

GUIDANCE FOR THE AID PROJECT PAPER SOCIAL ANALYST

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REDSO/EA September 1980

The role of the social analyst in AID project development work is relatively new and guidance for the analyst is still in the process of being developed. The first guidelines for the social analyst were included in the Project Paper (PP) section of the AID Design Handbook No. 3 in 1975. Since then, additional guidelines from the social perspective have been written for the various stages of project analysis and design--namely the Country Development Strategy Statement (CDSS) and the Project Identification Document (PID). Currently, all the guidelines are under revision, a process which may take considerable time to complete. In the interim, additional guidance to that presently included in Handbook 3 may be useful.

This paper provides two types of guidance for the mission personnel, project design officer, and social analyst responsible for the social analysis section of the project paper. The first consists of guidelines for the social analysis section to be included in the body of the project paper, and is essentially a revised condensation of the Handbook 3 Appendix 4A Social Soundness Analysis Guidelines which were adopted by AID in 1975. The second type of guidance offered in this paper consists of suggestions for the social analyst who may be working as a member of a multidisciplinary project design team for the first time. Both the guidelines and the suggestions have been developed at REDSO/EA and are based on four years of social analysis work carried out in countries with AID offices in East and Southern Africa.

I. Guidelines for the Project Paper Social Analysis Section

The social analysis section of the project paper contains a summary discussion of the social analyses conducted and the issues addressed in the process of designing the project. The actual content and emphasis of the analysis will vary considerably depending on a variety of factors

such as the scope of the project (e.g. national or area based), the types of development activities planned (e.g. upgrading a training institute or introducing new technologies to poor farmers), the characteristics of the beneficiary population (e.g. young school leavers or traditional birth attendants) and the social issues germane to project success.

There are six main topical areas of concern that should be addressed in this section; these are discussed in detail in Appendix 4A of AID Handbook 3.

(A) Socio-cultural Context

The socio-cultural context of the project should be described in relation to the wider surroundings of which it is a part. This very brief summary statement could include the significant features of the social landscape which relates to and demonstrates the need for the activities proposed, the history of similar types of development activities undertaken in the area previously, and an assessment of the adequacy of current knowledge pertaining to the area.

(B) Beneficiaries

With few exceptions, the ultimate beneficiaries of AID projects are the rural poor. The analysis should describe the relationship of the project to the poor, i.e. identify the direct and indirect beneficiaries of project activities and discuss the linkages between activities and resources and intended beneficiaries. In addition, the analysis should include: 1) identification of individuals or groups which may be negatively affected by the project; 2) an analysis of how women will be affected by the project; and 3) a summary description of the minimum participator profile (see Appendix 4A pg. 4) outlining the minimum requirements such as level of education, ownership of farmland, political allegiance access to water, necessary for a person or family to benefit from the project.

(C) Participation

The means by which opportunities for participation by project beneficiaries have been structured into project design, implementation and evaluation should be briefly addressed. Topics under this area of concern might include analysis of collaborative procedures built into the implementation of the project, opportunities for local level decision making, and assessment of ways for structuring incentives and thus ensuring motivation among beneficiaries, and host country personnel. This section should also identify potentially useful resources, groups, institutions, community leaders etc. which could be utilised during the implementation of the project as well as assess the potential negative impact of any local or national interest groups adversely affected by project-related activities.

(D) Socio-Cultural feasibility

Socio-cultural feasibility of the project should be addressed from at least three perspectives:

- (1) the degree of fit of proposed interventions (e.g. administrative, organizational technological, conceptual) within the context of the beneficiary population and proposed scope of the project and (2) the capability of the project monitoring/feedback system to identify problems affecting the socio-cultural feasibility of development activities and
- (3) the capacity of the project to solve these implementation-related problems on a systematic timely basis, throughout the life of the project. If items 2 and 3 have been adequately covered elsewhere in the project, the appropriate sections should be cross-referenced in this section.

(E) Impact

The impact of the project should also be addressed from several perspectives. These would include the probability that the project will achieve some spread effect and/or that project activities will be suitable for replication, and the probability that the project has been so structured that development activities and benefits can be expected to continue beyond the life of the project. Additional topics which could

be covered under an analysis of project impact are the effectiveness of the project monitoring evaluation system in determining social impact, the types of obstacles which may reduce the potential spread effects and longevity of project-related activities after project termination, and the types of information flows and communication systems which will be necessary to achieve the greatest impact over the widest area.

(F) Issues

In addition to covering the five areas of concern listed above, the social analysis should also address any social issues which have a particular bearing on the success of the project. Such issues could include topical areas of special interest of AID (e.g. role of women, rapid population growth, energy, employment) or issues raised in the PID or during PP design which require special attention during implementation, e.g. through project monitoring. Finally the analysis should briefly address country/government commitment to the project and identify from the social perspective any policies or practices (e.g. favoritism or discrimination displayed towards specific groups) which may facilitate or inhibit achievement of project goals and purposes.

In summary the six topical areas described above are meant to serve as guides only; considerable discretion may be used in preparing the social analysis section. In some cases, a topic will have been discussed at length in another section of the paper, necessitating only a cross reference to the discussion in the social analysis. In other cases, the nature of the project will require that a certain topic receive only the briefest treatment; in other reference will be made to an extensive body of analysis and documentation which may or may not be included in the annexes of the project paper. Finally, this section should be characterized by the avoidance of detail and repetition and the adoption of a flexible approach. It should take into full account the specific circumstances of the proposed project both from the point of view of what is currently known and also from the point of view of what may possibly arise during the process of project implementation.

- II. Suggestions to the Social Analyst working on the Project Design Team.
- (A) Be familiar with A.I.D. guidelines, documentation and jargon.

The more effectively the social analyst can communicate ideas and views in simple terms (rather e.g. than anthropological terms) and in the framework of A.I.D. issues and concerns, the more likely these will be incorporated in the project design. Furthermore, systematic use of the standard, common (in A.I.D. terms) set of concepts increases general familiarity with social concerns and will enable comparison to be made more easily among project analyses and recurrent issues.

- (B) Start early in the design process.

The reason for this is obvious given the goal of placing people and their needs at the center of project conceptualization and development and the information and time constraints facing the social scientist. Early involvement improves the chances of socially sound project design, by enabling the analyst to help identify problem areas and structure solutions to them. It also allows for early identification and possible rejection of purposed activities which threaten to have a significantly harmful impact on a segment of a beneficiary population. One of the most important functions of the social analyst is to ensure that the project as conceived is socially sound and if he/she is certain it is not, to communicate the reasons for such a determination to the head of the design team as soon as possible.

The time relationship of the social analyst to project development can be stated simply: early involvement and timely completion of analysis should maximize concrete usefulness in terms of how resources get to people; late involvement may result in an over-emphasis on justification of the project (in social terms) during the time when the project design team becomes preoccupied with the "packaging" of the final document to be sent to the A.I.D. offices in Washington for review and approval.

- (C) Face data constraints early and pragmatically

In East and Southern Africa it is the rare project in which the social

analyst can be fully confident of the existing data base. The means for gaining project related information, however, is typically expensive and time consuming. The key to data collection and analysis is flexibility, speed and relevance; the specific approach to a project varies greatly depending on time, resources local conditions, and nature of assignment. Above all, it is essential that the social analyst fully understand the constraints under which he/she is being asked to work and that he/she secures sufficient time to complete the agreed upon scope of work before undertaking it.

There are numerous approaches to data collection that merit consideration depending on actual circumstances. One important issue concerns the ways in which the holistic, participant-observational anthropological approach to cross-cultural studies can be utilised in social analysis work. On the one hand, in depth community studies are extremely effective as a means to understand the processes of social change and the dynamics of innovation and serve as an excellent point of departure for the social analyst unfamiliar with the project context. On the other hand, 1) they probably require more time to accomplish than is available to the analyst, 2) may, if carried out some time ago, foster a misleading impression of stasis in a society now rapidly changing; 3) may not be adequately representative of a "target" population; and 4) may contain information that is too specialized and/or incomplete to be of development use. One means for overcoming these limitations is to arrange to do a quick study in a community which has been studied in-depth previously. Another is to utilize social scientists who have made community studies earlier in the project area. Probably the most effective use of indepth studies is to incorporate them in the project design, as part of a project-based monitoring and evaluation system. (see chapter 5E Handbook 3). In this way, potential problem areas crucial to project success can receive systematic attention over the life of the project.

Another issue is determining the most judicious mix of information-gathering methods. The elaborate single round rural household survey is often not the most effective in cost, time, and relevance-to-project needs terms unless it can be initiated as a feasibility study well before

the arrival of the project design team. Particularly when designed under time pressure, without an adequate review of secondary sources, and without sufficient field testing, such surveys can produce disappointing results. An approach that is underutilized is the methodical review of published and unpublished resources of the area under investigation. A desk review can be done well-in-advance of project design work, it often turns up potential candidates for future studies, and it places no burden on the host government or local area. Particularly when mixed with intensive local discussions and key informant interviews, the library approach can be very useful and time saving. The social analyst may want to request pertinent background materials from the USAID mission and the time to review them if such are not automatically included in contract negotiations.

Finally, the identification and study of a successful development project in the target area offers an excellent means to make informed judgements about future interventions. In East and Southern Africa, for example, information useful to the design and implementation of new directions type projects can be gathered efficiently from interviews with missionaries and other persons involved in small projects sponsored by private and voluntary organizations.

(D) Where possible generate data based on local experience

A closely related topic is the importance of the small-scale pilot or phase one activity. Planning an initial pilot phase to gain experience and local involvement in a set of proposed project activities is an excellent means to deal with information gaps. It also maximizes local involvement in project design. Such "startups" of course, do postpone the time when A.I.D. can allocate a large bulk of money to address a particular problem. One means of shortening the gap between trials and full blown resource commitment is to tie into, or study and replicate separately, successful small-scale projects already ongoing in the project areas.

(E) Be a team member.

In the course of project development there always come times when there are breakdowns in communication, misunderstandings as to allocation of responsibility, strong differences of opinions and judgements, time pressures, and disappointed expectations. As in any bureaucracy, things go better when people make an effort to be flexible, positive, realistic in expectations, sensitive to others' special interests and measured in the assertion of ones own point of view. While it is likely that the social analyst will have reason to believe he/she should be taken as the final authority on a whole range of issues, other professionals on the team (e.g. the agricultural economist, the engineer, the lawyer, the irrigation expert) may well have similar confidence in their competence to make the final decision on an issue. The anthropologist orientation as educator is useful in helping to resolve in a productive manner many of the issues that arise in project development work. Very often educating the other members of a multi-disciplinary design team through face to face interaction to be more sensitive to some of the social issues involved in a development activity enable the whole team to find creative solutions to project design problems. Usually, such an involved, integrated approach is far more likely to result in a socially sound project (a project in which resources are allocated to people in such a manner as to maximize local participation and benefits and minimize project induced harm) than the more isolated, scholarly approach of preparing and filing an independently written social soundness report which, while accurate, may run the risk of being perceived as irrelevant to project design, relegated to the annex section of the project document, and hence overlooked.*

The chances of this happening have, unfortunately increased due to structural changes in the formal project design and review process in recent years. When first instituted the requirement of a project social soundness analysis in A.I.D was accomplished by preparing the analysis for Washington review midway through the project design process. This procedure enabled deficiencies in the general project design to be identified early enough for the team to redesign the project prior to final submission of the project document to Washington. This intermediate formal project review requirement has been abolished. Consequently, the requirement for a written social soundness analysis has become part of the final project review documentation, to be considered in its completed form at the final round of project review in Washington.

It is to some extent unfortunate that the project design team must structure a series of activities to achieve a previously established development purpose while at the same time (and in the same project paper) must persuade reviewers of the project's merits. In short, the document must contain an objective project design having the best possible prospects for successful implementation while at the same time be a persuasive document which will satisfy reviewers and justify allocation of funds. The social analyst must consider the implications of these two functions of the project paper, particularly when the paper is nearing completion. The period just before final project write up is rarely perceived by project designers as an appropriate time to raise difficult unresolved issues or to discuss at length the project's inadequacies; to the extent possible, these should be raised early on in the project design process.

6. Help the team find feasible alternatives.

Very often in project analysis and design there are general ideas to what problems and solutions merit attention, but specific locally-appropriate and practical ways to structure project interventions are lacking. In such a situation, the team member who proposes an approach will often see that approach adopted. The suggestion to organize a community group discussion to ascertain local perceptions of community needs, for example or the initiation of a specific line of questioning of local officials during a "windshield" reconnaissance of an area are examples of how early initiatives can help structure local participation in project design. A constructive image can be useful when the social analyst must try to stop a socially harmful activity. Typically the analyst having a reputation for being constructive will be more able to mobilize support in a veto situation when really necessary than an analyst having a reputation for being consistently negative.

Being able to offer positive, viable alternatives to counter less desirable proposals is one of the best means for avoiding impasses. Being prepared to accept a "least worst" alternative which resolves a difficult project design issue is another.

In sum, the social analyst should bear in mind that one of the most effective means for ensuring that a project will satisfy the social analysis criteria is by actively applying his/her own knowledge, and experience in a timely fashion to achieve the best possible project design.

PROJECT PAPER SOCIAL ANALYST
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I. Guidelines: PP/SSA

A. Considerations

1. Summary discussion of social analyses conducted
2. Issues addressed in project design
3. Context based on
 - a. scope (national or area)
 - b. type of development activities
 - c. characteristics of beneficiary population
 - d. social issues germane to project success

B. Sociocultural context (SSA 1)

1. The s-c context of the project in relation to the larger s-c context
2. History of development activities in the area
3. Adequacy of current knowledge pertaining to area

C. Beneficiaries (SSA 3)

1. Relationship of project to rural poor
2. Direct and indirect beneficiaries
3. Linkages between activities, resources, and beneficiaries
4. Groups negatively affected by project
5. Effects upon women
6. Minimum participator profile

D. Participation (SSA 2)

1. Means by which participants are included in design, implementation, and evaluation
 - a. collaborations, local-level decision-making
 - b. assessments of ways of structuring incentives
2. Identification of useful resources (leaders, instit.)

E. Sociocultural feasibility (SSA 1)

1. The degree of fit between interventions and target
 2. Capability of monitoring/feedback system to identify feasibility problems
 3. Capacity of project to solve implementation problems on a systematic, timely basis throughout life of project
- * cross-reference #2,3 if discussed elsewhere

F. Impact (SSA 3)

1. Probability of spread/replication
2. Probability of program life after project termination
3. Effectiveness of project monitoring evaluation system
4. Obstacles which can reduce spread and longevity
5. Types of information flows/communications needed for greatest impact

G. Issues (SSA 1)

1. Social issues particularly relevant (women, pop. etc)
2. Issues raised in PID or PP
3. Country/govt commitment
4. Policies or practices which may facilitate/inhibit achievement of goals

* Perspective: what is already known; what may arise

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II. Suggestions

- A. Familiarity with AID guidelines, documentation, jargon
 - 1. Presentation vis-a-vis AID format
 - B. Early start in design process
 - 1. Determination of social soundness of project; modification, counsel
 - 2. Usefulness of SSA is greater during design stage
 - C. Early and pragmatic approach to data constraints
 - 1. Flexibility, speed, relevance
 - 2. Participant-observation aids in understanding the process of change and innovation
 - a. may be time-consuming and irrelevant to target
 - 3. Use of local scientists, other in-depth studies
 - 4.. In-depth studies can be built into the monitoring and evaluation system
 - 5. Use of published and unpublished sources
 - 6. Local discussions and key informant interviews
 - 7. Rural household survey often is not feasible
 - 8. Use successful projects as models (consult other private and voluntary organizations)
 - D. Phase I/ Pilot activity
 - 1. Provides experience and generates local involvement
 - 2. Tie-in to other projects to obtain experience
 - E. Team Involvement
 - 1. Working cooperatively promotes social soundness
*(resource allocation to maximize local participation and benefits; to minimize induced harm)
 - 2. Document must be both convincing to reviewers and constructively critical of project design
 - 3. Presentation of feasible alternatives for intervention
- * active application of one's own knowledge and experience

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