for the Program.

Additionally, there are several types of interdependencies between the different actors participating in the program, two that stand out are the following:

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[22] An example of the sequencing matrix is the following: before the initiation of the first section of the highway (56km that go from Bayano to Torti) there are 8 conditions that need to be met. These include: (a) aerial photographs of the Bayano and Darien basin (100% completed); (b) strengthening of ANAM in the region (80% completed); (c) demarcation and cartography of the Comarca Madugandi (70% completed); (d) tenancy conflicts in the Bayano Basin (100% of the round tables already working, and 80% of the conflicts presented for resolution), (e) titling of Embera-Wounaan collective lands in the Bayano area (60%), etc..

- *Sequencing*, the order in which the ministries come into play in the program's implementation. This does not necessarily mean that ministries have to act jointly but it means that the actions of some ministries affect the actions of other ministries, namely, MOP has to wait until the other ministries have finished certain tasks.

- *Joint activities*. Some activities involved only two parties, such as the coordination between the UCP and each of the different ministries; others involve more than two, such as the demarcation of indigenous reserves.

Coordination Performance

It has been less than two years since the program took off and, therefore, it is impossible to conclude whether it will be successful or not, specially considering its complexity. Still, some facts about the quality of interagency coordination are already evident. One of the coordination successes of the program is to have survived the transition to a new administration, initially reluctant to continue with it. Coordination with Ministries has been difficult, mainly at the national level. Coordination with local and civil society actors, however, has worked better. A look at the structures and tools of coordination show that:

- The *International Advisory Committee* generated good coordination between the government of Panama and the main actors of civil society that could raise doubts about this kind of intervention (international environmental NGOs, and the indigenous groups). The committee had an important role during the design stage, when it was instrumental in defining the legal and institutional framework needed for the program to take place, namely, the passing of the Environmental Law and the creation of a National Environmental Authority (Autoridad Nacional del Ambiente, ANAM), as well as the formulation of the National Environmental Policy and Strategy. (Perafan and Nassim 2001, p. 6).

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- *Coordination between Line Ministries* has been difficult due to resistance to exchange information, feet dragging, slow implementation, etc. It took the UCP more than a year and a half to have the Ministries sign the bilateral agreements (convenios). The relationship between UCP and ministries has not been easy. Most agencies were critical of the UCP. UCP's staff said that LM were always criticizing the UCP as a way to destroy its reputation and be able to capture the funds for their own ministry. The designation of ministerial liaisons has improved coordination to a certain extent.

- At the local level national agencies seem to be collaborating better than at the headquarters level (see next section).

- The *interministerial group*, SECOIN, has not fulfilled its function of discussing the Ministries plans of action in the Darien region, nor of creating synergies among the participating agencies. LM representatives described SECOIN meetings as informative rather than deliberative. They said the UCP defines a tight agenda which basically consists of going over the implementation progress of each agency's responsibilities. No Ministry has presented its annual plan for the region (independent of what was funded by the Program). There has been no complementarity of efforts with donors working in the region.

- *Consultative Local Committees* appear as one of the more dynamic coordination instruments. There is a high level of participation of the different local groups and authorities which appear very committed to the program and whose demands to the line agencies represents a useful way of pressuring them to deliver on their commitments.

- So far, the *Sequencing Matrix* has been a helpful coordination instrument. However, the difficulty to meet certain conditions (due to the longer time-span required to fulfill them, e.g., land disputes and negotiations) is already generating doubts about how useful

it will be in the medium to long run. Outside of Darien, for instance, where the first sections of the highway are being built, some indigenous groups have already complained that the highway is advancing even though some of their land conflicts have not been resolved yet (a condition required in the Matrix).

Explaining Performance

There were a number of conditions that influenced the coordination performance of the program. The main difficulty of the program was in generating a common sense of purpose around the program concept among the different agencies. Main reasons for this were that: the program was not framed in a way that addressed an urgent need in the different agencies, the change of administration took the momentum out of the program, the program had low political appeal to politicians, staff turnover also hurt the possibilities of good communication, too many agencies involved made management complex, etc. If agencies participated, then, was because funding was attractive, because there was strong political leadership (the Ministry of Finance) behind the program pressing implementing agencies to participate, and also pressures from several partners (international NGOs, local political and indigenous actors, the donor) to keep the program working. Even though these factors have helped to generate a certain level of coordination to make the program work, they have not yet generated the enthusiasm and commitment that the literature suggests is necessary for coordinated programs to perform well.

Common Sense of Purpose

The main problem that has affected the performance of the Darien Program has been its difficulty to generate, among the participating agencies, a shared sense of purpose or ownership about the program. Many of my interviewees argued that the program often got stuck because line ministries [except the Ministry of Finance] "were not interested in the program, they did not see it as their own, it was not a top priority for them." Indeed, line ministries perceived this as

the program of the Ministry of Finance. Although it was too early to tell with certainty, at the local level agencies appeared to be more successful than at the national level in creating a common sense of purpose. Several of the factors mentioned below have contributed to make it difficult to generate this common sense of purpose

Urgent Problems or Urgent Deadlines?

The problems addressed by the program were not perceived by most agencies as being urgent, at least not more than what was happening in other parts of the country. The president cared about the resurfacing of the highway, that was the political problem he was facing and wanted to respond to, not deforestation or land titling problems. All the other components were the "price" he had to pay to get the highway. Even though the technical rationale for agency coordination made sense, most agencies did not see why it was necessary to work together. The Ministry of Public Works wanted to build the highway and waiting for the other agencies to meet the pre-conditions required by the loan to proceed with the sections of the highway only meant that the Darien Program was not among the top Minister's priorities.

Even though the design team made an explicit effort to bring the different actors together, they couldn't frame the program in a way that addressed pressing problems of individual agencies, which would require coordination to be solved. Doing that is not an easy task but there were certain conditions that made it even more difficult to achieve. In particular, the pressures to approve the program during the mandate of the previous administration impose a pace for program design that prevented more intense participation in its conception and design. Inter-agency coordination was left as a goal to be achieved in the implementation stage.

During project design, individual consultants were assigned to prepare the separate components and submit their reports to a team formed by representatives from the different ministries. The idea was that this inter-ministerial team would discuss and give feedback to the reports. The problem was that there were only two ministries (Planning and the Natural Resource Institute–INRENARE) that assigned high-ranked, full-time staff to this task. The other ministries (as the crucial Ministry of Agriculture) gave little importance to this program, sending different people to each meeting and taking too long to provide feedback. As a result, a full consultation process was affected by the urgency to have the project completed. As a result, some intervening agencies feel excluded or not fully involved in the process.

Change of Government Stalls Coordination Momentum

Rotation of ministerial staff participating both during program design and implementation represented a major hurdle for creating good coordination. One of the reasons for the initial delay in the program had to do with the change of national administration and government personnel soon after the program had started in February 1999. The new government only started in September 1999. The coalition that won was from the opposition, in a surprising victory. From May (when elections were held) to September was a transition period. After September, each minister in the new administration started by paying attention to the programs that were the direct responsibility of their ministries. The Darien Program was not perceived as an inter-ministerial program but as a program of the MOF. People that were involved during the design stage were not there anymore during the implementation phase.

Political Support

Traditional politicians do not find sustainable development programs politically attractive because these programs are more about resource management than about producing tangible goods. According to program managers this low political appeal has been a big obstacle to get agencies more fully involved. This lack of interest was clear when the new administration took office in 1999, and the new authorities initially did not show much interest in the program.

The Darien program was able to overcome this lack of political interest thanks to three kinds of pressures exerted on implementing agencies. First, there were pressures from civil society, which have been participating on the program since its inception. International NGOs participating in the Advisory Committee, as well as the local stakeholders—indigenous, political, and social actors from the Darien Region— all came in defense the program when the new administration was initially reluctant to continue with it and are still putting pressure on implementing agencies to perform.

Second, the program found a political leader to champion its cause in the bureaucratic political arena. Given the slow pace of implementation and the lukewarm support of line ministries during the year 2000, the IDB asked the government to appoint a presidential delegate to give a political push to the program. Unfortunately, the first person did not work since he was someone without political clout. After a few months the Vice-minister of Finance was appointed for this position, and he turned to be a big supporter of the program. After a few months, the Minister of Finance resigned and the Vice-minister assumed his post, and continued to provide strong political support for the program. Traditionally the Minister of Finance has great leverage over other agencies, which explains the location of the central executing unit there.

The flip side of this command position by the Minister of Finance has been a certain lack of ownership of the project by the remaining ministries. Although strong leadership is needed to implement a program as complex as this, it also helps if the leader has a style that aims to turn on the interest of the other partners in the program.

The way in which the program budget was formulated was, according to some interviewees, another factor that contributed to the political disinterest of the different ministries. The Ministry of Finance instructed the implementing ministries not create a line item in their budgets for the Program and instead it included all the Program's funds (both the IDB loan and the national counterpart) in MOF's budget. When Ministers and high ranking officials see that the

Darien Program is not listed in their budgets they assume that its implementation is not their responsibility. Having the funds centralized in the MOF, where the coordinating unit is, makes sense since it gives some real and needed leverage to this unit over the implementing agencies. The challenge would be to find ways of building the budget in a way that doesn't substantially diminish this leverage but also encourages implementing agencies to take more responsibility for the program.

Staff Turnover

Staff rotation was not only caused by the change of administration. During the initial stages of the new administration, it was common for Ministries to send somebody new to every meeting. In every meeting the UCP had to start explaining the program from the beginning. To complicate things even further, when a Ministry assigned a person it was not always the most appropriate choice. Sometimes, the person belonged to one of the several Ministerial Departments participating in the program, and did not communicate well with the others Departments. For instance, while the different directions worked well together in the case of AMP, in the case of MIDA they didn't, they were feuds within the Ministry with significant levels of autonomy. As a result of problems of communication across and within ministries, things didn't get done and nobody was taking responsibility for them.

To address this problem the UCP decided to appoint, and pay in some cases, Ministerial Liaisons with the program—people in charge of communicating back and forth between the UCP and the Ministry, and of following things up to ensure appropriate action. Even though this decision improved communication considerably, Liaisons can only mitigate the problem of communication but cannot solve substantive issues of managerial practices within the ministries. For instance, a liaison said that no matter how hard he had been trying to make a director give more attention to the program, the director's managerial style (no delegation of responsibilities, and work overload) meant that things got inevitably slowed down. Something that helps Liaisons perform well their role is to have the

rules of the game governing the relationships between the actors clearly established during program design. Otherwise, as it happened in Panama, they are placed in the difficult position of taking sides in an interministerial fight over program rules, which hurts their standing both with the UCP and their Line Ministry.

Rigid, Centralized and Bureaucratic Ministries

The high level of ministerial centralization meant that those who were invited to the coordination meetings were central level managers. These managers, however, were the least interested in the program, for two reasons. First, they had many other responsibilities to attend to, and going to meetings and coordinating with others took time away from fulfilling those other responsibilities (for which they did not need to coordinate with anybody). Second, most agencies see the region of Darien as one of the least important areas of intervention in the country. Apparently, when an agency wants to punish a staff it sends him/her to Darien—Darien is far away, lowly populated, the communications infrastructure is terrible, there used to be violence associated with the incursions of Colombia's guerrilla and para-military groups, etc..

In contrast, those who were more interested in the program, the agencies' staff located in Darien, had little administrative discretion and few resources to play a more active role in the coordinated effort. Panama is a very centralized country, and regional offices are poorly staffed and resourced. Still, despite these limitations the only good instance of interagency coordination that I found was among the Agriculture and Environment Ministries at the local level. The reasons for this success resembled significantly Bardach's conditions for effective coordination: being their offices in the same city (Las Palmas) they already knew each other and trusted each other, they shared the concern for the problems of the region, and they found it was a more enriching experience to work as a team than to work separately. Together they built a sense of mission of what they could do with the program for the region. An external observer commented that: "it was even difficult to know from which ministry was each one of them since each one was doing the tasks of both ministries."

Too many agencies involved

The number of agencies that participate in the program seem excessive. The greater the number of agencies the harder it becomes to coordinate since it puts more managerial demands on the coordinating unit and makes the process of engaging the different partners more difficult. The UCP's interinstitutional coordinator actually complained that it was very difficult for him to do a good job in coordination partly because there were more than 10 agencies/programs participating in the Darien program. Interagency programs need to include only those sectors with the stronger interdependencies. A case of a weak interdependency in the Darien Program is the basic services component, a large part of which is under the Ministry of Health (responsible for health infrastructure and water and sanitation). The rationale for including the health sector was that during the diagnosis phase it was clear that the region had greater health problems than other regions. Since the program was intended to improve the living conditions of the regional population, then health there was a basic services component.

Despite the good will and hard work that could be appreciated in UCP's staff, their internal organization and skills for coordinating were not strong enough to confront the big challenge of coordinating such a complex program as the Darien Program.

Recommendations

The following is a synthesis of the main lessons and recommendations derived from the literature review and the case studies discussed before. These can be regarded as the key points to be observed in any interagency coordination effort.

A. On Coordination as a Policy Tool

1. Interagency coordination can help to address more effectively problems with multiple and interrelated causes, to achieve economies of scale, and/or to reduce policy fragmentation.

2. Given the difficulty of making coordination work well, managers need to use it only when it is an essential condition for achieving a specific development goal. Coordination is not good per se. Other alternative options that should be assessed include sequencing of interventions, reorganizing the structure and functions of government, and promoting competition among agencies.

B. On the Incentives to Coordinate

3. Avoid strong-arm tactics to coordinate agencies from the top, or imposing coordination by authoritative fiat, since they have proven relatively ineffective. Good coordination requires a degree of commitment and collaboration from the participating agents that will not emerge from an act of imposition. It requires understanding their motivations and building an incentive system to reward collaboration.

5. Frame the collaborative effort as a way of solving problems that the participating agencies perceive as demanding an urgent solution, and where cooperation is an optimal way to resolving it.

6. Exploit existing professional values that emphasize interdependency and cooperation.

tion. Inculcate this kind of values in public managers.

7. Do not rely only on cash as an incentive for coordination. It is often either ineffective (agency has money resources), insufficient (it does not generate the enthusiasm needed for coordination to work), or unsustainable (finished the cash, coordination ends).

C. On Project Preparation and Design

8. Emphasize the process of coordination, not only its outcome. Start early, at the project design stage making the design of the project the first product of the collaborative process. Colaborative designs may take longer than non-integrated programs. Beware of extending design for too long since it runs the risk of making the coordinated effort more vulnerable to the various factors that can undermine it (e.g., change of political environment).

9. Build a broad internal and external consensus behind the coordinated effort that persists in the face of electoral changes. Whenever possible program preparation should be scheduled to coincide with the administrative cycles to limit turbulences associated with change of administration (staff turnover, change in political priorities).

10. Simplify project design. Reduce the number of participating sectors to the core where the stronger interdependencies lie.

11. There are no a priori best coordination structures or tools. Participating agencies should be involved in designing, installing and implementing the structures and tools they believe will be appropriate for the given task and that also suits their mutual purposes.

D. On Good Managerial Practices

12. Leadership at the different levels of government (political, managerial, service delivery) brings the extra effort, energy, and creativity required when things are done collaboratively. Certain institutional conditions are favorable for the emergence of leaders (e.g empowerment).

13. Line-level staff and implementing network should be given sufficient degrees of flexibility and discretion to do their job. It is the staff level that needs to take responsibility for forging working-level links across agencies since they are the ones responsible for getting positive action going in their agencies.

14. Build a common sense of purpose or ownership about the program among the participating agencies by establishing working relationships at all levels among collaborating agencies. Good practices that can help do this are human relations approaches to improving teamwork, collocation, or training workshops.

15. Active client/beneficiary participation helps to promote coordination because it puts pressures on agencies to deliver, and because clients perceive problems more holistically than sectoral agencies.

16. Promote a managerial culture of pragmatism and oriented by results rather than a culture of bureaucracy.

17. Have resources available to help in the negotiation process that takes place between agencies. These resources can range from professional mediators, organizational development specialists, facilitative leaders, or joint training activities.

E. On IDB's Role in Research and Training

18. IDB, and the donor community in general, should support case-based and comparative studies of interagency coordination in Latin America. The existing academic literature on interagency coordination has an overwhelming focus on the realities of developed countries. References to Latin America are scant. Until more empirical research is done in Latin America it is difficult to know how appropriate it is to extend the findings from developed countries to Latin America. The exercise done for this study suggests that the existing literature can make a significant contribution to the analysis of coordination in the region. However, my impression is that given the strong differences in terms of institutional development and bureaucratic traditions a deeper analysis of coordination in Latin America will lead to a set of distinct lessons for the region.[23]

19. 1DB's training of Latin American public managers can contribute significantly to create a culture of coordination among public managers by including interagency coordinating issues in its training package.

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[23] A complementary research topic could be interagency coordination among donors. Task managers giving feedback to this paper highlighted the irony of donors' advising government agencies to coordinate despite the frequent failure of donors to do it among themselves.

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