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SUMMARY PROCEEDINGS OF THE WORKSHOP ON A FUTURE-ORIENTED AGENDA FOR RESEARCH ON RURAL DEVELOPMENT

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SECTION TWO
FRAMEWORKS AND FUTURE TRENDS

> "An analytical framework is essential... it provides a means to think through the problem ahead...to build on what we know already...and to identify the major problems, constraints, and opportunities related to that long-term strategic view of the development process."

This section draws together the discussion during Session I and the working lunch since the topics represent opposite sides of the same question. During Session I the question could be posed as: "What will rural areas in developing countries look like in a decade?" During the working lunch the question was: "Are the development strategies in vogue today going to be relevant to the rural problems ten years from now?" Answering either question leads directly into considerations of ongoing trends in rural areas, their interaction, and impact. Session I focused on the net result of these trends, the working lunch on the continuing utility of present strategies to cope with the net results.

The Framework Underlying the Workshop Paper

The Workshop Paper takes the perspective that the rural areas will become increasingly incorporated into larger economic, political, and social systems, that population pressures will increase, that rural inhabitants will face increasingly insecure means for livelihood, and, that as a consequence, managing on intervening into the development process will become more complex at the same time it becomes more necessary.

More specifically, the Workshop Paper argues that rural insecurity will result from the interaction of two dominant trends: rural incorporation and population growth. Continuing incorporation of rural areas into national, and international economic and political regimes means that rural areas will become

less identifiably "rural" in tastes and expectations while they become more vulnerable to systematic fluctuations in economic conditions. Among other things, increased risk is likely to lead to alterations in the livelihood strategies of rural inhabitants.

The lingering effects of presently high population growth rates will serve to exacerbate the problems of incorporation. The greater number of rural dwellers is likely to increase competition for resources at the local level and to place increasing pressure on fragile ecologies.

Together these trends will produce an environment more volatile and risky than the present with the following likely elements: (1) Rural dwellers pursuing more diversified livelihood strategies where agriculture may no longer be the dominant revenue source and where family members may be geographically quite dispersed. (2) Growing levels of conflict over limited resources at both the local and national levels. Conflict at the local level may dissolve existing community institutions increasing the risks faced by households even more. (3) Greater incentives to search out alternatives to formal, perhaps government controlled, institutions where they are perceived as unfair. This includes parallel markets as alternatives to parastatals and informal channels and local advocacy groups as alternatives to formal bureaucratic operations. In the face of this somewhat pessimistic forecast, the Workshop Paper warns that we cannot count on revolutionary new technologies or innovations as remedies. We will have to continue to rely on existing agriculture-led, small-farmer, and local organization-enhancing strategies. Nevertheless, along with this broad strategy are large areas where present knowledge is insufficient or will be insufficient to meet the challenges of the future. It is on those areas of research that the Workshop Paper focuses its attention.

Discussion

More than particular substantive critiques or comments, the discussion was most successful in underscoring a premise implicit in the Workshop Paper, but made explicit by Bruce Johnston in the quote that heads this section. Analytical frameworks matter, particularly in attempting to forecast the future. A framework defines one's vision of the development process, identifies key actors, and suggests both critical problems and effective remedies. Thus while the participants could generally support the trends, results, and appropriate interventions laid out in the Workshop Paper, it was often due to the overlap rather than complete congruence of individual frameworks.

SECTION I
INTRODUCTION

"In a decade, what social science topics will we wish we had begun to research today?"
-Ruth Zagorin
Workshop Convenor

The aim of the two-day Workshop on a Future-Oriented Agenda for Research in Rural Development was to bring together a small group of rural development scholars and practioners (see Annex B) to begin to answer the question posed by Ruth Zagorin in her introductory remarks. That question was to serve as a major theme of the Workshop; it also serves as a major theme of the AID-funded contract with Harvard's Institute for International Development (HIID) that sponsored the Workshop.

To develop the set of research priorities requested by the agency, HIID has designed a program to solicit the views of a wide range of individuals invloved in rural development in universities, foundations, consulting firms, voluntary organizations, and donor agencies in the U.S. and abroad. In the initial phase 85 individuals were contacted. In addition, a broad spectrum of recent literature was reviewed. These inputs were reflected in a draft document (hereafter called the Workshop Paper) that also served a a reference point and springboard for the Workshop.[1]

Following the Workshop, HIID will continue to solicit further comments from those involved in rural development and to assess relevant literature. At the same time, papers will be commissioned on emerging priority research areas. These papers are intended to define the research area, including the existing understanding and knowledge gaps and to suggest a research program for the future.

Hence the Workshop was intended to fulfull three roles: (1) to critique and challenge the Workshop Paper; (2) to add another set of views on the future research agenda; and (3) most important, to begin to narrow the focus to a few high priority areas through careful criticism.

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[1] John M. Cohen, Merilee S. Grindle and John W. Thomas, "Future-Oriented Agenda for Research on Rural Development." Draft document prepared for the Workshop on a Future-Oriented Agenda for Research in Rural Development. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Institute for International Development, 1983.

In reality, the Workshop did fulfill its expected purposes. The discussion was lively and frank, numerous ideas for improvements in The Workshop Paper were suggested, and at the close of the Workshop, five priority areas were identified.

The purpose of this report is to characterize the discussions and critiques, and to describe the procedure used to select the priority research areas. To that end this report does not attempt to provide either a literal transcription or a linear synopsis. Rather, the report takes a more thematic approach, drawing together observations, sometimes out of sequence, to crystallize the points of agreement and disagreement.

Nevertheless, the report follows both the agenda and the order of the Workshop Paper fairly closely. The following section covers the discussion on the first day in Session I and during the working lunch dealing with the related issues of specifying expected trends and their implications for rural development and evaluating alternatives to the conventional wisdom and practice of rural development (Workshop Paper Sections II and IV). Section III briefly characterizes the initial presentation and ensuing discussion for each of the five problem areas (Sessions II-VI) identified in the Workshop Paper's Section III. Section IV describes the procedures and outcome of the session devoted to begin establishing priority areas.

As the Workshop proceeded, the participants agreed on several caveats for future research that cut across topics. These warnings and some reflections on the Workshop are presented in the concluding section.

At the same time, differing frameworks led participants to conclusions somewhat different than the Workshop Paper's. Bruce Johnston's position was perhaps the most stark. He argued that the Workshop Paper's focus on incorporation tended to emphasize the negative aspects of the process; "the pathology of development," as he put it. Identifying all of the negatives tended to multiply the perceived number of interventions as well as the research necessary to design them. As an alternative to the idea of incorporation, Johnston suggested "structural transformation." In contrast to the negative cast of incorporation, structural transformation emphasizes the dynamic and positive elements according to Johnston. In this light, research should be devoted to areas where the transformation will be impeded or where it is perceived to be unfair. Hence, though Johnston agreed with the Workshop Paper's stress on growing market penetration and population density in the rural areas, his analysis came to a fundamentally different conclusion because of differing perceptions of the development process.

In a similar fashion, different frameworks led various participants to identify different critical interrelationships that deserved further study. For example, a large group of participants stressed the importance of developing greater insight into rural households. They agreed with the Workshop Paper on the proliferation of multifaceted livelihood strategies and the importance of understanding them; but wanted to go further. Haven North articulated this position when he argued that households should be the focus of rural development research for out of that study will come an understanding of responses to the stresses and policies imposed on rural areas.

Another group, accepting the household level focus, still maintained that it was important to understand how national policies are made which define the rural environment. These two groups may appear to diverge only on where to place analytical emphasis, but as Alain de Janvrey was later to point out, the two views differ substantially on their perceptions of the latitude available to rural dwellers even in the face of an adverse policy climate.

Yet another group made the claim that it was intermediary institutions that were key, among them markets, local organizations and traditional institutions. Their point is that institutions are the conduits through which policies are articulated at the local level. Agreeing with the prospects of changing household strategies and increased competition at the local level, this group maintained that a better understanding of the functioning and evolution of the institutions is crucial. Jon Moris provided an example: "We are witnessing the breakdown of traditional institutions which are not being replaced in a meaningful way," this obviously has an impact on the rural poor, but we don't know what it is, good or bad, he concluded.

All told, there was a wide range of interpretations of what areas future research should emphasize even though there was general agreement on the important trends. The various different frameworks represented also converged on two other points.

First, current rural development strategies will continue to hold the highest prospects. Hence the present emphasis will continue on: labor-intensive, capital and land saving agricultural technologies, efforts to improve the rural policy environment, and projects and programs to strengthen local organizations and enhance management capacity. Thus the participants did not envision either dramatic technological breakthroughs or a retreat from the project mode of implementation.

Second, despite conforming to the conventional wisdom on rural development strategies, the participants called for innovations in terms of research. "We must unpack our intellectual baggage." declared Gillian Hart, explaining that researchers must not get caught up in the limitations of accepted models. She and others challenged researchers to ask new questions and reconceptualize old models. As an example Jon Moris suggested reexamining the long term impact of the educational emphasis to development strategies when behavioralism was in vogue in the early 1960's. Other examples were to appear during discussions of particular problem areas.

In coming to this conclusion, the participants underscored the irony facing researchers in rural development stated in the Workshop Paper: "just as the knowledge base is rapidly expanding,... rural development experts are less confident about what they know and how to apply what they do know." (p. 7)

In other words, even though analytical frameworks are well developed and firmly held, there is a shared sense that major conceptual voids exist and innovative research is needed to begin filling them.

SECTION III
SESSIONS II-IV: THE FIVE PROBLEM AREAS.

"As we consider each of the problem areas, I would like to keep attention focussed on answering four questions:

1. Is this an important subject area relative to others?

2. Are the issues correctly defined?

3. Is the issue "researchable"?

4. Of the issues identified, which are the priority items?"

-Jerry French
Workshop Chair

Understanding Governmental Decision Making

Overview

In her opening remarks on this problem area, Merilee Grindle argued that research on governmental decision making is important because central government decisions have considerable impact on rural areas and yet little is known about "how and why decisions are made." At present, we have "little insight into the reasons why policies, programs and projects are not adopted," she added. This knowledge gap extends to both the rules and procedures of the bureaucracy and to the "policy space" of senior-level decision makers. The aim of research in this area is to understand the underlying process, not the organizational form.

Moreover, as the Workshop Paper presents more fully, central government decisions are likely to have a greater impact in the future as increasingly scarce resource engenders increasingly fierce internal competition over them. In these internal battles, there is no guarantee that advocates of rural development will stave off predators.

These concerns were disaggregated into four research issues in the Workshop Paper:[1]

- Issue 1. National Policy Making and Its Impact. Examination of the ways in which national level policies are made and how these limit the effectiveness of rural development initiatives. The decision criteria policy makers use, the ideological and cultural biases of these policy makers and their capability to maneuver within complex political arenas.

- Issue 2. Coalition Building for Rural Development. How coalitions in favor of supportive policies for rural development can be created and maintained and how rural inhabitants can be drawn into these coalitions.

- Issue 3. Information for Policy Makers. How decision makers in different bureaucratic settings perceive and process information. The kinds of information that are most useful and most likely to be heeded.

- Issue 4. Bureaucratic Systems Research. Analogous to farming systems research, there is a need for a fuller understanding of the governmental and bureaucratic setting into which projects and programs are introduced, e.g., studies of procedures followed in decision making, financial management, ministerial regualations, personnel rules, logistical patterns and administrative services.

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1 The summaries of the issue areas appearing throughout this report were written by Dick Meyers as part of an executive summary of the report.

Discussion

While there was general agreement among the participants that the problem area was important, there was considerable discussion as to whether the more political issues were suitable for research. Some participants questioned whether research into national decision making would yield generalizable findings; others, while granting that governmental processes were suitable research topics, wondered if AID as a bilateral donor was an appropriate sponsor for research of this type. These issues did not extend to the bureaucratic systems research topic which received wide-spread support.

Typical of the concerns over the first two issues, were Guy Hunter's remarks. He argued that national level decision making (Issue 1) was "idiosyncratic", and that while research of this kind might produce some interesting "stories" they would prove to be little relevance. The stories would be out of date and therefore of little subsequent use in that particular country and because the personalities and processes were unique, of little use to understanding decision making in other contexts.

At the same time, Hunter argued that research into bureaucratic systems had potential pay-offs. "National governments come and go, but particular processes — administrative, budgetary — persist." Since they are stable and have well defined functions across countries, bureaucratic systems were more amenable to research, according to Hunter.

Adding another argument were those, including most to the AID participants, who questioned whether the type of politically sensitive information needed to understand the informal workings of decision processes could or should be gathered by groups sponsored by an agency of the U.S. government. The same concern was extended to research on building coalitions in support of rural development. This was perceived as being too interventionist to be permitted by host country governments.

In response to these arguments, several participants stated that research on policy was too important to be neglected and could be undertaken, particularly if the topics were "depoliticized". Several suggestions were make on how this could be done.

Jon Moris suggested the focus should be on "signals". He pointed out that market systems have readily identifiable signals, such as prices. However, the

signals provided by nonmarket institutions, either as substitutes to the market (such as the administered price structure of a parastatal) or as complements (such as the government provision of public goods) are not so clear or so well understood. By examining signals as the carriers of policy, Moris argued that the politics of policy analysis could be provided.

Another suggestion came from Lane Holdcroft who felt that examining particular policy decisions in a comparative perspective would yield generalizable results both about the decision process and the necessary coalitions. As examples he raised land tenure and food-price policy decisions.

Norman Nicholson suggested a third approach — identifying means to reduce political costs of decisions. This, he argued, was feasible, but he also questioned whether this was research or whether it was more appropriately the subject for direct technical assistance.

Beside the concern for researchability, several participants maintained that a research into national decision making went well beyond the borders of rural development. To narrow the inquiry, there were several recommendations that research center on issues of particular relevance to rural development, such as inter-ministerial coordination. Despite the argument, most of the participants felt that such a rural development "hook" was unnecessary. The topic, though broad, was of general concern.

While most of the debate centered around the first two issues, there was a concensus that research on bureaucratic systems was important — now and in the future. Studies relying on organizational theory, such as Leonard's Reaching the Peasant Farmer or examining particular bureaucratic functions like Caiden and Wildavsky's Planning and Budgeting in Poor Countries , were cited as examples worth replicating or expanding.

Expanding Markets and Equity Concerns

Overview

The Workshop Paper argues that recent attention on market-based alternatives to state intervention has underscored how little is known about markets in actual contexts. What is known is that simple assertions about the

unambiguous superiority of either market approaches or state approaches are equally naive. As researchers and policy makers move to a more sophisticated appreciation of the advantages and limitations of the polar positions and attempt to design appropriate intermediary mechanisms, there is, according to the Workshop Paper, an increasing need for basic research on the functioning of markets and market substitutes, particularly disaggregated by type and focused on differential access and impact. Given the expectation of increased penetration of markets or market substitutes in the future, this problem area will have growing salience during the next decade.

Specifically, the Workshop Paper identifies four research issues:

- Issue 5. Statist Strategies and Market Strategies. The particular advantages and disadvantages of market-oriented strategies in different contexts in order to identify criteria for selecting between statist approaches and market-oriented strategies.

- Issue 6. Market Security, Regulation and Equity. Information on how markets function and ways to ensure that equity and security are not sacrificed but ensured through appropriate regulations of the market.

- Issue 7. Controlling Phasing Out of Parastatals. Knowledge to ensure that second and third order problems involved in a move away from public enterprises are addressed.

- Issue 8. Withdrawal to Parallel Markets. Studies of situations in which withdrawal to parallel markets has occurred which provide insights useful for the development of market oriented strategies.

Discussion

Though some participants questioned whether the four issue topics were sufficiently well-specified, there was general agreement that the problem area was important and worthy of research. The importance of markets was underscored by several participants, including James O'Connor, who noted that markets, or their substitutes, have two roles to fulfill simultaneously. On one level markets provide for the transfer of information from consumers to producers and vice-versa. In a market system this information is conveyed through prices. At the same time, prices become the vehicle for distributing wealth. The policy dilemma arises when the informational aspect of price formation is seen to be unacceptable from a distributional standpoint.

Attempting to resolve this dilemma has promted numerous solutions including complete substition of markets with an administered system of prices.

While there is a general understanding of the function of markets in theory, reality is full of serious distortions. As Alain de Janvry put it, "we are aware that markets do not operate the way the textbook says." Failing to appreciate this fact, combined with failing to recognize the problems of pure statist solutions, has, according to de Janvry, led to dramatic policy swings in Latin America from market to statist solutions and back.

However, recognizing the deviance of reality from theory has raised problems of its own, de Janvry added: "We have a theoretical vacuum... the blackboard is blank." In other words, there is a lack of scholarship on the actual funtioning of particular markets and on how to assess the trade-offs of particular market structures.

The workshop participants had several suggestions about how to begin to fill the theoretical vacuum. One suggestion was to focus initial attention on agricultural markets, particularly commodity markets, as they were of vital importance to rural inhabitants. Another suggestion was that regardless of which markets were selected, it was important to disaggregate the analysis of access and impact along numerous dimensions. Socioeconomic, geographic and seasonal variables were noted. In dealing with agricultural markets, several participants emphasized the need to disaggregate according to crop type: markets for various crops vary dramatically even with countries.

In addition to research on markets, there was widespread agreement that market substitutes and their effects need attention as well. As Larry Mann observed, in the same fashion as there are markets that work, so too are there examples of parastatals that work; yet the question of why goes unanswered. De Janvry also noted that parastatals designed to extract a tax from rural producers through low prices were also supposed to spend the "tax" on improvements to increase agricultural production. They were no longer doing so. Indeed, he noted, that present uses of the extracted surplus were unknown, as were the processes that shifted the use over time. Guy Hunter raised the issue of parastatal management. Interventions raise the possibility of substantial incentives to cheating. The response,

according to Hunter, was research on ways to make such procedures "bandit-proof."

Several other participants recommended research devoted to understanding the second order effects of parastatals as mechanisms to extract surplus. One such effect has been the withdrawal of producers from productions of crops controlled by parastatals as a means of avoiding tax. Joan Atherton noted that this had obvious implications for cropping patterns and household incomes. A further second order effect has been the use of parallel markets often spanning national borders. As Jon Moris observed, this phenomenon is widely evident, yet the functioning, magnitude, and impact or parallel markets on policy making or the bureaucratic machinery goes undocumented.

Even though the discussion of this problem was wide-ranging, there was agreement on two points. First, the issue of markets is not simple; it is not a question of markets or not markets. Second, this emerging perspective needs research support. The range of intermediate choices, their functioning and trade-offs need to be better understood before policy can be meaningfully altered.

Overcoming Rural Insecurity and Unemployment

Overview

Until recently, most development literature, particularly that produced by economists, focused their micro-level studies on individuals. Individuals were perceived to be the appropriate decision-making unit. However, research on the "new household economics" has begun to change these perceptions. These new studies have indicated that households are not mere aggregations of individuals or components of a single household utility function. These analyses have pointed out the importance of understanding intra- and inter-family dynamics in determining household responses to policies and programs.

Further, as households become more diversified occupationally, and perhaps geographically in response to growing population and reduced availability of farm land, the understanding of household level decision making becomes even more important. In addition, it is equally important to understand how households respond to changing rural environments. It is for these reasons

that the Workshop Paper identified this problem area as deserving of research.

The Workshop Paper goes on to identify six more specific topics related to household decision making and the changing rural context:

- Issue 9. Social Analysis of Household and Production Unit Risk. Further research on important debates about the identity, behavior and cohesion of the household as a unit of production and consumption and the relationship of these factors to technology adoption.

- Issue 10. Risk and Collective Decision Making. Ways to reduce the risk perceived in commitment to collective action and group systems of production and resource management.

- Issue 11. Carrying Out Development in Remote Areas. Understanding the specific characteristics of household and production units and communities in remote areas so that development needs can be more fully understood. Important questions include infrastrucutre development, range management issues and changing patterns of transhumance.

- Issue 12. Small Farm Development, Labor Absorption, and Off-farm Employment. Examination of the question whether agriculture should assume primary responsibility for labor absorption, particularly as this question relates to investments in rainfed versus irrigated areas.

- Issue 13. Productive Investment of Remittance Income. Given substantial domestic and international remittances in many LDC countries, research is needed on the magnitude of remittance income, the present use of this income, its vulnerability to economic reversals and the possibilities for its more productive investment.

- Issue 14. Promoting Local Entrepreneurship. Research on promising areas for enterprise development in specific regions including research on the policy environment conducive to its development.

Discussion

Almost all of the discussion on this problem area centered around the issue of household decision making. Proponents of research on this topic argued that it was within the household that critical allocative and distributional decisions were made related to education, health, nutrition, family planning, consumption and employment. The household defined the constraints of decisions and therefore influenced them substantially.

"The problem," said Gillain Hart, "is that while we have a sense of the importance of household-level decision making, we do not understand households strategies very well and we understand even less about how they

change. It is on these issues where research is needed," she said.

At the same time that it is important to begin to examine intra-familial decision processes, the proponents warned that these studies must not be allowed to revert into the static, overly-micro focus of traditional economic analysis of households. As Alain de Janvry noted, these studies can quickly become "deadends"; "They allow us to marvel at the ingenuity of rural households, but they don't tell us what to do ... coping is not all there is to development."

To avoid this tendency, several participants stressed the importance of examining households in a dynamic environment as units responsive to outside change and as units that change over time. Hart emphasized the need to examine inter-family differences to see how options vary according to different demographic and socioeconomic characteristics. She and Susan Bourque also argued for examining households comparatively in response to national level policies, again to see the impact of household level characteristics on particular choices. Dick Meyers added that households themselves change over time and that this variable must be included in any dynamic analysis.

Despite the critical importance several participants accorded to research on this area, they were quite candid in acknowledging that there were a number of central theoretical issues that had yet to be resolved when pressed by other participants. Not the least of these is a universally accepted definition of a household. However, most of the participants saw this as a challenge for research not an indication of some logical inconsistency, as others suggested. And at very least, as Jon Moris argued, any work which highlighted intra-household dynamics could only help to break persistent perceptions of supposedly indivisable households. "These notions," he said, "thwart on-going research and policy making."

In addition to the dominant discussion about the need for approaches to household decision making in a dynamic context, several other issues were raised. Harking back to the lunch discussion about the absorptive capacity of agriculture-led rural development strategies, Lane Holdcroft pressed for more research on off-farm employment, including issues related to rural enterprise development. "If growing numbers of rural inhabitants cannot find direct agricultural employment, we are going to need ideas on how to employ them," Holdcroft argued.

Philip Church also asked for more work on risk management. He noted that it is well-known that new agricultural technologies are not riskless. He also noted that sophisticated models already exist for understanding yield and financial risks. The problem needing research, according to Church, is that new technologies often impose different types of risk, and we have no idea how to measure them. For example, irrigated agriculture substitutes the risks of nature associated with rainfed for the risks of institutions. The question is how to determine the risks associated with institutions and how do farmers make trade-offs?

Building Local Institutions Between the Public and Private Sectors

Overview

The Workshop Paper provides two justifications for this problem area. First, applied research, much of which received AID funding, has pointed to the importance of effective local organizations in promoting rural development. While these studies demonstrate the need, they provide little practical help on how to develop effective local organizations. The second justification is that alternatives to overly-taxed, inefficient central bureaucracies need to be found as channels for donor assistance. Thus the aim of research in this area is to begin to develop the practical, applied knowledge useful to those working directly with intermediary groups. To that end, the Workshop Paper indentifies seven specific research topics:

- Issue 15. Market Surrogates to Public Bureaucracies. How to stimulate bureaucratic performance through incentives based on competition, choice and accountability, alter the competitive environment external to institutions to increase pressures for better performance and increase internal bureaucratic incentives.
- Issue 16. Community Management of Natural Resources. Objective, location-specific research on current resource exploitation and types of local organizations that can promote community management of natural resources.

- Issue 17. Managing the Commons to Protect the Poor. Examination of patterns of exploitation of the commons by the poor, the range of attempted and possible interventions and guidelines for interventions that are sensitive to the dependence of the poor on such areas.
- Issue 18. Alternatives to the Small Farm. Research on group farming systems to assess their potential and question conventional wisdom about them.
- Issue 19. Expanding Local Control Over Technology. Given emerging innovations in biological, environmental and communications technologies, careful analysis of the economic, political and social implications of technological innovations to insure that their widespread introduction does not produce negative disruptions in human relationships and the natural environment. Attention must focus on the linkage between those who develop technologies and those who adopt them.
- Issue 20. Enhancing Local Management Skills. Information on training local organizations to identify needs, make demands on development ministry field offices, monitor performance of field offices and, most importantly, tkae on activities of their own.
- Issue 21. Stumulating the Public Impact of Private Development Efforts. The extent to which private development efforts can stimulate independent rural organizations that can become effective in influencin national and regional level policies and politics.

Discussion

Unlike the previous three discussions of problem areas, several participants had serious reservations with the way the Workshop Paper had framed this problem. The critics did not take issue with the importance of local institutions; rather they felt that the Workshop Paper tended to view the problem in terms of stark caricatures; grossly inefficient and inept bureaucracies on the one hand and active, egalitarian grassroot organizations on the other. Norman Nicholson called this "premature closure on particular institutional forms." With this predelicition, Nicholson and others felt that the central issue was mistated.

To this group the issue was not a choice of local versus central or one of trying to push as many functions as possible to the local level. Rather the issue is one of identifying particular tasks and then having the knowledge to devise or identify the institution appropriate to undertake the task. Often the appropriate institution may well be the central bureaucracy, in these instances it would be inefficient to lodge responsibilities elsewhere. However, as Larry Mann commented, the subtle message of the Workshop Paper is that bureaucracies should be by-passed as a matter of course.

Cast in this light, there is still a need for research, but the issue is one of understanding the relationship between tasks and institutions, not of devising strategies to build local organizations at all costs and thus by-pass central bureaucracies. Indeed, this approach refocuses attention on the previous question of understanding trade-offs of institutional choices. As George Gardner put it, talking about "building" institutions presumes we have "a bag of

viable institutional tricks." "It doesn't exist," he said, adding "we need to talk of identifying, not building appropriate institutions."

As a concrete example,Eric Eckholm cited the issue of community resource management in general and woodlot management in particular. Here, Eckholm argued, there is little understanding of the organizational issues involved, much less enough knowledge to recommend particular institutional configurations. In the absence of such knowledge Eckholm lamented that donors are searching blindly for a remedy and wasting money in the process.

There was one exception to this general position, according to ruce Johnston. He made the argument that there was enough accumulated evidence to prove that group farming alternatives (Issue 18) were less efficient that farms under private ownership. Johnston concluded that further research on this area was unnecessary.

Despite the challenges of several participants to the way the problem had been framed there was almost complete agreement that further research on local orgnizations was prevented. Guy Hunter remarked that even though local organizations are widely regarded as an important development facilitators we really lack an understanding of the attributes of successful examples. As a start he suggested examining both the membership and leadership of these organizations. Hunter maintained that it was a combination of a leader/catalyst and appropriate membership size and composition that produced successes.

Wayne Nilsestuen and others maintained that information of this type existed, particularly in the collective experience of AID-funded private voluntary organizations (PVOs). Unfortunately, this informa-

tion is not centrally located and no means presently exist to collect it. Nilsestuen suggested that research which tapped this data base might be extremely valuable to both AID and the PVO community.

Kevin Healey's pleas for research on innovative methods for transferring managerial skills to local organizations, particularly agricultural input management skills, was well-received. Missing local managerial capacity was perceived by the participants as a major constraint to effective local organizations. And effective local organizations were seen by all the participants to have an important role in rural development for the foreseeable future.

Managing Complexity in an Environment of Uncertainty

Overview

If, as the Workshop Paper suggests, rural development becomes more complex in the future, then so too will the management of that process. Exacerbating the problem is the harsh reality that management skills are scarce in developing countries and that what talents exist are often spent responding to the demands of donors for accountability. Thus the Workshop Paper concludes that research is needed on the means to reduce complexity at the same time increasing indigenous capacity to manage in an uncertain environment.

To this end, the Workshop Paper defines seven specific research issues:

- Issue 22. Proliferating Projects, Donors, and Complex Design and Aid Control Systems. Important questions include: what can be learned from projects that have been well managed; under what conditions should multisectoral, interministry projects be supported; what

can be learned from existing country and international approaches to donor coordination and penetration in order to formulate strategies that help prevent managerial breakdown in development ministries and that create more policy planning time for harried senior officials.

- Issue 23. Evaluation of Monitoring and Evaluation. Given considerable reservations in the literature about the utility of many existing monitoring and evalution (M&E) approaches, research should examine the range of M&E experiences, the constraints that they have faced, their relevance and whether alternative, more effective, simpler approaches are feasible.

- Issue 24. Improving Information Systems with Mircroprocessor Technologies. Research is needed on the range of existing and potential microprocessor interventions with the view to providing guidelines for their most fruitful application.

- Issue 25. Developing Backward and Forward Mapping Methodologies. Development of an approach which asks what future development outcomes are viewed as desirable and then work backward to the present in a systematic fashion to determine projects necessary to achieve this en

- Issue 26. Retraining for Rural Development Management. How to develop and utilize training approaches for development managers whose original training is frequently poorly suited for current tasks.

- Issue 27. Moving Beyond Training to Retention. Focus on terms of service and benefits, professional development, morale, etc. of LDC development professionals to address the widespread problem of the inability of governments to retain experienced, effective professional

- Issue 28. Developing Rules of Evidence for Process Model Methodologies. Development of commonly agreed upon standards for evaluation and implementation of "learning models" or "process" approaches

Discussion

As with the discussion earlier in the day, several participants took issue with some of the presumptions underlying the formulation of the problem area in the Workshop Paper. Chief among the criticisms during this discussion was that the Workshop Paper seemed to assume that all complexity was inherently bad. Larry Mann countered that much of the complexity was the result of laudable objectives among them: complexity arises from attempting to respond to equity concerns; complexity arises from trying to capture site-specific sensitivities; and complexity arises from efforts to retain control over scarce resources. Haven North added that complexity does not mean that something becomes unmanageable.

The point Mann and North were making is that simple is not always optimal and complex is not always deadly; however over broad generalizations are. The upshot of these comments is that the research focus should be on those areas that are unnecessarily complex; a point the rest of the participants had no trouble accepting. This concensus evaporated the discussion shifted to the sources of unnecessary complexity and the research needed to remedy them. The Workshop Paper identified donor agencies as a major source of unnecessary complexity. Demanding requirements for design documents and numerous exhaustive operational and financial evaluations were seen to severely tax host-county management skills. Further these demands and the protocol varied from donor to donor. Bruce Johnston added that the problem went well beyond issues of procedure. Donors often push mutually contradictory rural development approaches onto developing country governments. Many of the non-AID participants

underscored the severity of this problem and called on AID to take a courageous stance in supporting reserach in this area and initiating efforts to simplify and standardize procedures with other donors.

The AID participants did not deny the importance of the problem. Indeed, they argued that the problem was sufficiently severe that the agency was already taking steps to improve inter-donor coordination. As an example Ken Sherper noted that the Near East Bureau along with other donors, already established a joint-training center for the region's finance officers responsible for donor projects to train them in their reporting procedures. AID participants also questioned whether the agency was the appropriate sponsor of additional research in this

Besides the importance of research on identifying unnecessary complexity and creative remedies, the participants promoted two other research topics. The first was refining the adaptation of futures methodology to rural development (Issue 25). Jon Moris argued that, unlike that other issues in this research area, only the forward/backward linkage methodology dealt with long-term concerns. He and Susan Bourque suggested that expanding the effort at futurizing contained in the Workshop Paper itself, might be a useful first step.

The second topic was the interelated problems of training and retention. Here Ken Sherper noted the need for research on innovative in-county training programs as overseas training becomes prohibitively expensive, on the incentives, particularly non-financial incentives, needed for retention of trained staff, and on the appropriate dose of managerial training even for those receiving technical instruction.

Running through this discussion was the question raised by Jerry French in his introduction to this problem area: is this "nuts and bolts" of management a topic requiring long-term research or is it more appropriately short-term action-research. There was no resolution of this issue during the discussion.

SECTION IV

IDENTIFYING FUTURE RESEARCH PRIORITIES

> "It is not enough to develop a shopping list, we need to establish priorities to make selections from this tantalizing smorgasboard of research topics."
>
> — Ruth Zagorin
> Workshop Convener

To begin the process of selecting the priority areas from the wide range of issues laid out in the Workshop Paper and even wider range discussed during the first day and a half of the Workshop, the AID and HIID organizers felt it was essential that the participants should be asked to make specific recommendations on priorities. This was the goal of the final session.

Rather than simply rank the issue topics, the organizers felt it was important to examine the nature of the research the participants envisioned for each suggested priority area. This was a response to concerns raised during the discussion of each of the five problem areas about whether the topics required long- as opposed to short-term research, whether the problem was one of gathering together existing data or asking new questions, and whether or not the area needed theoretical attention to sharpen the concepts and define the methodology. To elicit this information, the organizers devised the horizontal axis of Table 1. The first task posed to the participants was to suggest topics for the vertical axis.

Ultimately, twelve issue topics were suggested by the participants.

- Intensifying Household Decision Analysis, particularly by seeking an understanding of diversified livelihood strategies.
- Undertaking Bureacratic Systems Research, including management under uncertainty and increasing bureacratic managerial capacity.
- Understanding the Policy Context for Rural Development.
- Indentifying Appropriate Institutions to handle policy objectives, particularly marketing.
- Investigating the particular social problems associated with Fragile Environments.
- Studying the Rural-Urban Nexus, including migration, informal networks, and power relations.
- Developing Forward-mapping and backwards-linkages and other Futures Methodologies appropriate to rural development.
- Searching for innovative ways to increase the managerial skills of Local/Community Organizations.
- Identifying more Labor-Using Rural Technologies and their appropriate uses.
- Researching methods to increase the efficiency of Rural Social Service Provision.
- Consolidating and reworking existing evaluations to establish lessons learned, particularly on the uses and limitations of Project Monitoring Evaluation.
- Investigating ways to stimulate Rural Enterprise Development.

Having defined the two axes of the matrix, the participants were asked to define the primary, secondary, and tertiary research

tasks for each topic. The results of this exercise are presented in Table 1.

To sharpen the focus further, the participants were then asked to rank the five highest priorities among the twelve listed. The results of this activity are presented in Table 2.

The initial ranking was intended to set the stage for further discussion of the priority topics and debate about the relative merits of the top five versus those topics not included. Unfortunately, there was insufficient time to press this interactive process further. As a result, while the exercise yielded five research priorities, two serious problems deserve mention. First, there was no opportunity to reconcile the five priority topics with their analogs in the Workshop Paper. Many of the twelve topics span several issues as defined in the Workshop Paper. Second, there was no opportunity to reconsider the odering or permit the inclusion of some of the other topics as priorities.

Together, these problems undermine the methodological rigor of this process. However, methodological rigor was not the intent of the exercise. Rather, the aim was to elicit yet another ordering of priorities from a group of practitioners and scholars who had been contemplating the issue for two days. At that level, the priorities which emerged present an important statement about issues that might be pursued.

TABLE 1

Ranking of Research Tasks by Topic

Research Topics	Research Tasks: Consolidation of Existing Research	Sharpening of Concepts and Theory	Short-Term Data Needs	Long-Term Research Needs
Household Decision Analysis		P	T	S
Bureaucratic Systems Research		P	S	T
Policy Context		S	P	
Appropriate Institutions	P			
Fragile Environments			P	S
Rural Urban Nexus				P
Futures Methodologies		P		S
Local/Community Organizations	P	T	S	
Labor-Using Rural Technology	P	S		
Rural Social Service Provision	P			
Project Monitoring and Evaluation	P	S		
Rural Enterprise Development		S	P	T

Key: P = Primary research task
S = Secondary research task
T = Tertiary research task

TABLE 2

Ranking of Priority Research Topics

Topic	Ranking[1]	Score[2]
Household Decision Analysis	1 (14)	95
Bureaucratic Systems Research	2 (1)	47
Policy Context	5 (1)	34
Appropriate Institutions	8 (1)	20
Fragile Environments	7 (1)	25
Rural-Urban Nexus	3 (3)	44
Futures Methodologies	11	8
Local/Community Organizations	6	28
Labor-Using Rural Technologies	9	14
Rural Social Service Provision	12	0
Project Monitoring and Evaluation	10 (1)	9
Rural Enterprise Development	4 (2)	39

Notes: Underlined topics were the highest five priority areas

1-Numbers in parentheses indicate the number of first place votes.

2-The scoring was the result of assigning numerical values to first through fifth place votes (5 points for first place, 1 point for fifth) by the participants. The number shown is the total number of points.

SECTION V

THEMES, CAVEATS, AND CONCLUSIONS

"We must unpack our conceptual baggage."

- Gillian Hart
Workshop Participant

As the characterizations of the discussions of problem areas in section three and the process used to select five priority topics in section four clearly indicate, there were a number of different analytical frameworks present. These frameworks framed individual's criticisms and arguments and informed their interpretation and selection of research priorities. This is certainly to be expected. More important are the areas on which the proponents of particular perspectives could agree. This happened in three areas.

First, there was general agreement on the dominant trends and resulting vision of rural areas contained in the Workshop Paper. Second, there was also general agreement that the Workshop Paper had identified key problem areas and research topics even though there were questions about how certain problems were described and whether particular topics were researchable. Third, there were a number of points made about the research enterprise on which there was agreement irrespective of the participant's analytical framework. Several of there points were repeated so often that they took on the aura of general guidelines or even caveats to future researchers in rural development. The four most important are:

1. Avoid Dichotomies. The tendency in the past has been to establish polar positions and then insist on a choice between them. This perception continues to influence discussions of markets versus parastatals, policy versus projects, decentralization and local organizations versus bureaucratic control and reorientation. The workshop participants agreed that such a view unnecessarily limited choices. Instead, the emphasis should be on an understanding of the functions necessary to be performed

and the institution or approach appropriate to that task. Research should thus avoid dichotomies and consider intermediate alternatives.

2. Consider Variation and Disaggregate Creativity. The Workshop brought together scholars with expertise in different disciplines and different geographic regions. Often the varying regional perspectives led to disagreements on particular points. Emerging from these incidents was a firm feeling that regional, national, and subnational variations are important to keep in mind regardless of the issue. In short, there are few universal truths in rural development. Hence it is important to disaggregate by crops or crop production systems when considering the range of issues from household decision making, local instititutions, and national agricultural policy. Thus the participants waived future research to consider variation and disaggregate to creativity.

3. Insert the Dynamic Element. For the most part, models assume a static environment, this is particulary true at the micro-level. When change is included, it is modeled as a change in two static invironments. This view presumes that the rate and direction of change has no impact on the process being modeled. This approach convenient for modelers, is no longer a suitable tool for researchers in rural development, according to the workshop participants, as change and the attendant risks so thoroughly infuse the rural environment that avoiding it leads to serious analytical errors. Hard though it may be to capture, the participants stressed the fundamental nature of change in all research areas and asked researchers to accord primary importance to ways to insert the dynamic element.

4. Adopt a Vision of "Greater ~~Urban~~ Rural Development." During the workshop discussion on the impact of migration as an element in a diversifying strategy, one participant made the point that it was no longer appropriate to consider rural development concerns to be restricted strictly to rural areas. Too much that happens internationally, in urban areas, or between urban and rural areas, be it policy formulation, remittance flows, or elite coalition formation has considerable impact on rural life. This wider concern was likened to realizing that an urban center must be considered in terms of the "greater metropolitan area." Hence, the idea of greater ~~urban~~ rural development emerged. To avoid the tendency to overly narrow the focus, the participants urged that research

take a panoramic view and adopt a vision of greater rural development.

In a sense, then, the Workshop ended the way it began, emphasizing the importance of understanding the analytical frameworks researchers bring to bear on problems of rural development at the same time recognizing that there are a number of conceptual holes in everyone's perspective. Hence the thrust for future research, regardless of the subject matter, should be to conceptual clarity, for it is only through clear and rigorous frameworks that creative and effective responses to rural poverty will emerge.

ANNEX A

AGENDA FOR THE WORKSHOP ON
A FUTURE-ORIENTED AGENDA FOR RESEARCH
ON RURAL DEVELOPMENT

JUNE 2-3, 1983
WASHINGTON, D.C.

JUNE 2, 1983	Jerome French, CHAIR
9:00-9:10	Introductory Remarks, Ruth K. Zagorin
9:10-9:20	Introduction of Participants
9:20-10:30	SESSION I The Task Environment for Rural Development in the 1990's: How should it be characterized? Brief Overview of Section II: John Cohen Discussants: Bruce Johnston, Erik Eckholm, Norman Nicholson
10:30-10:45	Break
10:45-12:15	SESSION II Understanding Government Decision Making Brief Overview of Problem Area: Merilee Grindle Discussants: Guy Hunter, Haven North
12:15-12:30	Break
12:30-1:30	Working Lunch Alternative Approaches to Rural Development Session Chair: Ruth Zagorin
2:00-3:15	SESSION III Expanding Markets and Equity Concerns Brief Overview of Problem Area: John Thomas Discussants: Alain de Janvry, James O'Connor
3:15-3:30	Break
3:30-5:00	SESSION IV Overcoming Rural Insecurity Brief Overview of Problem Area: John Cohen Discussants: Susan Bourque, Gillian Hart, Lane Holdcroft

JUNE 3, 1983	Jerome French, CHAIR
9:00-10:30	SESSION V Building Insitutions Between the Private and the Public Sectors. Brief Overview of Problem Area: Merilee Grindle Discussants: Kevin Healy, Wayne Nilsestuen
10:30-10:45	Break
10:45-12:15	SESSION VI Managing Complexity in an Environment of Uncertainty Brief Overview of Problem Area: John Thomas Discussants: Jon Moris, Larry Mann, Kenneth Sherper
12:15-1:30	Lunch
1:30-3:15	SESSION VII Identifying Research Priorities Session Chair: Jerome French
3:15-3:30	Break
3:30-4:30	Session VII, Continued.

ANNEX B

WORKSHOP PARTICIPANTS

Invited Experts:

Susan Bourque, Department of Political Science, Smith College
Expertise: Rural change and its impact on women in the highlands of Peru; also relationships of women to other family members to other women, to the community and its power structure, and to the rural economy.

Erik Eckholm, Natural History Magazine, New York
Expertise: Environmental, energy, and development issues with particular interest in local environmental management and the future of renewable and non-renewable natural resources.

Gillian Hart, Department of Economics, Boston University
Expertise: Micro-economics with particular focus on labor markets and non-agricultural activities as they affect farming in Asia; also concern with comparative work on relation of productions.

Guy Hunter, Overseas Development Institute, London
Expertise: Extensive and long-term experience with administration of rural development programs and projects. Particular concern with implementation, participation, and comparative studies of local level impact of development projects.

Kevin Healy, Inter-American Foundation, Rosslyn , Virginia
Expertise: Extensive experience with private voluntary organizations at local level, primarily in Andean region. Concern for training and use of paraprofessionals and impact of consumer cooperatives on welfare and economic strucutres at the local level.

Alain de Janvry, Department of Agricultural Economics, University of California, Berkeley
Expertise: Combined interest in global context of rural development with concern for macro-level policy making and local level labor markets, household economies, and technology use.

Bruce Johnston, Food Research Institute, Stanford University, Palo Alto
Expertise: Long-term familiarity with rural development, including conceptualization of many of its central perspectives. Recent influential book on "future directions" for rural development. Concern with acting on what we know already.

Lawrence Mann, Department of Management and Policy, University of Arizona, Tuscon
Expertise: Spatial and locational dimensions of regional development, especially role of small towns and market centers. Concern with administrative capacity at sub-national level and rural and urban linkages.

Jon Moris, Department of Sociology, Utah State University, Logan
Expertise: An anthropologist with broad familiarity with management issues, especially at the project level. Concern with parastatelism, parallel economies and bureaucratization of local services.

Aid Representatives

Joan Atherton: Rural Development Division, Office of Policy Development and Program Review, Bureau for Program and Policy Coordination.

Philip Chruch: Office of Agriculture, Bureau for Science and Technology.

John Eriksson: Deputy Assistant Administrator for Research, Bureau for Science and Technology.

Jerome French: Director, Office of Multisectoral Development, Bureau of Science and Technology and Workshop Chair.

George Gardner: Social Analysis and Rural Development Division, Office of Technical Support, Bureau for Near East.

Allen C. Hankins: Chief, Agriculture and Rural Development Division, Office of Technical Resources, Bureau for Asia.

Lane Holdcroft: Director, Office of Technical Resources, Bureau for Africa.

Richard L. Meyers: Office of Multisectoral Development, Bureau for Science and Technology.

Norman K. Nicholson: Deputy, Human Resources Directorate, Bureau for Science and Technology.

Wayne Nilsestuen: Rural Development Division, Office of Development Resources, Bureau for Latin America and the Caribbean.

Haven W. North: Special Assistant to the Administrator, Office of the Administrator, ~~Agency~~ for International Development.

James O'Connor: Office of Policy Development and Policy Review, Bureau for Program and Policy Coordination.

Douglass Pickett: Office of Technical Resources, Bureau for Asia

Kenneth H. Sherper: Director, Office of Technical Support, Bureau for Near East.

Ruth K. Zagorin: Agency Director, Directorate for Human Resources, Bureau for Science and Technology

Ruth K. Zagorin: Agency Director, Directorate for Human Resources, Bureau for Science and Technology.

HIID Participants

John M. Cohen, Harvard Institute for Interanational Development, Cambridge.
Expertise: Social analysis of rural communities, implementation of rural development ministries, participatory development strategies, land tenure and national resource management and rural local government. Primary experience on Africa and Middle East.

Merilee S. Grindle, Harvard Institute for International Development, Cambridge.
Expertise: Public policy analysis particularly concerned with the political and bureaucratic context of rural development initiatives, implementation processes, and the role of the state in local development. Primary experience in Latin America.

John W. Thomas, Harvard Institute for International Development, Cambridge.
Expertise: Design and management of rural development projects, administration and financial management of development ministries, agricultural policy and planning, rural public works and choice of technology. Primary experience in Asia and Africa.

S. Tjip Walker, Harvard Institute for International Development, Cambridge.
Expertise: Development administration with particular focus on identifying the appropriate functions of particular institutional forms; issues of collective decision making, public choice, and management capacity at the local level.