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A Framework and Plan For Undertaking A Preliminary Assessment
Of Selected PVO Development Assistance Projects
And Refining Hypotheses To Guide Further Work

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1. Executive Summary

There is substantial agreement within the PVO community and the PVO office regarding the need for evaluative studies at the policy level as well as at the level of the individual project and program. Both the PVO office and individual operating agencies recognize their responsibilities to determine priorities and make policy decisions based on the best available information. This implies re-examining systematically and periodically particular development strategies and approaches and incorporating lessons learned into the decision-making process.

This paper discusses a process toward that end which will engage the PVO office and interested PVOs in a preliminary assessment of PVO experiences. It focuses on a particular programmatic or functional area rather than a cross cutting approach. This preliminary assessment will determine what is known and what needs to be known about development assistance as practiced by the PVOs; it will seek to understand the problems faced by people which certain kinds of PVO projects attempt to reach, and the best ways to address these problems.

In the long run, any comprehensive re-examination may involve carrying out evaluative studies in the field on a range of individual projects. However, such field studies are time-consuming and expensive. Ideally, they should address well-defined development hypotheses which participants in the studies and potential users of their results agree are important and "testable". They should also reflect and build on the existing knowledge base within a particular functional area. The process we propose in this paper is expected

to ~~provide~~ for these criteria. Specifically, the outcomes of the process we propose are three:

- a) a better understanding of the development assistance approaches currently used by US private voluntary organizations and an articulation of what is known and believed to work in particular programmatic or functional areas;
- b) a refinement of questions and issues which need to be addressed in subsequent evaluative studies;
- c) a decision as to how such studies should be carried out.

This paper consists of two parts. The first part discusses the following eight categories of questions which might be asked about any type of development assistance project:

- a) Is there any case in which the PVO office or other donors should not continue or entertain supporting a particular type of project unless the approaches used are fundamentally altered?
- b) Are there host country policies which should be considered as prerequisites for the funding and support of a particular type of project?
- c) Are there conditions at the micro-level which should be considered as prerequisites for the funding and support of a particular type of project?
- d) Should the objectives of a particular type of project always contain certain elements: should the way in which they are formulated always reflect certain kinds of principles?

- e) Are there specific inputs or activities which should always or never be included in a particular type or project?
- f) Are there specific inputs or activities which traditionally have not been part of a particular type of project but which warrant a very close look?
- g) Are there any steps which the PVO office should take with respect to a certain type of project?
- h) What are the most difficult dilemmas faced by operating agencies in a particular programmatic area: how have they been successfully addressed?

These questions constitute the framework we propose for assessing what is known and what needs to be known about past experiences. There is nothing mysterious about the questions, as there is a limited number of policy issues related to development assistance projects. We want to stress the importance, however, of having an assessment of past experiences cover the whole range of relevant issues - from the technical and programmatic to the philosophical. The eight broad questions we propose cover that range.

We expect that specific hypotheses or questions to be addressed in further studies will emerge from discussions around what are suggested as the "right" answers to the eight questions. This should especially be true where there is a great deal of debate over the right answers or whether any answers exist. Once the state of knowledge is established and key questions identified, participants can decide on the most appropriate ways to proceed. Any number of ways might be reasonable, including

having the PVO office sponsor another field study of PVO impact; no option should be precluded at this stage.

The second part of the paper outlines the steps of an iterative process for preparing case histories of individual PVO projects. We propose preparing a set of case histories for discussion purposes for several reasons. First, they will help build up the descriptive data base on PVO experience, while at the same time highlighting gaps in the knowledge base. Second, they facilitate discussions and comparisons of very different contexts and projects. Third, they encourage the explanation of underlying themes - of why, for example, certain kinds of approaches or technologies are selected in a given situation.

Case histories of 5-7 projects should suffice as a basis for discussion - as a springboard for addressing the eight broad questions. The steps we suggest are pretty straightforward. They include the following:

- a) identify and define the boundaries of an important activity area;
- b) prepare a 3-5 page paper which suggest key questions and issues with each of the eight categories mentioned above;
- c) survey operating agencies and outside observers to get feedback on the paper and generate interest in the assessment process;
- d) identify PVO projects which illustrate key questions and issues;
- e) prepare 20-30 page case histories on individual projects using outside case writers and PVO personnel to prepare at least two drafts before dissemination to wider audiences;
- f) use case histories as springboards for discussion in 1-2 day workshops.

The process of preparing case histories and running the workshops should take between 2-3 months, once an appropriate functional area is selected. The PVO office should take the lead in selecting that area. Furthermore, the area should be defined as broadly as possible since an assessment of past experiences needs to reflect the multi-dimensional nature of the problems faced by poor and marginal populations. Income-generating activities, for example, is a program area that should invite the participation of PVOs with very different experiences and perspectives.

The second part of this paper also discusses guidelines for the preparation of project case histories. The model we propose has been abstracted from a paper prepared by Allan Hoben on livestock projects in Africa. This paper is an excellent example of the type of document which is needed to structure effectively discussions of what is known and needs to be known about projects which aim to modify the indigenous production systems of low-income people. In order for the case histories we propose to be maximally useful they should contain enough descriptive information to allow readers to do the following:

- a) describe key project inputs and elements;
- b) describe the extent to which key project activities are in fact carried out;
- c) assess the appropriateness of each input along at least four dimensions: economic, technological, socio-cultural, and political;
- d) describe and assess the chain of reasoning which links project inputs to the hierarchy of project objectives and to the assumptions made by project planners about the putative beneficiaries and their environment;

- e) speculate as to reasons underlying the assumptions and other choices, especially if they prove to be incorrect.

The strength of Hoben's paper lies in the clarity with which it isolates, describes and ties together all key project elements, including underlying assumptions. Case histories of individual PVO projects prepared in accordance with guidelines suggested by that paper should, therefore, encourage an assessment of past experiences from a holistic perspective and the raising of questions and issues which cover the entire spectrum of concern - from purely technical problems to conflicting value systems. They should also be very significant additions to the development literature, since very few descriptions of PVO projects exist in the public domain.

2. Introduction

Private voluntary organizations (PVOs) operate in a wide variety of functional areas all over the world. They address many problems that are basic to the development of poor people and their communities throughout the less-developed world: food production and nutrition, rural development and the generation of gainful employment, education and human resource development. It is believed they are extremely effective at reaching very poor and marginal populations - one AID dollar spent through their projects having a more direct impact on these groups than one spent through regular bilateral channels (Schwartz, 1978). This argument is reflected in the substantial increase in AID funds programmed through PVOs over the past seven years.

As operating agencies, PVOs are anxious to build on this experience and expand the scope and scale of their activities (while the climate remains favorable.) While this tendency is natural, there is growing recognition of the need to take a hard look at particular aspects of the PVO experience, especially in areas where performance has not been particularly good or where the understanding of what does or does not work is particularly weak (e.g., small enterprise development). Such assessments are needed to strengthen the policy decisions of both the PVO office and individual agencies.

If future evaluative studies of PVO projects are to produce useful results, they have to be more focused than past assessments. At present, however, no decision has been reached regarding aspects of the PVO experience where comprehensive and comparative assessments need to be done. And, naturally, specific questions which need to be addressed in evaluative studies remain to be selected. Furthermore, past experience has underscored the

importance of encouraging the active participation of the operating agencies in making these crucial decisions. It has also underscored the importance of basing these decisions on what is already known about what works and what doesn't. Thus, this paper is intended to help the PVO office with the full collaboration of interested PVOs, engaged in a preliminary assessment of what is known and what needs to be known about the problems faced by marginal populations being reached by certain types of PVOs and how best to deal with them. The paper consists of two parts. The first part discusses eight categories of questions that constitute a framework for assessing what is known and what needs to be known about particular kinds of projects. Examples from three types of projects are used: livestock projects for nomadic peoples in Africa, income-generating projects for marginal populations and nutritio. interventions. The examples are only intended to provide the flavor of what we would expect from a process that engaged operating agencies in an assessment of past experiences. We cannot attest to the relevance or veracity of the examples. If the examples result in debates among people familiar with the particular content areas, we will know that we are at least on the right track.

There is nothing mysterious about the structure we propose. There is a finite number of policy issues related to development assistance programs. We simply want to make certain that discussions of past experiences cover the entire range of possibly important questions and issues which could be addressed in evaluative studies. We believe the eight categories noted below cover that range.

The structure we propose for surfacing these questions might

appear at first glance to have a problem-versus opportunity-orientation. We do not mean to imply that an assessment of past experiences should focus primarily on the negative. We do believe, however, that a discussion of possible negative effects is a good place to start such an assessment. What we would expect to emerge from discussions of problem areas are insights into how problems have been resolved and opportunities which have been seized in many projects. Thus, discussions and lessons learned would focus on what does work as much as on what does not.

The second part of this paper outlines the steps of an iterative process of brainstorming and preparing and discussing written materials. There are basically two ways to proceed. One way would be to commission a discussion paper similar to Hoben's paper on livestock projects in Africa. A second way would be to commission case histories of several projects that reflect the issues and questions which PVOs and outside observers feel are important and, when taken together, constitute the 'state-of-what-is-known' in a particular program area. We will suggest the preparation of case histories.

A challenge to the PVO community and the PVO office is to strengthen their policy-making decisions. To accomplish this they need to deepen their understanding of PVO experiences in particular program areas. It is our hope that this paper and the process it initiates will help the PVO office and the PVO community meet this challenge.

3. A Framework for Assessing Past Experiences - Eight Broad Questions Which Need to Be Specified

3.1 Is there any case in which the PVO office or other donors should not continue or entertain the support of a particular type of project unless the approaches used are fundamentally altered?

This question, of course, has the potential for being the most threatening and challenging of the questions which an operating agency can ask itself. It can bring into question the very essence of what an agency is about. The purpose of the question is to raise early whatever danger signals there are and to assess whatever claims there are of negative (as well as zero) impact.

In the livestock field there is evidence to suggest that existing approaches not only fail to reach key objectives (e.g., lower stocking levels, mitigate environmental degradation and raise income levels of nomads) but in fact have negative impact. They put great stress on the coping strategies and social structures of the nomads, they exacerbate the struggle for scarce resources and create more environmental degradation than would otherwise exist. An argument is made that income-generating projects which involve marginal populations are often very unrealistic and have negative effects. Many projects require such an intensity of services (e.g., follow-up supervision) that only a very few people could ever be effectively reached by them. Many programs also presuppose the existence of a market (or their ability to stimulate demand) which marginal populations can satisfy. It is argued that not only is demand often static but when it is not, more efficient producers (Asians in East Africa, for example) move in. The argument is also made that the intensity of

resources and services necessary to succeed in the first place often creates unhealthy dependencies, thereby having a negative effect. Finally, the argument is sometimes made that the cost of helping an individual entrepreneur become more efficient is often the loss of employment and income for the more informal producers.

In the nutrition intervention projects a case is made that donated food within conventional delivery systems not only creates dependency relationships but has negative impact on local food production. It is also argued that there is no evidence that nutrition education programs have effectively changed the nutritional habits, much less status, of putative beneficiaries.

In at least three program areas, therefore, there is evidence to suggest that the most basic and, perhaps, most threatening question needs to be asked early on in an assessment of past experiences. If there is any indication that projects might have had a negative impact on the immediate beneficiaries or others, the evidence, whatever it is, needs to be brought out into the open and assessed openly. If claims of negative or zero impact cannot be substantiated by the existing knowledge base, the focus of one evaluative study suggests itself.

3.2 Are there host country policies which should be considered as pre-requisites for the funding or support of a particular type of project?

Many PVO projects suffer within policy climates that are inimical to their objectives. It comes as no surprise to PVOs operating income-generating projects, for example, that most governments hurt small-scale enterprise development more through their general policies (e.g., import

duties on sewing machines in a West African country) than they help through extension or other client-oriented programs.

Hoben argues in his paper that the following prerequisites should be conditions for the further funding of livestock projects:

- a) range policy incorporating ecological guidelines;
- b) legislation to regulate land use based on the recognition of pastoralists' right to range and water;
- c) existence of an executive agency with authority to coordinate activities of other agencies.

In income-generating projects tax holidays for micro-business, non-discriminatory practices, legislation mandating banks to lend to micro-enterprises might constitute a set of necessary conditions. In nutrition intervention projects the linking of feeding programs to a consistent policy encouraging local food production might be considered a prerequisite by some organizations.

Because PVOs operate at the micro-level many observers feel that most of their projects are not affected by macro-level policies. It is also felt that the proximity and the intensity of resources PVOs can bring to bear on a particular setting can often mitigate the effects of a negative policy climate. In many situations (and the sewing machine example is a good case in point), however, there is simply no escape from macro-level policies. Consequently, minimum conditions at the policy level (ones that at least avoid impacts) should be delineated. If there is debate over the relative importance of certain factors, a focus of subsequent studies presents itself.

3.3 Are there conditions at the micro-level which should be considered as prerequisites for the funding or support of a particular type of project?

The micro-level or 'near environment' of a project is usually considered by PVOs to be even more important than the overall policy framework. Thus, a question which needs to be asked is whether there are conditions here which need to exist before a project should begin. In livestock projects, for example, ranching programs seem to work, if they can be built upon indigenous systems of resource control and allocation. In cases where these do not exist (e.g., the opening of new lands through tsetse control) problems arising from random differences in wealth between individual herders at project outset and the difficulties of keeping herds within the confines of ranches during drought are exacerbated. In income-generating projects the existence of a viable market might be a prerequisite. When dealing with very marginal populations which have not had much experience in the market place, a social-welfare infrastructure which provides a range of services might be considered a necessary condition by some observers.

What these necessary conditions are and the effect they have on what is not only feasible but appropriate needs to be spelled out clearly. If it is not clear what they are, if there is great debate, if the conditions seem to vary greatly from area to area, then, again, a host of questions for evaluative studies should emerge.

3.4 Should the objectives of a particular type of project always contain certain elements: should the way in which they are formulated always reflect certain kinds of principles? What should they look like, how should they be arrived at?

The objectives of an individual project should and will vary from context to context. In a particular program area, however, one can ask whether certain principles need always to be reflected. In livestock

projects, for example, Hoben argues that project objectives should reflect the actual problems faced by people involved and should be broadened to include the goods and services which people need, want and will support. In income-generating projects for marginal populations, it is often argued that objectives need to be multi-dimensional if the needs of these groups are to be effectively addressed. According to some observers this is equally true in nutrition intervention projects. There are those, however, who argue that effective development assistance projects are narrowly focused and supplement on-going efforts. Thus, the question of whether these arguments reflect what is appropriate and feasible would probably be a subject for much debate regardless of the particular program area being examined.

3.5 Are there any specific project inputs or activities which should always or never be included in a particular type of project?

Particular type of project inputs might be very appropriate in one context and totally inappropriate in another. Generalizations are difficult to make. An assessment of past experiences, however, should try to turn up whatever generalizations seem to make sense. Usually, statements about the appropriateness or inappropriateness of a particular type of project input are accompanied by all sorts of qualifiers. It is equally important to find out what they are. For example, Hoben suggests that the following inputs in the absence of comprehensive plans, should never be included in livestock projects: (a) range water development schemes; (b) broad spectrum veterinary health services; (c) marketing boards and price stabilization schemes; (d) training of extension workers.

Subsidized interest rates are usually a part of many income-generating projects. Some observers, however, feel they should be avoided as much as possible, except under certain conditions. Intense supervision and follow-up in income-generating projects for marginal populations is often considered to be a crucial input. As we have noted, however, there is at least one type of cost attached to it and to some observers this often outweighs the intended benefits. Materials contributions are inputs frequently included in nutrition intervention projects. Questions related to the appropriate magnitude and form of such contributions are hotly debated - a debate we would expect to emerge naturally during an assessment of past experiences.

3.6 Are there specific inputs or activities that traditionally have not been a part of a particular type or project which warrant a very close look?

Here an assessment of past experiences would involve looking for very innovative programs and approaches and really new and different ideas which have not yet penetrated conventional projects. In livestock projects, for example, Hoben suggest that appropriate inputs would be based upon opportunistic range management strategies as opposed to "conservative range management strategies" - the normal pattern or approach). This would involve in fact a very different set of inputs than presently exist in most projects: (1) as emphasis on low value products as opposed to high value products; (2) elimination of veterinary regulations that prevent rapid movement of herds; (3) mechanisms and techniques for rapid marketing - to get rid of stock before the next drought takes effect. In the income-generating area, the PISCES project has uncovered several very innovative credit programs which integrate the delivery of a range of services to marginal

populations. These could serve as interesting and instructive comparisons to many small-scale enterprise projects which focus only on service.

3.7 What are the most difficult dilemmas faced by operating agencies in a particular programmatic area; how have they been successfully addressed?

The important choices in complex situations in which multiple objectives have to be satisfied are never easy. In many development projects operating agencies are faced with having to balance absolute need criteria on the one hand with likelihood of success criteria on the other. In many income-generating projects among marginal populations the need for intense follow-up and supervision in some respects creates a dynamic tension with the objective of self-reliance. In livestock projects in East Africa the interests of many groups (e.g., small farmers and urban dwellers) are in direct conflict with the needs of the nomadic herdsmen.

Robert Chambers has noted that it is misleading to speak of maximizing anything in development projects. What is required, he argues, is a series of informed attempts to optimize a number of resource uses in relation to a number of outcomes, not to maximize any particular ones. Many of the balances which have to be struck, however, involve moral and ethical considerations. This makes the task of optimizing resource uses extremely difficult and insights into how someone else addressed the same dilemma all that more important to share.

3.3 Are there steps which the PVO office should take with respect to a particular type of project?

In view of the answers to the first set of questions an assessment of past experiences needs to bring up the question of whether the PVO office

should take any specific actions. For example, it might do any of the following:

- a) specify the types of experience and skills that should be included in staffing patterns for the implementation:
- b) specify the minimum requirement for social, economic, etc. monitoring
- c) specify people to be involved in particular projects.

4. A Process

4.1 Some General Principles

The issue before the PVO office is how best to move to the point where a consensus can be reached among operating agencies on specific questions which need to be addressed by further study, deliberation and discussion. For example, the specific nature of the negative impacts of some income-generating projects need to be delineated and the evidence on both sides of the debate compiled and discussed in an open forum before a decision can be reached as to whether more evidence and more insights need to be generated. It goes without saying that the operating agencies themselves need to take primary responsibility for compiling and assessing descriptions of past experiences. It is equally important, however, to involve from the outset, outside observers who are both knowledgeable and independent of the PVO community. Lessons and issues should be stated as clearly and unequivocally as possible, even at the risk of overstatement. Independent observers are a necessary ingredient of that process.

The PVO office needs to take the lead in the selection of those areas of the PVO experience which will be explored and assessed. Many PVOs and PVO projects have very particular operational emphases: for example, primary health care delivery, nutrition intervention, livestock and ranching, small-scale enterprise and entrepreneurial development, and rural feeder roads. Clearly, PVOs need to have highly specialized skills in particular areas to be effective. The multi-dimensional nature of the problems faced by the marginal populations with which they work, however, suggests that compilation and assessment of past experiences needs to be done from as

broad a perspective as possible. It also suggests that PVOs operating in very different functional areas have more common experiences and common grounds for discussion than might be initially apparent. Consequently, the program area selected by the PVO office should cut across conventional lines and encourage the sharing of experiences and insights from a range of operating agencies.

It is also important to bring into more formal settings discussion of issues that are most often left to after-work bull sessions. Development is a field that requires rigorous moral awareness. Discussions of moral and ethical considerations, therefore, should take place in conjunction with discussions of more programmatic issues. For example, many PVOs agonize over concern about becoming involved in school-feeding programs which may provide significant short-range nutritional benefits at the potential cost of longer term community dependency on outside sources of food. Similarly, small enterprise agencies facedilemmas about ownership and control: to what degree, for example, should they require "human" treatment or higher wages for workers hired by small businesses with which they work. A broadly defined program area will encourage discussion of the entire range of relevant issues - from the highly technical to underlying values and world views.

4.2 The choice: a position paper or a set of case histories on individual PVO projects

Two types of documentation would serve as a basis for discussion. One is a position paper similar to that prepared by Allan Hoben on livestock projects for nomadic peoples in Africa. This type of paper is a very

efficient way to get at what is known about a particular problem area and isolate key issues and questions. In order to prepare such a paper, however, there needs to exist a fair amount of literature, especially the micro-economic and ethnographic studies such as those on which Hoben draws so heavily. Such papers also do not encourage in-depth discussions of very different situations and projects; exceptions to the "general rule" are usually only briefly referenced and very incompletely described. Position papers also do not add to the descriptive data base - which in the case of the PVO experience needs to be built up:

A second alternative would involve preparing a set of case histories on selected PVO projects (non-PVO projects might also be included). The case histories could be in-depth descriptions of individual projects or composites, drawing from several projects. In either case, the identity of the implementing agencies could be masked, if that were considered necessary. Sufficient data should be obtainable from project files and interviews with project personnel in this country. A preliminary assessment of past experiences should not require field visits. A central purpose of the assessment, as we noted at the outset, is to refine questions and issues that need to be addressed later by evaluative studies with field-based components. If sufficient information on individual projects does not exist so that participating PVOs can accomplish this task, exploratory, open-ended studies will have to be launched.

4.3 The steps for preparing case histories

The steps are pretty straightforward:

- a) identify and define the boundaries of an important program area.

"Income-generating projects for marginal populations" is an area in which a very wide range of operating agencies have experiences

and which meets other criteria discussed above;

- b) prepare a 3-5 page paper which suggests key questions and issues within each of the categories discussed in the previous section (2 calendar weeks);
- c) survey operating agencies and other observers to get feedback on paper and to elicit interest in the process (1 calendar month);
- d) identify PVO and other projects which illustrate key questions and issues and which when taken together would constitute the "state of knowledge" in the area (3 calendar weeks);
- e) prepare 20-30 page case histories on individual projects or composite histories; use both outside case writers and PVO personnel in an iterative process (2-3 calendar months);
- f) use the case histories as springboards for discussion in workshops of 1-2 days in length;
- g) write up results of workshops (3 calendar weeks);
- h) edit and prepare cases for publication (1-2 calendar months)

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This entire process should take 3-5 calendar months from the time an appropriate programmatic area is selected by the PVO office. Two to three part-time case writers would be needed for 2-3 months each. Some costs of participating PVO personnel could also be picked up by the PVO office. The services of at least 2 senior consultants familiar with the programmatic area and the PVOs would be needed at several points: (1) to assist in the preparation of the first issues paper; (2) to assist in the design of starting frameworks for preparing case histories; (3) to review first and second drafts of the cases; (4) to lead case discussions. The costs of the entire process for a pilot effort in one program area would be approximately \$50,000. It's purpose would be to determine if the process is worthy of consideration for a longer term, comprehensive review of other PVO program

areas using the same basic process and approach.

4.4 Case histories - what descriptive data should they include?

To be maximally useful the case histories of individual projects should contain enough information to allow discussants to identify and assess the very foundation of the projects (i.e., the myriad of assumptions on which the projects were based). This goal is based on the approach to learning represented in the works of Chris Argyris and his colleagues. In describing the learning process, Argyris and Schon distinguish between two kinds of behavioral learning - single-loop and double-loop learning.* They cite W.R. Ashby's example of a household thermostat:

A thermostat may be said to be capable of learning when the room temperature goes above or below the point at which it is set and of taking corrective action. We may call this single-loop learning. The thermostat, however, is not able to ask itself the question of whether it should be set at 68 degrees, or if it should be measuring the temperature, or if there are better ways to measure the temperature. To do so would be to question its design and its purpose and would indicate the capacity for double-loop learning.

Double-loop learning is important because without it individuals are not able to reexamine their values and assumptions in order to design and implement a quality of life not constrained by the status quo. Elsewhere, it has been suggested that the increasing concern about the capacity of the helping professions (especially in mental health, education, divinity, medicine, and law) to correct some of their acknowledged rigidities requires professionals who are able to double-loop learn while they are practicing. Double-loop learning perspectives may also be important if rigorous social science methodologies are to be redesigned so that they generate knowledge about human options that go beyond the status quo.**

* Argyris, Chris and Donald Schon, Theory in Practice: Increasing Professional Effectiveness, San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1974, pp. 18-19.

** Argyris, Chris, "Theories of Action that Inhibit Individual Learning", American Psychologist, September, 1976, p. 638.

Critical to the learning process among PVOs, therefore, is the reexamination of the assumptions which underlie particular development assistance projects. In order to reexamine these key assumptions they must be explicitly set forth and clearly linked to other elements of the particular projects. When this is done well key questions to be addressed in subsequent evaluative studies can be isolated. Hoben's paper on livestock projects in Africa provides a useful basis from which a general approach for doing this can be abstracted. Many of the general issues raised by his discussion of values and assumptions underpinning livestock projects are directly relevant to other types of projects intended to modify the indigenous production systems of low-income and politically marginal people. The discussion, therefore, is understandable even to people who do not know the first thing about livestock projects. For these reasons we draw very heavily on his paper in this section.

(1) First, key project inputs and elements are isolated and succinctly described. In livestock projects, for example, key project inputs include conservative range management approaches, settlement schemes, marketing boards and price stabilization programs and range water. The conservative range management approach is defined as a behavior which leads to a relatively constant number of animals grazing, but not overgrazing, an area through good and bad years alike, and producing a relatively constant level of economic output which may be directly consumed, exchanged or sold. It implies that the carrying capacity of an area should be limited by the harshest period during the climatic cycle. Consequently, livestock numbers are not allowed to increase during good years to utilize all the forage available. This input involves such techniques as rest and rotation

of range sites, temporarily reducing stocking densities on some sites, and land tenure modifications restricting the movement of herds to specific locations.

It is also important to describe the extent to which a project activity or process is actually carried out. This is especially crucial when discussing such inputs as extension and training and follow-up supervision in income-generating projects. What is described as intensive follow-up supervision too often either never materializes at all or consists of very infrequent and unproductive contact hours between client and extension agent. (The Evaluation of TOTOTO - Kilemba and PRRM-SAM at Midpoint by World Education is a good example of the kind of descriptive information which is important to have on project activities. A copy of part of this study is attached to this paper.)

Second, the appropriateness of each key project element or input is discussed along at least four dimensions:

- a) economic fit: to what extent are the capital costs and the recurrent costs of the inputs in line with their potential profitability and utility - both to the putative beneficiaries and to the larger society; to what extent are there negative externalities associated with the inputs?
- b) technological fit: to what extent are the inputs clearly superior to existing technologies in the local setting; do they actually work in the local setting?
- c) socio-cultural fit: to what extent can the pre-existing socio-cultural and organizational structures (for organizing individuals, for carrying out productive activities, for resolving disputes, etc.) handle the changes brought about by the inputs; to what extent do the inputs strengthen or weaken the pre-existing structures?
- d) political fit: to what extent do the inputs strengthen the putative beneficiaries vis-a-vis other groups who are competing for resources with them?

Third, the inputs are traced back through a hierarchy of project objectives and the problem statement to the underlying assumptions. For example, an objective of livestock projects involving conservative range management inputs is to limit stocking levels in order to avoid overgrazing and not to exceed the carrying capacity of the range land and cause its degradation. The problem, as stated in project documents according to Hoben, has the following chain of reasoning: long term environmental degradation, eco-stress and seasonal problems in nutrition: caused by: (a) increased stocking levels; (b) decreased availability of forage and range water; (c) public ownership of range resources; (d) long-distance transhuman grazing patterns; (e) herd structures with unwarranted number of unproductive animals; (f) overgrazing.

The problem-objective-input chain described above is then linked to the underlying assumptions. For example, the following, according to Hoben, are assumptions made implicitly and explicitly by planners of livestock projects:

- 1) pastoralists are motivated by an irrational desire to accumulate ever larger herds and operate with a zero-sum mentality;
- 2) pastoralists are weakly organized and incapable of controlling access to range lands;
- 3) pastoralists move herds over excessively large areas;
- 4) pastoralists are subsistence-oriented and not interested in increasing productivity;
- 5) extent of degradation of grazing lands is very high;
- 6) "overgrazing" inevitably causes degradation.

Based on the Hoben paper there are at least four sets of assumptions which are important to make explicit in case histories or in discussions of cases:

- a) Putative beneficiaries - assumptions about putative beneficiaries as individuals: (i) what they perceive as their problems and needs; (ii) the process by which they choose solutions open to them; (iii) their cognitive abilities, etc.; and assumptions about their coping strategies (i.e., strengths and weaknesses of the indigenous production, organizational, health, and education systems).
- b) the "near environment" of the putative beneficiaries - assumptions about the interests and perceptions of groups which are competing for resources with the putative beneficiaries and their inter-relationships; assumptions about the physical environment of the putative beneficiaries and their relationship to it.
- c) the cost of project inputs - assumptions about the financial and opportunity costs (as well as diseconomies) which are associated with the inputs to the beneficiaries of organizations that deal directly with them.

Fourth, inputs, objectives, problem statements and assumptions are all assessed. When they can be clearly linked together, as in the Hoben paper, the assessment process can start at any point (e.g., assessing the appropriateness of a particular input) and will eventually involve all project elements - which is what we want discussion of case histories to do. Hoben's analysis, for example, includes an assessment of conservative range management as uneconomic (to the interests of the nomads), a recognition that the objective to limit stocking levels is rarely attained and an assessment of the nomads' indigenous coping strategy as highly specialized and flexible and that they realize maximum livestock output, given capital and land resources. If Hoben's assumptions about the economic rationality of the nomads and the effectiveness of their coping strategies are correct, they force analysts to consider

a very different set of input - objective - problem - assumption relationships.

Fifth, even without assessing the appropriateness of Hoben's suggestions, it is clear that his approach would lead to a discussion of the type we are seeking. It would be literally impossible to defend or question the appropriateness of a particular input without assessing the entire chain of project elements, including the assumptions that link them together. Furthermore, assessments of input - assumption chains which can be built from descriptive case material or from critical examinations of a project type can go beyond determining the correctness or incorrectness of particular assumptions. They can ask why certain assumptions exist in the first place. This is a fifth step in our proposed model.

In the case of livestock projects for nomads, Hoben suggests that ignorance plays an important role - ignorance of the nomads, their production systems, and of their ecology. He also provides evidence which suggests that the maintenance of particular "myths" about the nomads helps project personnel justify their own values and perceptions. The important risk to minimize, from the view of the range scientist, for example, is risk of degradation to the environment. From the perspective of the range scientist, a conservative range management strategy presents less risk than the nomads' "opportunistic" strategy. The point is that the perspective with which project

* Hoben's analysis suggests problems which, according to him, are not articulated in most projects, namely bottlenecks that restrict rapid marketing of livestock at the onset of periods of drought (a.g., transportation, processing, working capital, veterinary regulations that prevent the rapid movement of herds, the size of final markets, etc.). These problems, then, suggest to him a new set of project objectives and inputs, namely low value products and mechanisms for rapid marketing.

personnel approach the "problem" is not the same as the nomads'. Materials which help to sharpen this distinction should be useful devices for getting at the underlying concerns of other important protagonists. Hoben suggests, for example, that many myths about pastoralists and pastoral systems persist because they provide a useful ideology for non-pastoralist interest groups.

A case study prepared by John Thomas on the choice of technology for drilling wells in Bangladesh underscores the need to look into the values, perceptions and needs of the operating agencies, if one is to gain a comprehensive understanding of the factors that affect the choice of technology or project inputs. Thomas suggests that reasons behind the choice for a medium-cost technology (while a low-cost technology was more economic and acceptable to farmers) were alternative perceptions of the issues and the objectives (read needs) of the organization of the project personnel. One important issue that was perceived differently was risk. To the farmer risky technology was that which was installed by outsiders and which he or she could not operate or repair. To the donor agency concentrated drilling locations where operations could be observed by contractors implied less risk than a decentralized, locally supervised operation. Also, the implementing organization itself, Thomas suggests, had established routines and staff which made it almost impossible to employ low-cost technologies; which forced it to seek "satisfactory" rather than optimal solutions; and which encouraged it to avoid uncertainty as a matter of course. Clearly, therefore, there are many reasons why assumptions about a project's beneficiaries and choices of project inputs prove to be incorrect. It is equally clear that descriptive data on the operating agencies and personnel involved in a particular project are necessary to include in a case history, if these reasons and their relative importance are to be adequately explored.

5. Concluding Remarks

It is our judgment that discussions of case histories prepared in line with the approach suggested in this paper will raise issues that cover the whole range of possible concerns to the PVO office and operating agencies - from value positions and system perceptions which underlie choices to the more technical considerations. We expect that participants will not only internalize lessons which they themselves draw from discussions of case histories; we expect them to take the first steps to join together in efforts to address questions of mutual concern. What forms these take (e.g., evaluative studies or on-going discussion forums or something else) cannot be predicted.