

Geography and Public Planning:
Case Studies of Institutional Arrangements
Interagency Planning in the Agriculture, Agrarian
Reform and Natural Resources Sector
(DA, DAR, DENR)

Jude Esguerra and Nikkin Beronilla

HDN DISCUSSION PAPER SERIES

PHDR ISSUE 2012/2013

NO. 3



HDN Discussion Papers are commissioned by HDN for the purpose of producing the Philippine Human Development Reports. This research is funded by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). Papers under the Discussion Paper Series are unedited and unreviewed.

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For comments, suggestions and further inquiries, please contact:

Room 334, School of Economics, University of the Philippines, Diliman, Quezon City

+632-927-8009 +632-927-9686 loc.334 <http://www.hdn.org.ph>

Geography and Public Planning: Case Studies of Institutional Arrangements

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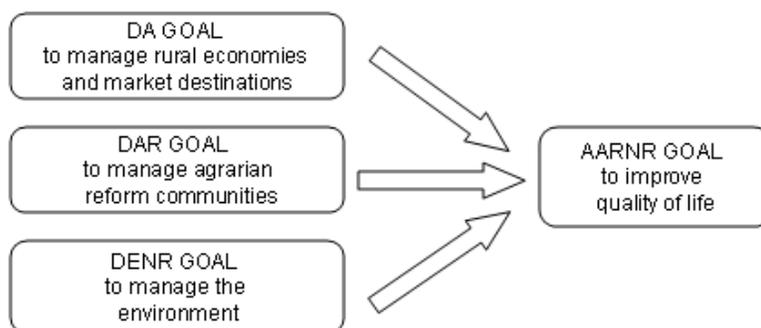
Jude Esguerra¹ and Nikkin L. Beronilla²

1. Logic of the Convergence Initiatives

a) The goal of the agriculture, agrarian reform, and natural resources (AARNR) sector is to improve the quality of life of the people. The three departments under the AARNR sector, namely, the Department of Agriculture (DA), Department of Agrarian Reform (DAR) and Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) must converge their initiative to achieve the sectoral goal. At the department level, however, each has different goal that make it appear to work on different direction and not towards the sectoral goal. For example, DA aims to manage the rural economies and market destinations; while DAR aims to manage agrarian reform communities; and DENR aims to manage the environment or life forces.³

b) Despite the different departmental goals, all of them are meant to converge toward improving the quality of life which is the goal of the AARNR sector. For example, managing rural economies and market destinations by DA would improve the quality of life of farmers; managing the environment by DENR would improve the quality of life of the population; and managing the agrarian reform communities by DAR would improve the quality of life of the agrarian beneficiaries. In other words, the goals of different departments are moving together in the same direction that at some point in the future, these goals would converge to achieve the sectoral goal of improving the quality of life (see figure below).

Figure 1. Different Departmental Goals Assumed to Converge to Achieve the Sectoral Goal



1 Undersecretary of National Anti-Poverty Commission (NAPC)

2 NAPC consultant; research staff of the Institute for Popular Democracy; part-time consultant of Emerging Alpha Asia Ltd., a hedge fund based in Hong Kong.

3 Based on the DA, DAR, DENR 2011 power point presentation.

c) If convergence is assured towards the AARNR goal given that departmental goals are achieved, then theoretically each department could work individually to achieve its goal and by extension the AARNR goal. However, working individually in a constrained environment may lead to fragmentation and duplication⁴ of projects and programs of different departments delaying the attainment of the AARNR goal. Fragmentation and duplication could be traced to limited sharing of information across departments especially in budget preparation and no clear delineation of roles. For example, different departments prepare the budget individually with limited sharing of information across departments as can be seen in the budget calls until 2012.⁵ Both DA and DAR conduct service delivery like irrigation and farm to market road, creating the possibility of a duplication of functions although the main service of DAR is to distribute land to landless farmers.

d) The National Convergence Initiative (NCI or simply convergence initiative) aims to address fragmentation and duplication through a series of Joint Memorandum Circulars (JMC) since 1999. It aims to coordinate the initiatives of the different departments so that their projects or programs complement each other to maximize resources and achieve the common goal of the sector. According to an ADB report (Lange, 2009), this could be achieved through joint planning and budgeting among departments.

e) Joint planning and budgeting is the straight path to ensure that projects and programs to be delivered by different departments are complementary and no possibility of duplication. For example in a given geographical area, the different departments during the joint planning and budgeting would agree and allocate budget so that DAR would award the lands to agrarian beneficiaries, DA would construct or repair the irrigation system and DENR would protect the watershed. However, joint planning and budgeting is not possible in the current budget preparation arrangement.⁶ The current arrangement is for the departments to prepare the budget individually and if there is sharing of information across departments it happens through informal channels (Lange, 2009).

f) In the current budget preparation setup, both the national and local offices (e.g., regional, provincial and municipal) in each department would prepare their budgets which are submitted and consolidated by the national level. The consolidated budget, as can be seen in the National Expenditure Program is general and for items with no final beneficiaries identified, the beneficiaries would be decided after the budget is legislated. Since joint planning and budgeting is not possible, the NCI conveniently locates itself in the budget execution phase⁷ as an interagency committee to coordinate the delivery of services of different agencies in selected geographical areas called model sites.

4 In the Joint Memorandum Circulars and in the convergence websites of the three departments, fragmented service delivery is cited as the main reason of the convergence initiative, while duplication is mentioned in the convergence website and by the NCI resource person.

5 See www.dbm.gov.ph on budget call.

6 Current budget preparation means until 2012. For the 2013 budget preparation, the DBM has experimented a bottom up budgeting in which the LGU would identify the budget items and be funded by different departments.

7 There are four phases in the budget cycle: budget preparation, legislation, execution, and accountability (auditing by Commission on Audit).

2. The NCI History

a) The problem of fragmented service delivery in preventing and/or delaying the convergence towards the AARNR goal has long been recognized and effort to address this problem was started more than decade ago. It can be traced back in 1999 when the three Department Secretaries of DA, DAR and DENR initiated the National Convergence Initiative (NCI). It was formalized through DA-DAR-DENR Joint Memorandum Circular (JMC) 01, series of 1999 to signal that the convergence initiative receives official approval within the three departments so that their respective planning and operations personnel adhere to common frameworks in the formulation and implementation of their respective programs. Specifically, the aim was to develop, and implement convergence models to demonstrate efficiencies that can be achieved if three departments pooled their resources within a geographic area and with a common intervention strategy.

b) The JMC also described how the NCI be structured organizationally. It mandated to create an inter-agency steering committee (SC) and technical working group (TWG) to develop and operationalize the convergence initiative. Specifically the function of the SC was to tackle on policy issues, the selection of model sites and the adherence of three departments to the NCI framework. The TWG was concerned with developing the operational plans and guidelines which it then would recommend to the SC. The TWG was also tasked to monitor the adherence of the departments and recommends to SC the adjustments necessary in order to facilitate such adherence.

c) The JMC mentioned, however, that NCI has no separate budget in the General Appropriations Act (GAA) and must source the budget from existing allocations. Inherently, this means that NCI is not going into the budget preparation territory like joint planning and budgeting, and must work within limited degrees of freedom on the GAA budget items with no final beneficiaries identified yet. Given that there were existing players attempting to influence the budget items to their favored sites, the NCI was just another player that must compete in influencing the selection process of the final beneficiaries.

d) Following the JMC process, the SC was able to select nine pilot convergence sites as the areas of interventions, namely:

- ▲ Cagayan Valley River System
- ▲ Central Luzon
- ▲ Quezon-Bicol River Basin System
- ▲ Panay Island
- ▲ Negros Island
- ▲ Bohol Island
- ▲ Zamboanga Peninsula
- ▲ Davao Norte/Oriental/ComVal
- ▲ Caraga Region

e) According to the documents, these sites were chosen based on their strategic importance and potential contribution to model-building which were translated to seven criteria, namely: completeness of ecosystem; combination of high productivity zones, in-between areas and agropolitan centers; combination of sites across major crops; combination of sites across major poverty groups; potential for high impact on increasing productivity and income of the

rural poor; presence of development-oriented local government leaders; and presence of Non Government Organizations, People's Organizations and academic research institutions.

f) Despite the comprehensive criteria used in the site selection, the convergence initiative did not prosper beyond site selection. The documents cited the abrupt changes in the administration in January 2001 as the main culprit that lead to reduced interest in the NCI. Although the TWG was tasked to monitor the adherence of the departments to the NCI, it was not able to offer any steps to move forward until a new Department Secretaries were installed in 2004.⁸

g) To push the convergence initiative to move forward, a JMC No. 1 series of 2004 was issued by a new set of Department Secretaries with the aim to reactivate the NCI. In addition it aimed to lay down the guidelines in the operationalization that was not well defined before the 2004 JMC was issued. It also reiterated the functions of the steering committee and technical working group and the fact that the budget for the NCI would come from existing departmental budget. Most importantly, it aimed to continue beyond site selection to implement pilot model of convergence in these sites. However, aside from solving the fragmented delivery of services, the new JMC must align its initiative with the Medium-Term Philippine Development Plan (MTPDP) of 2004-2010 which was initiated by the President and translated into targets that must be attained during her administration. For the AARNR sector, there were two explicit goals, dubbed as Goal 1 and Goal 2 that may affect the NCI which were listed in the Chapter 3 in the MTPDP. Specifically, Goal 1 aimed for the development of at least two million hectares of new land for agribusiness and Goal 2 aimed for sufficiency in food through rice production.

h) Between the two goals, the National Steering Committee in 2005 decided that the focus of convergence areas would be on the development of agribusiness areas. In addition, the scope of implementation was expanded from pilot sites to nationwide to meet the 2 million hectares target for agribusiness. The MTPDP (2004-2010) defined this 2 million hectares as idle or underutilized lands with potential for agricultural and fishery production. The shift in policy to agribusiness development and scope expansion of model sites to nationwide were formally adopted in a JMC No 1, series of 2006. On the other hand, the Goal 2 or rice production was not mentioned in the 2006 JMC.

i) Aside from adopting Goal 1 in the NCI, the implementation guidelines were also spelled out in the 2006 JMC. It emphasized participatory approach in all phases of implementation and identified the LGUs as the main player in the convergence initiative aside from the three departments, although the previous JMC issued in 2004 also mentioned that LGU must be represented in the NCI meetings. Another innovation in the 2006 JMC was that TWGs were introduced at different levels of the organizational set up unlike before with only national TWG. There were now different Technical Working Groups at national, regional, provincial and city/municipal level. The Municipal TWG would be responsible for developing agribusiness investment proposals while the higher level TWGs can be tapped for technical assistance. By 2008, the NCI was generating investment proposals for specific convergence sites.

j) By 2010 at the end of the term of the previous administration, no agribusiness convergence site was implemented despite the proposals being developed in 2008. The proposals were still in the pipeline, although the three agencies had reported of opening of a total of 1.82

⁸ There were new Secretaries installed after the abrupt change in the Administration but most of them serve a year or less.

million hectares, around 89% of target production areas of goal. However, this accomplishment covered mostly production areas already under the different ongoing programs of DA, DAR and DENR and not through the agribusiness development under the NCI. In short, the Goal 1 target was easier attained if departments acted individually than through cooperation with the three departments.

k) After more than a decade of planning for the convergence initiative with no model site implemented, the new Department Secretaries issued a JMC No. 1 series of 2010, after the national election, to lay down an enhanced policy and implementation framework for the NCI. The enhanced NCI, according to the 2010 JMC, was expected to address the gaps and weakness in the previous initiative. It aimed to define clear mechanisms for harmonization and complementation among the three agencies to avoid conflicting and overlapping policies. It gave local government units a more pro-active role in identifying and implementing convergence initiatives at the local level. It aimed to promote sustainable agriculture and rural development by adopting the watershed and ecosystem management approach (“Ridge to Reef”) which is a holistic, collaborative, multiple use and sustainable management of all resources within a watershed. This approach also identifies the constituencies of different ecosystem. These were the Agrarian Reform Beneficiaries and small farmers, indigenous peoples, marginalized dwellers and fisher folks.

l) Other content in the 2010 JMC were just a reiteration of the previous JMCs for the organizational setup like the steering committee and a TWG, and for sustaining the focus on agribusiness investment. It also reiterated the selection criteria of a convergence site which was laid by the previous SC sometime after the 1999 JMC. Operationally, the enhanced NCI was expected to work through: sharing of expertise and information; collaboration and complementation of projects; realignment of limited resources; reconfiguration of each agency activities to more focused interventions in identified project sites.

3. NCI under the current Administration

a) Two months after the 2010 JMC was issued, the first model convergence site for agro-enterprise was finally launched in the middle of September in the province of Antique. The objective was to encourage the farmer to practice integrated farming systems and limit monocropping to promote the sustainable development. The site is in Central Antique composed of large tracks of agricultural lands spanning five towns and covering three ecosystems: namely upland, lowland and coastal. The areas for agro-forestry, fisheries, livestock and agriculture were identified and their locations were put in a cluster map out to facilitate planning. The NCI has a list of services and support downloaded in this model site like composting facilities, rattan and agro-forestry plantation, upland rice seed distributed etc. These information were also displayed into the cluster map.

b) Aside from Antique site, a total of nine model sites were launched spanning from February to July of 2011. Most of these sites are at provincial level or consist of several municipalities, except for Javier Leyte which is at municipal level. This is a departure from the nine original sites selected which are envisioned at regional level but were never implemented. The complete list are shown in the table below:

Convergence Model Site	Date Launched
Central Antique (Barbaza, Patnongon, Laua-an, Valderrama, and Bugasong)	September 16, 2010
Iloilo (Calinog, Lambunao, Janiuay, Passi, Pototan, Barotac Nuevo, Dingle, Duenas, Mina, San Enrique, Dumangas, Anilao, and Badiangan)	February 11, 2011
Isabela (Tumauini, Cabagan, Ilagan, San Mariano, Gamu, Cauayan, Agdanganan, Echague, San Agustin, Jones, Benito Soliven, Naguillian, and San Guillermo)	February 23, 2011
Camarines Sur (Presentacion, Caramoan, Pili, Ocampo, Calabanga, Lagonoy, Del Gallego, Bula, Tigaon, and Baao)	March 11, 2011
Sorsogon (Castilla, Sorsogon City, and Casiguran)	April 8, 2011
Leyte (Javier)	May 6, 2011
Quezon (Real, Infanta, and Gen. Nakar)	June 7, 2011
Northern Samar (Mondragon, Catarman, Lope de Vega, Bobon, Las Navas, Catubig and Laoang)	June 25, 2011
Misamis Oriental (Binuangan, Salay, Kinoguitan, Gingoog City, Medina, Balingoan, Balingasag, Subongcogon, Lagonglong, and Talisayan)	July 19, 2011
Lanao del Norte (Sultan Naga de Dimaporo and Mamagum)	July 21, 2011

c) In total there were ten model sites this year⁹ and the three departments working together to channel resources in the General Appropriations Act (GAA) that are not allocated to specific beneficiaries. In addition, there are target investment plan until 2016 for different crops, livestock, agro-forestry, and fisheries, although most of the investment are expected to come from the private sector.

d) Some elected local officials have noticed the convergence sites and are pressuring to expand the pilot site to other provinces. However, the NCI lacks capacity and the resource to handle additional 70 sites yet, assuming one model site per province. The cabinet cluster of Human development and Poverty reduction, for its part, has identified 600 focus municipalities and has begun the classification of these areas, based on the depth of poverty and the geographic density of poor populations. The National Anti-Poverty Commission, which is the cabinet secretariat, has also requested to be included in the convergence initiative, with a view to enhancing the operationalization of a poverty reduction focus in the enhanced NCI.

⁹ 2011 as of time of writing.

Box 1. Summary of NCI History

Date	Important Event
January 1999	Joint Memorandum Circular (JMC) no 1 Series of 1999 was issued to formalize the National Convergence Initiative (NCI) by creating inter-agency Steering Committee (SC) and Technical Working Group (TWG)
February 2001	Abrupt change in the Administration that created uncertainty was cited as the main reason for the loss interest of the three departments in the convergence initiative
October 2004	JMC no 1 series of 2004 was issued by the new Department Secretaries to reactivate and lay down the guidelines of operationalization of NCI
July 2006	JMC no 1 series of 2006 was issued to formally adopt the Goal 1 of Medium-Term Philippine Development Plan (MTPDP) which was the development of at least two million hectares of new land for agribusiness
2008	Agribusiness proposals ready for implementation
September 2010	First convergence site was launched in Central Antique spanning five towns and covering different ecosystems from forest, upland, lowland down to coastal and marine ecosystems
November 2010	JMC no 1 series of 2010 was issued to lay the policy and implementation framework to enhance the NCI
February to July 2011	Nine additional convergence sites were launched or a total of ten sites including Antique.

4. Delays in Model Site Development

a) Looking back at the NCI progress for years, it takes eleven years from inception to finally implement a model convergence site in 2010. Within that span of time, it took nine years for the planning process from 1999 to 2008 to finally produce an agribusiness plan and two years before actual implementation in 2010.

b) There are three factors why it took nine years for the NCI in the planning stage. First, the collegial arrangement among Department Secretaries is a very tenuous that has broke down twice in the NCI existence. In 2001, the interest of the three departments in the NCI was killed by the uncertainty brought by the abrupt change in the administration according to an ADB report (Lange, 2004). The interest in the NCI was revived when the new Department Secretaries came in 2004. Again in 2008, the uncertainty concerning the extension of DAR's existence was cited as main reason for lack of interest in the convergence.

c) Second, new objective was introduced in the planning process shifting the focus of the NCI. Since the 1999 inception of the convergence initiative, the goal was to solve the coordination problem and identify pilot sites and to demonstrate how convergence would work in practice. However, the MTPDP 2004-2010 introduced a target of 2 million hectares for

agribusiness developed and increased rice production that created dual objectives of production targets and coordination problem. The NCI took two years to decide which production target to adopt and have to abandon the creation of the limited model sites approach and decided to apply the convergence initiative to all provinces in order to meet the production targets. Collectively, the three departments were able to hit 89% of the target through other existing programs but not through the convergence initiative.

d) The MTPDP was mandated by the president while the NCI was mandated by the secretaries that are under the president. It is the MTPDP prevailed in the planning of budget that according to ADB staff the planning is based on production targets while NCI is only secondary. MTPDP was translated into budget (even to 2011 budget was still based on production targets) while the NCI planning is not. The GAA resources, especially in the DA, were based on such production targets and were still adopted in the 2011 GAA.

e) Third, the NCI is not monitored in the Organizational Performance Indicator Framework hence there is no incentive to prevent the stalling of the planning process. There is no harm for the departments, if the MTPDP is achieved individually and not through the NCI process. Hence it is not surprising that development of two million hectares of agribusiness production areas was achieved by individual departments and not through the convergence initiative. There is no harm if one or the three departments loss interest in the convergence initiative. The main indicator monitored in the OPIF is on the rate of expenditure of the budget items in a given the fiscal year. The goal of the departments is to spend the entire budget within the fiscal year to obtain a higher rating in the OPIF. On the other hand, the JMC in 1999 has mentioned of developing a monitoring tool in the adherence of the NCI, however, monitoring is never mentioned in the subsequent JMCs.

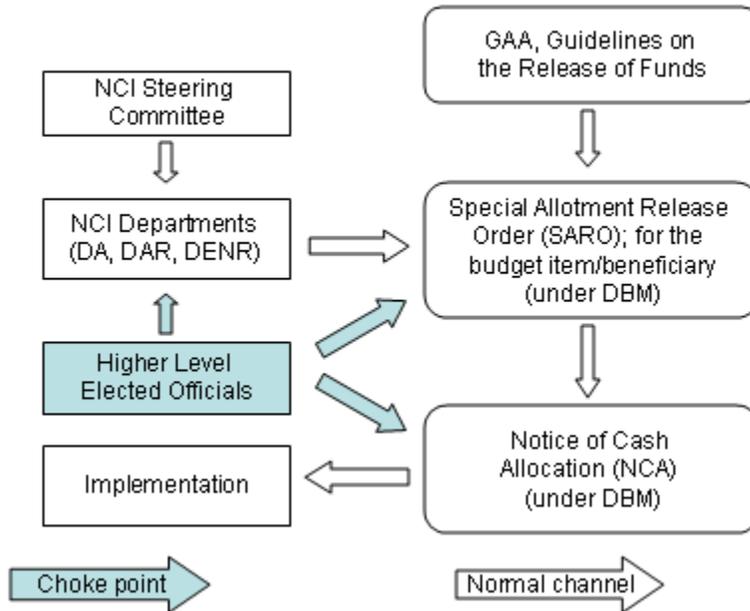
5. Implementation Delay in the Previous Administration

a) Aside from nine years planning delay in model site development, there was also a two-year implementation delay for convergence model sites. According to the JMC issued in 2010, some agribusiness proposals were ready in 2008. However, the first model site (Central Antique) was implemented only in 2010. This model site plus the nine other model sites were all implemented in the current administration and happened in less than a year from September 2010 to July 2011. The simplest explanation the NCI resource person can offer is that no site was implemented because the convergence initiative was never funded in the past administration. If the problem is no funding then the solution is to provide the funding. However, according to the JMCs issued since 2004, the initiative would be funded using the regular budget of their respective departments. In short, there was funding available but the NCI could not access the fund, or more appropriately, the NCI could not influence the budget execution process so the funds can be channeled in the model sites.

b) There are two ways why the NCI could not access the fund, either it fails to secure the Special Allotment and Release Order (SARO) or the Notice of Cash Allocation (NCA) was not released. To secure the funding, the NCI must transmit their recommendation to their respective departments that would then secure the SARO and NCA (see figure below, in white). However, the release of SARO and NCA can be blocked by the higher elected official, say speaker of the house or the president, (see figure below, in blue box) causing delay in the implementation in the

model convergence sites. The main reason for blocking the SARO or the NCA is if the higher elected official has another favored site or as political punishment in the last election.

Figure 2. NCI Planning and Implementation Cycle (before)



c) The SARO and NCA seem to appear as documentary requirements but these could be manipulated by higher elected official making them the choke points in the release of the budget preventing implementation. According to the Manual for National Government Agencies (NGAS) Volume I Accounting Policies, the release of SARO is subject to compliance with specific laws or regulations or is subject to separate approval or clearance by competent authority. In practice, the regulation is contained in the special provision found in the footnote of the GAA. In most cases though, the special provision is not specific so that the budget item needs a clearance and approval from a competent authority. It is not defined in the NGAS manual but in the past the informal arrangement was that the default competent authority was higher level elected official (usually the speaker of the house or even the president). The power of the higher elected official to approve the release of SARO is a potent tool to control the release of funds. This arrangement was a Marcos-era tool designed to centralize the fiscal powers of the president which was later adopted by the revolutionary government of the Cory Aquino.

d) With this arrangement, the NCI steering committee could simply ask the competent authority for clearance and approval of the SARO for a particular budget item. However, if the budget items are also target by elected officials (either the competent authority or lower level, e.g., congressperson or local government elected officials) who wanted to channel the budget to their favored areas, then NCI steering committee is helpless to the point that their model sites are not funded.

e) Aside from elected officials another player (not in the figure) could be simply those

within the department lobbying for the immediate release of SARO because they need to release the fund within the year to meet the Organizational Performance Indicator Framework (OPIF) target. The NCI being a new planning tool to coordinate the resources of the three departments is not yet in place and may cause a substantial delay in project implementation if followed. Hence, players inside the departments have the incentive to speed up the release of budget without waiting the result in the NCI planning process to meet the OPIF target.

f) Even if the higher elected official would not block the release of SARO, not all funds could be channeled to the model sites. Only those items with no beneficiaries identified, like the farm-to-market roads and some irrigation budget could be channeled; while, those items with beneficiaries already identified in the GAA could not, like most irrigation budget. In other words, only those budget items with no beneficiaries identified yet would create competing forces between the NCI and the elected officials in channeling to their ideal sites. In fact, the NCI can do nothing if the final beneficiary towns are already identified in the GAA. This situation is understandable as NCI is created (according to the JMCs) not to undergo joint planning and budgeting across the AARNR departments but to function only during the budget execution process as interagency coordinator of channeling resources to the model sites. The budget preparation (as mentioned in the introduction) is still done by departments individually as dictated in the budget call drafted by Department of Budget and Management (DBM).¹⁰

g) Even if the SARO is released, the budget could not still be released if the NCA is blocked. The NCA is a notice that cash is allocated and deposited in a particular bank from the National Government. However, the higher level elected official (say, the President) could impound the fund by instructing not to deposit money in a particular budget item, making it unimplementable.

h) This manipulation is an informal rule and not acknowledge by the resource person in the Bureau of Treasury. The resource person has a benign explanation that this only happened due to lack of funds. If the reason is lack of funds, the situation should be temporary as there is no limit the on debt the government can issue. In addition, the previous administration in 2008 declared 106 billion funds as savings from the 2007 fiscal year budget (Bagayaua, 2008). This was done by impounding the budget and once the fiscal year has lapsed, the president could simply declare the fund not deposited to specific budget item as unspent funds and declare it as savings. The senate and congress tried to control this power to impound the fund by filing a bill almost every year in previous administration, although without the support of the President the bill was and will never passed.

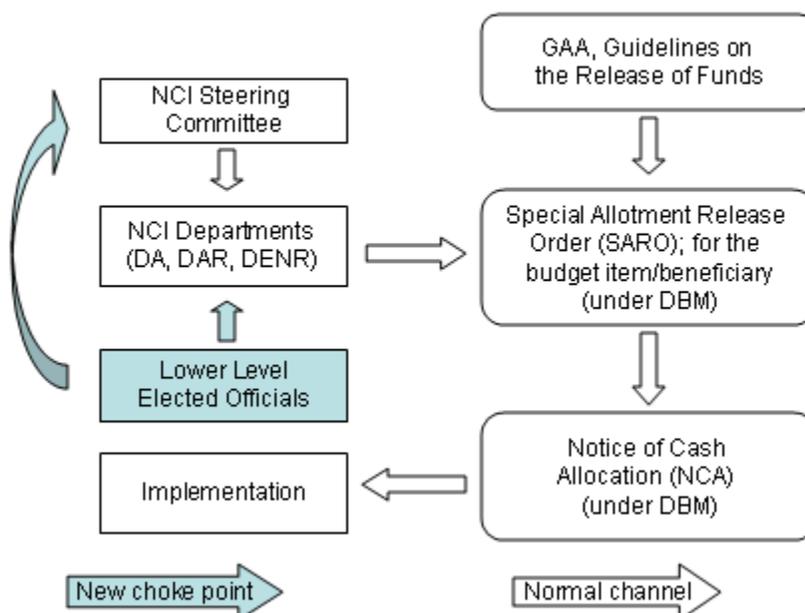
i) Although, the power to approve or block the release of the SARO and the NCA could cause of substantial delay in the NCI implementation, the higher elected official may also opt to fast track the release of SARO and NCA like what happened in the fertilizer scam. Without the clearance from the competent authority to release the SAROs and if no fund is deposited to release the NCA, the fund to buy the fertilizer could not be released and the scam would never happened. However, the power to manipulate the SARO and NCA are all informal rules and difficult to gather hard evidence that this is ended what happened.

¹⁰ For the 2013 budget preparation, DBM introduce the concept of joint planning and budgeting at the municipal level in which the items identified will be funded by different national agencies and incorporated in GAA. It is expected that the 2013 GAA contains budget items that are specific to the municipalities that are part of this experimental method of budget preparation.

6. Implementation in the Current Administration

a) In the current administration, the choke points are not exercised by the higher level elected official making it easy for the NCI to implement the model convergence sites. This explains why ten model sites are launched in a span of less than one year in the current administration. The President does not exercise its power to control the SARO and impound the budget to prevent the release of the NCA. Without exercising these two bottlenecks, the Departments Heads are now the default competent authority as a new informal arrangement. With this new informal arrangement, the current mode of influence of lower elected officials is through the NCI steering committee or through the department level by pressuring them to expand the convergence sites to other provinces. This kind of pressure (see figure below) is less effective as the lower elected officials has no control the release of SARO or NCA. The NCI through the three departments could implement their projects or programs to the model site without yielding to political pressures.

Figure 3. NCI Planning and Implementation Cycle (current)



b) The current “success” in the in implementation could be reversed anytime soon if the higher elected official (say the President) wishes to control the SARO and NCA again. This may happen if s/he wishes to use the budget process for patronage politics like rewarding the allies and punishing the opposition. So far the President is clear that all lower level elected officials (say legislators) would receive the funds regardless of political colors.

c) Although the choke points are not exercised, another danger that NCI may not be able to respond to the needs of the convergence sites in the 2012 GAA the new the policy of no lump sum amount. Because the budget call for FY 2012 specified that there should be no lump-sum amounts in agency budgets, it is very likely that the three agencies (which prepare the budget

individually) took public investment plans that have been on the drawing boards from previous years. While this budgeting approach creates local constituencies that will be making it costly for legislators or elected officials to shift budgets around, the pre-specification of investment plans also makes it difficult for the NCI to become responsive to the priority investments as identified through consultative processes with local stakeholders and the private sector. For example, if the beneficiary town for farm-to-market road is specified in the GAA then the NCI could not allocate to the NCI selected town or could not use the fund for other item like irrigation. There is of course that process of budget realignment; however, this process should not be made routine and easy because budget flexibility that works for legitimate constituencies can also be subject to capture by local elite interests.

7. NCI Planning in the Agro-Enterprise Site Development

a) The launching of a model site is a product of planning process designed for agro-enterprise development for model sites. It includes gathering of secondary data, a first workshop, ocular inspection, pre and final workshops, launching of model site, and lastly monitoring. The data to be gathered are provincial plans, maps, existing projects and programs of the National Government. The first workshop consists of orientation of the “ridge to reef” approach to empower the TWGs and introduction of long list of crops that could be grown in the site. The ocular inspection validates the data gathered in the two previous steps. The second and final workshops aim to produce the final list of crops and discuss the investment requirements needed. The launching activity formalizes the commitments of the three departments on the investments they could deliver to the model site and the monitoring process is done to make sure that all parties adhere to their commitments. The key planning steps or activities and their features are describe in more detail in the table below:

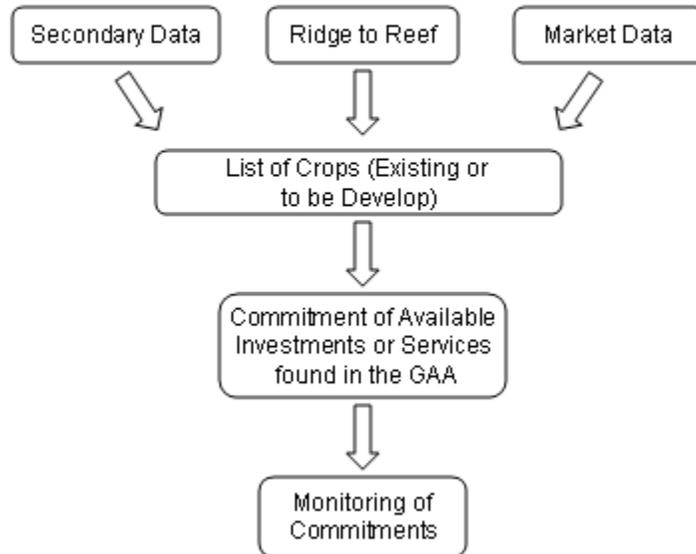
Planning Step	Key features, activities
Gathering of Secondary Data	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provincial Physical Framework Plan - it containing baseline information on the physical, biological, social, infrastructure, investment plans and development goals. • Available maps like geo-political boundaries (province, municipality, and barangays); thematic maps (topography, slope, existing land-use, soil profile, etc.); maps showing infrastructure (road networks, irrigation and dams, transmission lines, communication, post-harvest, airports, seaports, banks, SUCs and R&D centers, market centers); • Location and area of regulatory instruments, including location and area (ARC, CBFM, ISF, SIFMA, IFMA, CADT/CADC, watershed area, protected area) • Provincial Agribusiness Plan or Profile which may contain data on existing commodities (area planted, production, and market profile); market and trading posts; agri-aqua investment plan/program (priority commodities, market potential, area – rotational or expansion, and budget requirements) • Identify which commodities have value chain analysis and feasibility

Planning Step	Key features, activities
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> studies; • List of donor-assisted projects/programs (completed and on-going) to include description and location in agriculture and fisheries, forestry, environment, and natural resources management; agrarian reform and eco-tourism
First Workshop	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Orientation on the NCI strategies and ridge to reef approach, a holistic conservation and management approach that links conservation action across watersheds and adjacent coastal ecosystems. The goal of this activity is to empower the regional, provincial and municipal TWGs. • Workshop on agro-enterprise development using secondary data gathered and inputs from participants; introduce long list of possible commodities to grow in the area. • Target participants /audience - RED/RTD and NCI RFP, DAR (PARO), DENR (PENRO), DILG, Governor, PPDO, PLGU-ENRO, OPA, NGO, cooperatives, Academe, NEDA, representative from RDC and PDC, DTI, DOST, DILG, and HLURB, Representative of Congress, private sector, farmers association.
Ocular Inspection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The purpose of this activity is to validate secondary data gathered, existing facilities, potential areas for expansion and identify potential lead firms.
Second and Final Workshops	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The goal of the second workshop is to produce a shortlist of commodity cluster and be finalized in final workshop. In both workshops the following topics are discussed: mapping of the commodity clusters; commodity situationer of each cluster to include cost of production development; investment requirements to include FMR, PHF, irrigation, etc.; financial analysis (financial cash flows) • Target Participants in both workshops - RED/RTD and NCI RFP, DAR (PARO), DENR (PENRO), Governor, PPDO, PLGU-ENRO, OPA, NGO, COOPs, Academe, NEDA, representative from RDC and PDC, DILG, DTI, DOST, DILG, and HLURB, Representative of Congress, private sector, farmers association; plus respective DA, DAR, DENR units, ACPC, BAR, LBP, BPI, AMAD
Launching	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The objective is to formalize the commitments different departments and LGUs, presentation of investment requirements of the final commodity clusters and turn over / awarding of projects
Monitoring	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Updating and follow through of the investment requirements • Monitor deadlines and deliverables according to approved investment requirements

b) In the planning process, the local governments take the lead in identifying the final list of commodities in the series of workshops consistent with the guiding principles laid down in the previous JMCs. The list is then the basis of the different departments on what investment and services they could commit to the convergence sites. These commitments are formalized in the launching event and monitored for adherence of commitments of different parties. Moving

backwards, the elaborate planning steps in the table above could be summarized in figure below:

Figure 4. Current NCI Planning Process for Model Agro-enterprise Development



c) The planning process appears to have addressed the original objective of JMCs to solve the fragmented delivery of services of different departments under the constraint that the NCI is not involved in the budget preparation. NCI facilitated the convergence of resources towards a given model site. For example, in the Central Antique convergence site, the DENR has supported the development of 70 hectares abaca and 50 hectares rattan plantation, handed 78 land titles turned over 1,000 seedlings of fruit trees and forest trees seedlings. The DAR, on the other hand, provided a combination of infrastructure, institutional development, agricultural and enterprise development support amounting to some P 99.21 million through the launching of the Agrarian Reform Infrastructure Support Project (ARISP) III. The DA provided tramline to Patnongon town to help transport the product of around 1,000 farmers. It has also distributed drum seeder, power sprayer, shredder machines, upland rice and vegetable seeds to model site. In addition, a transplanter that could transplant a maximum of two hectares per day using only five liters of gasoline was handed to the provincial government.

d) Although the fragmented delivery of services is solved, the planning process could still be improved. First, the planning process is only for developing a model agro-enterprise site which is just one of the seven policy directives of the new NCI according to the 2010 JMC. The other six policy directives has no elaborate planning process yet or was not incorporated in the agro-enterprise cluster development planning. The other six policy directives are:

- ▲ Strengthening of the regional and provincial CI technical working groups
- ▲ Intensify promotions of agribusiness investment opportunities
- ▲ Development of public-private partnerships for agribusiness ventures and agricultural

development

- ⤴ Pursue capacity building towards developing stronger farmer organizations that are entrepreneurially-oriented and market-driven
- ⤴ Provide value chain financing to the agribusiness projects identified in the convergence clusters
- ⤴ Formulation of regional rural development plans

e) Although not explicitly included in the planning model of agro-enterprise cluster development, other policy directives have observable outcomes in some model sites. For example, the Isabela model convergence site has developed a public-private partnership by attracting the Aboitiz Group to invest on the hydro-power with a capacity to produce 100MW amounting to P12.9 bn and post-harvest facilities amounting to P2.25 bn.

f) Second, the planning for model site is conservative and has not gone further beyond identifying the final list of crops like identifying the key constraints to scale up production, gap analysis, capacity building needed by the local stake holders, etc. Since the local government takes the lead in identifying the final list of commodities, it could have also done these things by itself. However, the budgets for many services that are supposed to have been already devolved are still with DA and DENR. In other words, the public expenditure management process that allocates budgets to specific localities is still in the control of the national agencies. At the moment, NCI appears to be a process of delivering capital goods from the line agencies to the model sites.

g) If the hands of the local government are tied, the NCI could take the lead identifying the key constraints to scale up production, gap analysis, capacity building needed by the local stake holders, etc. However, the hands of the NCI are also tied for it has to work with existing budget in the GAA. In fact, this is the main reason why the three departments will choose the investment they can deliver in the model site, instead of local governments identifying the investments needed. The NCI has limited control in the GAA for it could only influence budget items with no final beneficiaries identified and could not realign resources to address investment identified in the planning for model site is not available in the GAA. This may explain why the planning process is conservative and only identifies the final list of crops to be grown in the model site.

h) To demonstrate the limited degrees of freedom of the NCI and how this constraint affect the setting of an optimal planning process, let us assume that local governments could now choose the investment needed instead of just selection of final list of commodities. For example, the local stakeholder in model site planning process has identified farm-to-market road (FMR), irrigation and a tractor as the investments needed in the site. A quick look in the 2011 GAA shows that both FMR (2.5 bn pesos) and irrigation (500 mn pesos) are present while the tractor is not. This means NCI could not address the third investment identified. From the point of view of the NCI, it is not reasonable to let the local stakeholder choose the investment when some of the local stakeholder choices could not be delivered. From the point of view of the local stakeholder, choosing the investment would also raise their expectation that NCI would address all the investments later. This unmet expectation could affect its cooperation in the model site. To avoid unmet expectations derail the convergence initiative, the optimal arrangement is a conservative planning arrangement in which the local government would only choose the final list of crops while the selection of investments were done by the departments subject to what is available in the GAA.

8. Other Planning Approaches as Benchmarks

a) It has been argued in the previous in the previous section that the conservative planning for model site development is the product of the inability of the NCI to realign the budget to address the key constraints and gaps that could be identified in a more rigorous planning process. But assuming that the NCI could realign budget and resources, the current planning model for site development could still be improved and incorporate other planning approaches. For example, the emerging practice of Department of Health engagement with local governments is unique among the national agencies and can be instructive for an NCI planning. Although the DoH still allocates funds for facilities that are supposed to have already been devolved all provinces have been asked to prepare Provincial Investment Plans for Health (PIPHs), each of these investments correspond to service-level agreements (SLAs), and the performance of the provinces against their SLAs is measured via a official scorecards. If this system gets incentives right and makes it difficult for LGUs to game the system, the SLAs corresponding to the requested investments reveal the best truthful guess of LGUs concerning the outputs and outcomes that their proposed investments could deliver. Presumably, the DoH allocates budgets using this information on the projected cost-effectiveness of proposed LGU investments.

b) The DA's own MRDP project (Mindanao Rural Development Program) has developed just such a set of measurable rural development and environmental indicators for the capital and community strengthening investments that it conveys to local government units. The MRDP process has two advantages relative to the PIPH process of DoH that can also be incorporated in strengthening the local component of the NCI, namely:

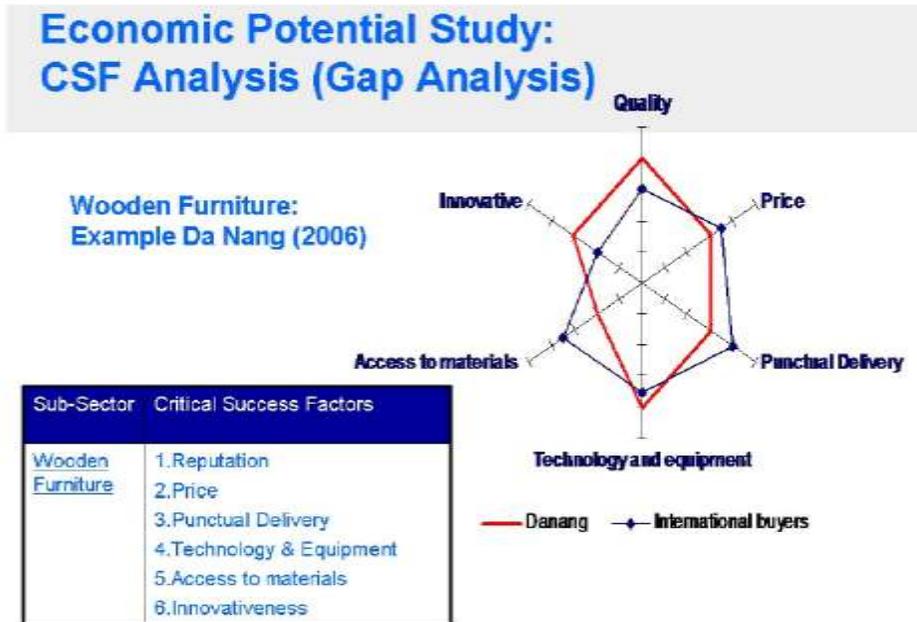
- a thoroughgoing participatory approach that includes meso-level inputs
- a capacity-building component, that will allow LGUs to progressively perform better in the delivery of rural development and environmental services;

c) Since the local stakeholders are already part in the planning model agro-enterprise cluster development, the future methodologies used in local consultations and decision-making need to yield the following minimum elements (aside from the final list of crops):

▲ identification of product niches and buyers' desired improvements in local production capabilities and product qualities (see box 1 below); related to this, deciding what kinds of private partners to recruit for investments in local productive capacity;

Box 2. Spider Diagram

A “spider diagram” illustrates the gaps in local capabilities of a local production cluster (furniture) versus those desired by buyers, based on the capability of other suppliers. Knowledge of this sort should drive discussions about the club and public goods and institutional capabilities that a production area should be coordinating to secure and produce.



Adopted from Schoen C. (2008)

- ⤴ identification of priority public and co-financing modes for club goods that would scale-up a production cluster’s capabilities to develop products for markets;
- ⤴ identification and support for modes of small-holder participation for achieving inclusive growth – here the qualitative improvements in the matching of extension services to needs and innovations in financial and technologies would be critical.

9. NCI Roadmap to the AARNR Goal

a) Since the short term goal of solving the problem of fragmented service delivery has been addressed, the NCI could also focus on creating a road map on how it should function after several iterations. The NCI could create a roadmap that identifies the milestones in the future enhancement of the convergence initiative especially incorporating the six policy directives mentioned in the 2010 JMC (also mentioned in previous section). This would help put the indicators of such milestones in agency work plans and calendars.

b) In addition to incorporating the six policy directives, the roadmap could also evolve into the direction towards an alliance from a coordinating platform. Currently, the NCI is a coordination mechanism that would strengthen the viability, inclusivity and sustainability of agribusiness-based local economic development. But even after several iterations, the NCI most valued function would at the moment appear to be that of delivering capital goods from the line agencies. The current NCI could evolve into NCI-LGU-community alliance that can be described (from Gordillo and Wagner, 2004) below:

“It is a coordinating organization at regional scale, which articulate local requirements and potentials with the opportunities (actual or possible) given by both the different agencies (governmental, international, cooperation) and the market, in a long run sustainable and integrated vision.

The alliance is responsible, independently of who executes, about implemented projects quality and strategic coherence. In order to fulfil its mission, it must have: a dynamic and integral strategy, an effective coordination system (with documented responsibilities), a process and product monitoring system and, finally, an effective commitment for continuous improvement of the system.

The alliance is a meeting point for different positions. Conflict should be managed in order to equilibrate visions and regulate timing and sequencing. All the above purposes boil down to attaining within the legal framework, sustainable improvements of regional welfare.”

10. Other Developments Towards the NCI Roadmap

a) The planned folding-up of DAR provides strong impetus for the continuing evolution of the NCI approach. The new DAR Secretary is also preparing transition plans that would result in the handover of residual DAR responsibilities to DA or to LGUs in the event that no further extensions of the agrarian reform program is legislated in Congress. Resource persons have indicated that agrarian reform staff would increasingly be mobilized to beef up agricultural extension services, especially in the context where the inclusion of the poor into commercial value chains must happen if agribusiness is to have a credible poverty reduction focus.

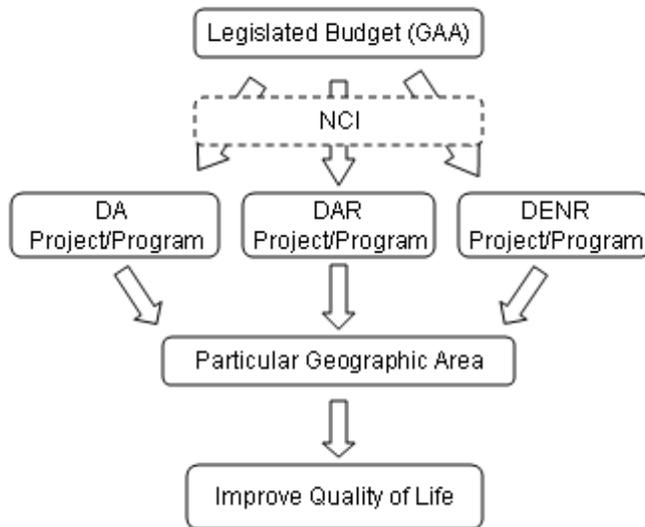
b) Certainly the DAR Secretary, in the case of the ongoing effort to enhance the coconut sector roadmap of the Philippine Coconut Authority (PCA), is looking at the DA to mobilize its resources for Agrarian Reform Communities in the coconut sector; however, even that would appear to be quite ad hoc. The World Bank too is said to be implementing a technical assistance project that would propose options for the rural development agencies in the event that CARPER is no longer extended. A roadmap that identifies the milestones in the future enhancement of the NCI would help put the indicators of such milestones in agency work plans and calendars.

11. Analysis and Recommendations

a) The current NCI is based on the framework that achieving the goal of the three departments would ultimately achieve the sector goal of improving the quality of life.

Convergence happens because the projects and programs of the different departments would lead to improve quality of life in the long run. However, working individually resulted to fragmentation and duplication of services delivered in a given geographic area, hence, there is a need to coordinate their programs and projects. The most effective way is for the NCI to coordinate the AARNR departments in planning and budgeting process (Lange, 2009) so that the budget items in the resulting GAA are complementary for a given area. Unfortunately, the authority to order a joint planning and budgeting is beyond the realm of the NCI but rest in the Department Budget and Management through the budget call. Consequently, the mandate of the NCI, as describe in the series of JMCs, is in coordinating the projects and programs after the budget is legislated (see figure below). The broken lines for the NCI indicates that the budget could be released outside the NCI planning process.

Figure 5. National Convergence Initiative Operationalization

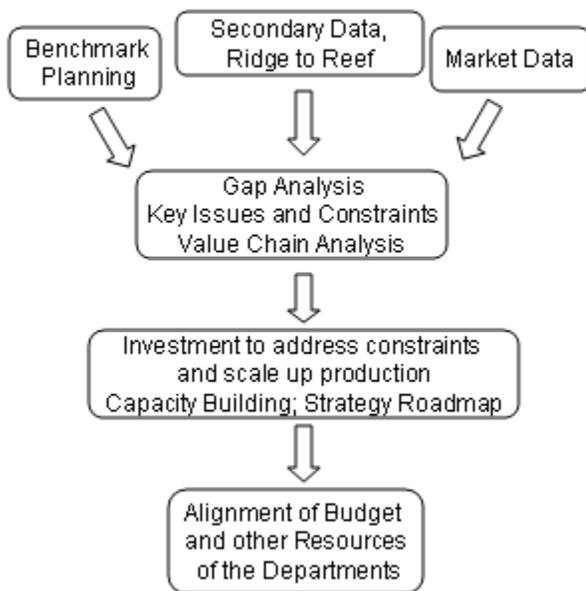


b) Since the NCI mandate is in coordinating the projects and programs after the budget is legislated, it can only direct budget items that have no final beneficiaries identified. But even then, the NCI has difficulty in channeling resources to model sites if other players will control the SARO and the NCA. To address this issue, one improvement is to grant NCI a greater ability to align the budget by i) putting a budget item in the GAA with a special provision that could be disbursed through the recommendation of its TWG and ii) removing the impoundment powers of higher elected officials.

c) Granting the NCI greater ability to align resources and budget is a necessary but not sufficient step to move from conservative to progressive planning of agro-enterprise site development. As argued in the previous section (section 7), the main reason for being conservative in planning is that the current NCI could not respond to all the key issues and constraints identified in the planning process as only budget items with no final beneficiaries could be align to the model site. Identifying key issues and constraints in the planning process would only raise the expectation from the local stakeholder that the NCI would address them.

d) Once the NCI has greater control over the budget allocation and resources, it is more willing to identify the key issues and constraints, the investment needed to scale up production and adopt an improved planning process (see figure below). The NCI could also adopt the MRDP practice of incorporating the capacity-building component or the DOH practice of supplying the investment needed for the type of services the local government chooses to deliver. In addition, granting more control on budget allocation and resources, NCI could move to long term planning rational like planning for NCI roadmap. Currently, NCI roadmap is not attractive since there is no guarantee that it will be implemented in the future given the enormous effort to prepare it.

Figure 6. Ideal NCI Planning Process



e) Putting a special provision¹¹ in the GAA on how a particular budget will be released is done on some other items like the budget for conditional-cash-transfer (CCT). For the CCT, the special provision states that the budget will be disbursed based on the CCT manual. For the NCI, the special provision could be stated that a particular budget item be allocated based on the selection process agreed by the NCI TWG. The NCI could design a selection process that rewards performance by giving more grants if a service-level-agreement is achieved (or performance-based-grant). Since the budget preparation starts a year and a half before the actual year of budget implementation, the special provision for a particular budget for 2013 GAA should be ready by the middle of 2011. In addition, the special provision should be incorporated yearly to maintain the ability of the NCI to align the budget.

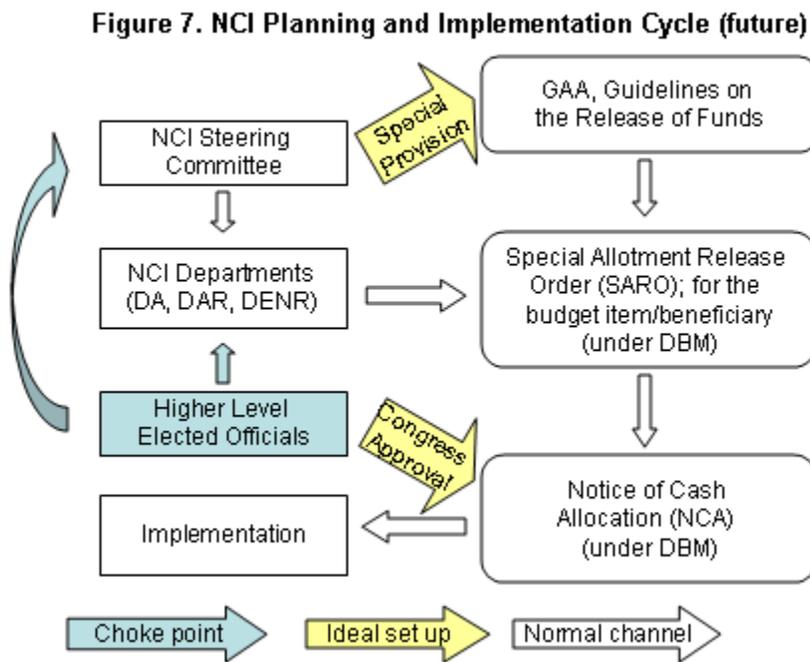
f) This special provision has another advantage aside from giving the NCI the ability to align the budget. The release of SARO could be now subject to compliance to special provision, and not on the competent authority with default being a higher elected official. In other words, the higher elected official could not muddle the implementation by blocking the SARO. The special provision would partly solve the current fragile equilibrium making it more difficult to

¹¹ Special provisions appear as footnotes in the General Appropriations Act.

revert back to old arrangement of influencing the release of SARO.

g) Although special provision could remove the gate-keeping powers of the higher level elected official and allow NCI to align the budget for needs identified in the planning process, the budget can still be impounded through the Notice of Cash Allocation (NCA). Hence, another way to grant NCI greater control over budget and resources is to remove the power to unilaterally impound the budget item. The only way to remove this power is through amendment of the budget law which is Marcos-era designed to centrally control the budget execution process and was adopted by the 1987 constitution to support the fragile government at that time.

h) There are many anti-impoundment bills filed but the most comprehensive is the house bill no. 3074 entitled Budget Reform Act of 2010. This bill requires the approval of congress if the President wishes to impound a particular budget. This proposed mechanism is similar to the check and balanced installed in US. Once the two ways of granting the NCI more control, the implementation cycle would look similar to figure below.



i) Aside from granting NCI greater powers on budget and resources, another area for improvement is on tracking the indicator/s of the sectoral goal. Currently, there is no agreed measurable indicator for the improvement for the quality of life. In other words, no one is aware if the assumption that the effect of the projects and programs of three departments would converge to attain the improvement of quality of life in the long run. If the NCI would adopt a proxy indicator for quality of life that is easily measurable, it could be either income or expenditure which could be collected through the existing methodologies that are site-specific such as Community Based Monitoring Survey (CBMS) or National Household Targeting System (NHTS). The current performance measure that is in place to monitor the success of the program or project is the Organizational Performance Indicator Framework which focuses on the project/program output and not on the welfare effect to the beneficiaries.

12.Summary

a) Convergence in the AARNR sector would happen because the impact of the projects and programs of different departments is assumed to improve the quality of life of the beneficiaries in the long run. However, working individually, especially in the budget preparation, would lead to fragmented delivery of services, so the National Convergence Initiative (NCI) main task is to solve the coordination problem among departments. The quickest way to achieve this is for the NCI to facilitate a joint planning and budgeting, but since this is not possible without the help of the DBM, it functions itself as a coordinating committee in allocating resources across departments.

b) The NCI was initiated by the three Department Secretaries of AARNR sector in 1999 through a signed Joint Memorandum Circular (JMC) which mandated to create an inter-agency steering committee and technical working group. The stated aim of the NCI is to establish a model site in which the three departments would converge to pour complementary projects and programs to maximize the impact on the sector goal of improving quality of life.

c) However, the NCI is full of implementation delays. First, it is based on collegial arrangement that broke down twice since its existence. Second, the site selection was delayed for nine years due to new objectives introduced by authority higher (the MTPDP) and the lack of negative incentive if the NCI process is stalled. Third, the NCI could not influence the budget and resources allocation to implement the model site in the previous administration.

d) The model site, centered on agro-enterprise development, was only implemented in 2010 under the current administration. In other words, it took eleven years from inception to finally implement the model sites. This success, according to resource person, is due to unwritten policy in the current administration of allowing the NCI to channel the unallocated budget items in the GAA to the model sites.

e) Allowing the NCI to channel the unallocated budget items in the GAA to the model sites is a necessary condition to make the NCI going but the planning process could still be improved by granting the NCI more power to align and allocate resources and budget. By granting more budget powers, the NCI would be able to plan long term and commit resources to address the key issues and constraints in the model sites, and to address the investment needed to scale up production. It could also integrate capacity-building similar to MRDP, and let the LGU identify the services they need similar to DOH's SLA.

f) Granting more budget powers may happen if one or both of the pre-requisites will happen. First a special provision is incorporated into the GAA for a particular budget item. This provision describes how the fund is disbursed based on the NCI TWG agreed process. Second, the budget law is amended to regulate the impounding powers of the President.

g) In summary, the interagency planning in the AARNR sector is in existence for eleven years but the actual model site launching only started in 2010. In theory, the model site launching could have been started as early as 2008 but the NCI was only able to influence the allocation of resources in the current administration. With the span of more than a year, the NCI is focused on the actual implementation; while, convergence towards the AARNR goal of improving quality of life of the beneficiaries is assumed to be the logical consequence of the impact of the different

projects and programs of different departments.

13.Epilogue

The Department of Budget and Management in the 2013 budget call would experiment a joint planning and budgeting at the municipal level across agencies in which the lead group is the local government unit. It is hoped that this experiment would solve the coordination problem, so that the items identified in the process would be incorporated in the GAA and detailed enough that it could be disbursed to the municipality that identified the items. In addition the project and programs identified in this process are expected to be complementary in nature similar to what is aspired in the National Convergence Initiative as stated in the Joint Memorandum Circulars.

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