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ABSTRACT

The discussion paper consists principally of two checklists of preoperational research for development projects in developing nations. (Preoperational research is focused on the possibility or feasibility of introducing a given innovation, its implications, and necessary modification.) The checklists, the first on factors relevant for agricultural program planners and the second on implications for a family planning project, group preoperational research needs as quantitative and qualitative data in nine categories: Kinship, economic and political and bureaucratic, structure, legal system, educational system, medical/nutritional/sanitary beliefs and practices, religion and ethics, other cultural factors, and current exposure to other innovations. The author contends that it is useful to systematize needed information so that the social planner may be made aware of the multiplicity of factors affecting his projected input in a development activity, e.g., his introduction of new agricultural techniques or of a contraceptive device. (MF)

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DISCUSSION PAPER

Jane Bunnag
16 February 1976

Needs Appraisal

There appears to be a very low degree of consensus amongst those working in development as to the meaning of the term Needs Appraisal and as to the necessity for such appraisal relative to development projects.

A person's view as to the possible function of needs appraisal reflects directly his conception of the probably or desirable development donor/recipient relationship, and the likely origin or source of development innovations.

To elaborate this a little:

- the most conservative viewpoint on this question would hold that innovations are developed externally and introduced by the development agency concerned to the potential "adoptees" who, by accepting the innovation, become "developed". For people of this persuasion the problem lies only in extending the given innovation to the audience, a process which at best might involve some probably rather cursory enquiry into viable channels of communication into this audience. Real appraisal of audience needs is an irrelevance.
- at the midway position are those who would hold that it is in the nature of things that innovations are more likely to arise -- in essence at least -- in those countries/societies which are also development donors. However, adaptation of an innovation is an essential pre-requisite for its transfer and adoption.

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In order to achieve such adaptation it is essential to a) conduct very thorough pre-operational research/needs appraisal into the project audience prior to any attempt to introduce the innovation ~ b) establish sensitive feed-back systems to monitor and evaluate at each stage the audience responses. These two processes combined should result in the appropriate modification of the innovation to be introduced, and of its presentation to the audience.

- at the progressive end of this spectrum of opinion are those who would consider that needs appraisal and the genesis of the innovation are essentially one and the same process. Needs appraisal is thus seen as a process which seeks out and activates the creative potential of the audience themselves. Needs appraisal of this type is thus not "focussed" towards an existing (though malleable) innovation as is the needs appraisal/pre-operational research of the type described above. On the contrary needs appraisal in this latter sense results in the pin-pointing of an innovation defined by the audience themselves which is then nurtured or boosted by the development agency.

The present writer would tend towards a mid-way position for a variety of reasons, including the following, that:

- An innovation will not "stick" in a basically hostile environment however "persuasively" introduced, although it may be sustained by artificial transfusions of money and expertise throughout the life-time of the project. If it is of marginal use it may be modified so that it can be absorbed by the host, perhaps out of all recognition. (It is not only more ethical but also more sensible to advocate and conduct pre-operational research and audience evaluation).

- It is to deny the evidence of history to assume that societies are self-sufficient in terms of invention and ideas. There has always been transfer and adaptation (catholicism, communism, bio-gas! Bathos!).

Checklists for Needs Appraisal/Audience Evaluation

The attached checklists have been used for pre-operational research i.e. research focussed on the possibility/feasibility of introducing a given innovation, its implications and subsequent necessary modification.

Checklists of Pre-operational Research Needs and Findings: Some Implications for Programme Planning.

In the attached Checklists the Pre-operational Research data needed has been categorised according to content. Data within each category can to some extent be further classified according to its quantitative or qualitative nature, although this distinction is not always clear-cut. In some cases the quantitative/qualitative distinction corresponds on the one hand to the ideal and on the other to the actual beliefs and values in that particular area of social activity; which again, and in some cases only, corresponds on the one hand to the kinds of information which is most likely to be contained in existing census and other surveys (quantitative), and in the other to the (qualitative) types of information to be obtained from field-testing of hypotheses based on statistical data.

It is clear that most of the data (though it should be remembered that these lists are not exhaustive) under column b) in both lists would be of equal relevance to programme planners in any sectoral activity and indeed this information, in the ideal situation, would be stored in some central socio-economic data bank for use by planners and policy makers from any sector.

It must be further emphasized that the categories we have chosen as a basis for this list (see column a) do not have objective validity, any more than do the more conventional "sectors".

It is however useful to systematize needed information into these fairly broad categories, which in some, though not all cases correspond to the subjects' own distinctions between areas of human activity e.g. most people would make conscious distinctions between occupational, political, domestic, and religious activities. The interest and importance for the social analyst lies in discerning where and how these categories infuse and inter-penetrate one another; and, to take it a step further, for the social planner to be aware of the multiplicity of factors which will affect the response to his projected input in one small area of activity e.g. his introduction of new agricultural techniques, or of a contraceptive device.

Check List No. 1

a. Pre-Operational
Research Needs

i. Kinship

b. Factors Relevant for
(Agricultural) Programme
Planners

Quantitative Data

Basic demographic data for area;
average/normative family/
household size. Mobility seasonal
and others.

Qualitative Data

Significance of family/household
group as economic unit, for
organisation of labour, for con-
sumption, inheritance etc. Changes
in household size/composition in
response to seasonal variations in
mode of production.

ii. Economic

Quantitative Data

Natural resources in the area.
Local/national/world demand for
new crops. Technological status
of various occupational categories.
Figures on employment/unemployment/
under-employment. Marketing system
within area, and with outside groups.
Class/occupational stratification.
Household income/expenditure/
inheritance patterns.

c. Programme Implications

Innovation may require consoli-
dation of individual landhold-
ings and formation of co-operative
units larger than household.
Change in optimal family size for
a given area of land.

Seasonal fluctuations in size and
composition of "target" community
crucial.

Necessity to find guaranteed
markets; provision of marketing
information/transport to farmers.
Implications for formation of
Co-operatives; development of
agro-industries.

Qualitative Data

No tradition of co-operative labour units wider than household.

Farmer-training needs

Household income largely in kind not cash; spare cash converted into jewellery or spent, on religious ceremonies. Little experience of use of banking system. Many people permanently indebted to money lenders from ethnic minority group. Many agricultural tasks forbidden women after puberty; woman's major economic role as vendor. No awareness of growing pressure on land.

Organisation of rural credit system.

Development of women's role -- agricultural and other.

iii. Political and Bureaucratic Structure

Quantitative Data

Institutional framework for proposed project; data on infrastructure at all levels (central, provincial, district).

Political groups/associations in "target" community

Qualitative Data

Functioning and operation of elements in infrastructure; e.g. relationships between different ministries/departments, management information and training needs.

Early inputs in project infrastructure, in management information; training project cadres.

Relationship between local political groupings and land-ownership.

Local political leaders' support for project essential

iv. Legal System

Quantitative Data

Rules for ownership and inheritance of land and other types of property, by men/women.

Marriage laws/divorce laws etc.

Need to establish relationship between rights over land, and rights over parts of the irrigation system to be introduced under the project.

Qualitative Data

New opportunities for women to earn cash income giving rise to litigation between husband and wife.

Marriages often arranged in relation to consolidation of land parcels decimated by inheritance practices etc.

Bear in mind women's changing economic role, and their potential in relation to new project inputs.

v. Educational System

Quantitative Data

Kinds and levels of education available in project area. Level of literacy.

Adapt agricultural information for use in educational system at all levels (e.g. primary, secondary, adult literacy classes).

Qualitative Data

Educational highly valued, but as a channel of escape from the area, to the capital. Teachers often local leaders.

Establish vocational agricultural schools. Teachers, potential change agents.

vi. Medical/Nutritional/
Sanitary Beliefs and
Practices.

Quantitative Data

Birth/death rates for all
categories of population.
Major health/nutritional/
sanitary problems. Official
medical services in the area.

Indications for manpower
planning. Introduction of
certain crops require major
ethical/attitudinal changes.

Qualitative Data

Religious/ethical beliefs
forbid growth and consumption
of certain food products; class
distinctions also have dietary
implications.

Applied Nutritional Programme
to support new agricultural
inputs.

Women forbidden to work in
fields during menstruation or
pregnancy. Official medical
services under-utilized relative
to indigenous practitioners.

vii. Religion and Ethics

Quantitative Data

Primary religious groupings in
area. Major religious leaders
and meeting places.

Qualitative Data

Implications of religious beliefs
for day-to-day activities.
Credibility/authority of religious
leaders in other fields.

Religious leaders not involved
in practical affairs.

Religious expenditures and ceremonies seasonal; constitute considerable drain on personnel and financial resources at certain times of the year.

viii. Other Cultural Factors

Quantitative Data

Mass media facilities and resources; local/indigenous media. Audience size and categories.

Organize support for project through media other than trained project cadres, and in support of these.

Qualitative Data

Audience preferences. Regional linguistic differences, and colour codes.

People may prefer to have leisure-time, than to invest time in growing new crops to make money.

Preferred forms of recreation and entertainment. Existence of concept of "leisure-time", and how best to spend it.

ix. Current Exposure to other Innovations

Quantitative Data

Details of all other project inputs into the area in same/different sector(s); international, bilateral, local/national, private funding.

Implications for cross-sectoral diffusion of messages, and rationalization of information inputs. Possibilities of co-operation and mutual assistance at all levels.

Qualitative Data

Best assessment of impact of these inputs on "target" community.

Pre-operational Research Checklist: Implications for a Family Planning Project

a. Pre-operational Research Needs

1. Kinship

b. Some Factors Relevant to (FP) Programme Planners

Quantitative Data

Basic demographic data for area; average/normative family size etc. Mobility into/out of area.

Qualitative Data

Structure and composition of "family" and household unit e.g. typical household, 3-generation extended-family, is primary economic and subsistence unit; grandparental generation are "managers", because of inheritance system newly married couples tend to set up house with wife's family. Equality of status between the sexes? Perception of mobility into/out of area at individual/family level.

c. Implications for FP Programme Planners

Design and interpretation of future census surveys dependent on knowledge of fam/hh. size and structure and what these terms imply in this culture. Grandparent may influence decision-making re contraception; some FP communication should be aimed at them. Unlikely that strong preference for children of either sex exists.

11. Economic

Quantitative Data

Means of subsistence in area; availability of land; marketing outlets; household income/expenditures in cash and in kind. Income disparities in area. Existence of co-operatives etc.

Further investigation into female economic role and what this means for her ability/willingness to purchase FP services.

FP communication materials encourage awareness of growing pressure on land; stress that smaller families means larger share for each child of consumer priorities listed.

Qualitative Data

Agricultural developments minimizing need for female labour in fields. Women emphasizing traditional role in marketing produce. Major household expenditures made on authority of grandparental generation. Consumer priorities -- food, clothes, religious observations and obligations, education, health (in that order). Growing pressure on land not perceived. Social significance of income disparities (if exist).

iii. Political and Bureaucratic Structure

Quantitative Data

Institutional framework for proposed project. Civil service structure; basic frame-work for delivery of services (FP). Local political groups, associations.

Determine bureaucratic location of Programme; e.g. MCH-based, or health-based. Re-organisation of basic facilities.

Qualitative Data

Functioning of this system; capacity to deliver services; management information, training need.

Need for training orientation at various levels prior to establishment of project.

iv. Legal System

Quantitative Data

Inheritance through female line, Women's brothers/father "managers" of her inherited estate; woman has independent control with respect to earned cash income.

Monogamous marriage

Divorce possible

Abortion illegal

Implications for overall design of FP communication/motivation campaign. Interpretation and design of quantitative studies (i.e. disparity between monogamous ruling and actuality).

Qualitative Data

Women increasingly independent economically (see ii economics).

"Common Law" marriage very common (both simultaneous and consecutive). Divorce easy and frequent. No stigma attached to illegitimacy; fatherless children easily absorbed into extended kinship group.

"Adoption" of brothers/sister's children by unmarried, or childless women very common.

Abortion illegal but easily obtained.

v. Educational System

Quantitative Data

Categories and levels of education available literacy levels.

FP communication materials not emphasize text and reading.

Use of members of educational system as bearers of message.

Qualitative Data

Majority of people in state of "lapsed literacy". Education highly valued per se and as escape route from rural life.

Teachers often local opinion leaders.

Volunteer teaching programme (students) and externally-funded volunteers also potential channels of communication.

vi. Medical/Nutritional/
Sanitary Beliefs and
Practices

Quantitative Data

Birth/death rates, infant and maternal mortality. Major health problems - malaria, liver-fluke, protein deficiency.

Basic KAP data.

Official medical services available, utilization of etc.

Need to create awareness of actual decline in child mortality stressed.

Need for instructional materials to counteract inaccurate (misleading medical/nutritional beliefs.

ANP/sanitation/overall health instruction closely allied to confidence in child-survival and therefore acceptance of FP.

Qualitative Data

Knowledge relating to functioning of the normal human body; beliefs and values attached to these processes (e.g. fertility, sterility, virility/femininity, heredity, legitimacy, adoption, contraception (traditional/modern).

Nutritional beliefs and practices.

Sanitary beliefs and practices. illness and disease, causes and treatment, tolerance of disease.

Death; expectations/perceptions of child mortality; concept of aging; subjective life expectations; attitudes to abortion/contraception.

Relationship with official and unofficial medical personnel in area, their relative credibility and utilization; unofficial services available (in detail).

Investigate use of indigenous doctors in programme.

Training needs of official medical services.

vii. Religion and Ethics

Quantitative Data

Religious and Ethical Codes in area (not necessarily same as "Great Tradition" Religion).

Religious and spiritual leaders, monasteries; temples.

Qualitative Data

Practical implications of religious and ethical beliefs especially as related to conception, contraception, birth, abortion etc.

Religion ethically neutral to FP
Religious Leaders traditionally not involved domestic affairs.

Religious Leaders; credibility/authority in other fields.

Religious ceremonies are social event; potential for staging FP communication event.

Religious and other ceremonies; important social events or not, time and money expenditures.

viii. Other Cultural Factors

Quantitative Data

Mass media network and facilities; audience size for each, local media/indigenous media.

Choice of appropriate media; design of production materials.

Qualitative Data

Media preferences (within and between modern/traditional media)

Media accessibility, media events e.g. folk song contests.

Regional linguistic differences (especially in FP field).

Distinctive colour preferences and colour codes.

ix. Current Exposure
to other innovations

Quantitative Data

Details of agricultural/industrial/
educational projects to which community
exposed.

Cross-sectoral diffusion of
messages to target audience;
or at least rationalization
of message input.

Qualitative Data

Best assessment impact of these inputs.
Effects on socio-economic condition
e.g. changing role of women in agriculture
(see 11. Economic above)