PDWAB 171

MEMORANDUM

TO: Donald Ferguson

DATE: March 31, 1984

FROM: Jack Reynolds

SUBJECT: Summary Evaluation of Swaziland Workshop

Background

The Swaziland workshop was proposed as a strategy for responding to the difficulty PRICOR was having in soliciting technically acceptable research proposals from Africa. The general plan was to invite African applicants whose proposals had been rejected on technical grounds. PRICOR staff would help these applicants develop technically acceptable proposals at a workshop. This idea was formally submitted to AID and approved.

Workshop Design

The workshop was divided into three stages: preparation, macro-design of proposals, and micro-design of proposals. During the preparation stage, each team was to develop and submit a concept paper to PRICOR. These papers were to be reviewed prior to the workshop and feedback prepared for discussion with the applicant during the first workshop session. Only seven teams submitted concept papers prior to the workshop; four others brought papers with them to the workshop.

The macro-design stage consisted of three days of diagnosis, discussion and redrafting of the concept paper. Each section of a proposal was discussed: research problem, methodology, management plan, staffing and budget. The general format was: PRICOR staff presentation on how to prepare a section of the proposal followed by individual team work to prepare or revise that section with guidance from PRICOR staff. At the conclusion of this stage all of the teams had prepared a revised concept paper, although some sections were in outline form rather than finished narrative.

Most of the decisionmakers left at the conclusion of the macro-design. The workshop was moved to a more remote hotel for the micro-design stage, where the researchers spent an additional three and one-half days of intensive work filling in the details of the proposal. Again, PRICOR staff made presentations on sections of the proposal and then provided assistance to the individual researchers on preparing that section. The actual schedule for the workshop is attached. A day-by-day description of events can be found in Melinda Wilson's July 18, 1983 memorandum.

Workshop Goals and Accomplishments

The purpose of the workshop was to provide participants with assistance in preparing and submitting research proposals in Primary Health Care Operations Research to PRICOR for possible funding. Twenty-eight participants made up 14 two-person teams of researchers and program managers/policymakers from 11 countries. One of the teams was from a PRICOR-funded project in Zaire. They came to learn more about operations reseach and to work on the refinement of their methodology. They were not expected to submit a new proposal. By the end of the workshop, each of the remaining 13 teams was to have accomplished one of the following objectives:

	Objective	Achievement
1. Complete and submit a research proposal correctly prepared according to PRICOR guidelines	5	7
2. Develop a timetable for completing the proposal after returning home	4	6
3. Decide not to prepare and submit a proposal to PRICOR	4	0

As these figures show, the workshop was remarkably successful in achieving its objectives. All 13 teams either submitted or planned to submit completed research proposals. The long-term objectives of the workshop were:

4. Receive and review completed proposals	9	12
5. Approve and fund proposals	5	11

Only one proposal was not submitted, and of the 12 received, only one was rejected. One proposal, from Ethiopia, was approved and received funding from non-PRICOR resources. Of the remaining 10 proposals, seven (7) have been funded by PRICOR and three are undergoing revisions prior to funding. The complete list of 13 proposals and their disposition is shown below.

Proposal Site	Status
Cameroon	Approved, waiting for revisions
Ethiopia	Approved, funded from non-PRICOR sources
Ivory Coast	Approved, waiting for revisions
Kenya	Waiting for revised proposal
Liberia (Cole)	Approved and underway
Liberia (Moore)	Approved and underway
Malawi	Approved and underway
Nigeria (Gray)	Approved and underway
Nigeria (Ojofeitimi)	Approved and underway
Nigeria (Honponu-Wusu)	Not submitted
Sierra Leone	Approved and underway
Swaziland	Approved and underway
Tanzania	Not approved

Participant Feedback

The participants were asked to evaluate the micro and macro stages of the workshop. A summary of their reactions is attached. In general, they were very positive. On scales of 0 to 5 (with 5 being high), they rated most aspects of the workshop between 4 and 5.

Lessons Learned

Among the most significant lessons learned are the following:

1. This type of technical assistance workshop is not only an effective, but also a cost-effective way to develop acceptable research proposals.
2. The workshop design fit the needs and capabilities of the participants. It was particularly useful to divide it into Macro and Micro segments and to design it to follow the proposal requirements rather than general operations research principles.
3. Having teams of researchers/decisionmakers was particularly effective.

2

4. The workshop setting was also conducive to learning and working. The participants were not distracted.

5. The content was designed for researchers with limited training and experience in operations research, and that was appropriate.

6. The participants were highly motivated and worked very hard. One of the reasons was that they had a reasonable expectation of having their proposals funded if they could be made technically acceptable. This is an advantage that PRICOR has, and a valuable incentive.

7. Logistical arrangements in Africa are extremely difficult and require an enormous amount of time and patience to complete successfully (see Dorothy Brandt's memo of July 20, 1983 on Swaziland Workshop Logistics).

8. Most of the participants had difficulty understanding what OR is and how it is carried out. There is a definite need for a short, clear methods paper describing operations research.

9. Better materials need to be prepared for the methodological sessions, particularly problem analysis and solution development. Examples of applications of OR are very useful, particularly those that are drawn from real-life experience, and those which illustrate how different approaches or techniques can be used (e.g., the use of the nominal group technique in the Tanzania study, cost-effectiveness analysis in the Thailand study).

10. Good reference materials are needed. The Delp book was particularly useful and appropriate. Copies should be provided to all PRICOR researchers.

11. Terminology is difficult for many applicants to follow (e.g., decision variables, objective function). Simple, clear terms are needed.

12. This type of workshop could be an effective way to help other researchers prepare proposals for PRICOR or other donors. It might be very cost-effective to bring such groups of applicants to Washington for one or two weeks to prepare their proposals.

even [illegible] doubt that methods paper will succeed without workshop [illegible]

cf methods paper