

PN-ACC-060

**COMMUNICATIONS  
NEEDS ASSESSMENT:  
INDIA**

Final Report

**SANJEEV KUMAR**

**ASIA AND NEAR EAST**

**OPERATIONS RESEARCH AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE PROJECT**

**THE POPULATION COUNCIL, NEW DELHI**

**May 1996**

# COMMUNICATIONS NEEDS ASSESSMENT: INDIA

## CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY.....	i
INTRODUCTION.....	1
DISSEMINATION STRATEGY.....	1
NEEDS ASSESSMENT OBJECTIVES.....	2
AUDIENCE, CHANNELS AND MESSAGES.....	2
METHODOLOGY.....	4
FRAMEWORK OF STUDY.....	4
Context.....	4
Operations research and policy research.....	5
Policy process.....	5
Stakeholders.....	6
Policy power structure.....	6
The Audience chain .....	7
RESPONSE AND ANALYSIS.....	8
Response.....	8
Concerns.....	8
A Simple Framework: Five 'Fs' .....	10
FOCUS.....	11
FORMAT.....	11
FREQUENCY.....	12
FORUMS.....	13
FOLLOW-UP.....	13
RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTION.....	14
Short term: five 'Fs'.....	14
Long term: communications training.....	15
CONCLUSION.....	17
Appendices.....	18
1. OR Projects in India.....	18
2. Persons interviewed.....	19
3. List of guide questions.....	20
References.....	21

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The term needs assessment refers to the process of assessing needs - of services, products or information. Communications Needs Assessment: India, had the following main objectives:

- To identify policy makers and program manger's specific information needs.
- To refine project audience segments according to their information needs.
- To assess current ANE OR/TA dissemination activities in India.

Currently the ANE OR/TA Project is using many conventional and some innovative channels to reach a diverse audience. They include: **ALTERNATIVES**, Research Summaries, final reports, policy briefs, working papers, personal communication with decision makers, workshops and seminars, the OR Home page on the Internet, and local and national media.

To assess the information needs of policy makers and program managers in-depth interviews were conducted with a selected range of actors. These interview were complemented by participant observation at workshops in February-March 1996 in Lucknow, Agra, Baroda and New Delhi. For analyzing the responses, content analysis was applied to identify major themes, and to sort issues within each theme. The observations focused on how other researchers communicated their results.

One common theme emerging from all interviews was the need for bridging the gap between research and utilization by policy makers and program managers. This means there is an urgent need to understand the mechanisms for better utilization of research finding. Many of the ANE OR/TA communications products and efforts to share information are much appreciated. The audience clearly sees our efforts as useful.

There were other issues directly related to communication and dissemination where there is scope of improvement. These can be classified into five areas namely: **Focus, Format, Frequency, Forums and Follow-up**.

**Focus** demands sacrifice. To be effective the message needs to contain only the key findings and feasible recommendations. There are differing opinions about which **format** is most useful to the diverse range of audiences. Another problem of information availability was the **frequency** of the communication and interaction. There are several partners in the project, and if some are making an extra effort to reach multiple forums, there is a synergetic effect when all involved voice similar concerns. There are several **forums** still untapped in this effort, for example, the panchayat, a local government. Media is another underutilized constituency. When projects are finished, **follow-up** is often diminished. Follow-up often is assumed to be the responsibility of the government or service agency.

It is obvious that there are communication aspects to the enhancement of the utilization of research results. Specific formats could be designed to cater to the needs of the policy makers and program managers. An update bulletin would be useful for sharing ongoing activities and progress of the project. The frequency of the communication should be increased for better visibility and retention. This could be done by making communication an ongoing process, delivered in stages. One very important aspect of the impact process is the use of many more forums. Researchers also need to keep in touch with audiences even when the project term is over.

The long term inputs to increase the utilization are training the administrators, program manager and policy makers to understand the value of research. They should be actively involved in the project from the beginning. The PRCs, SIHFW, UPAAI, MLAs, MPs, Panchayat members, media professionals should receive orientation on how to understand and use research better.

This communications needs assessment also underlined the need to understand the policy process and the process of change. It would be useful teaching researchers about policy constraints and realities of the policy makers' world; and keeping researchers knowledgeable about changes in the policy arena that may affect research utilization.

## **INTRODUCTION**

The Population Council's Asia and Near East Operations Research and Technical Assistance Project (ANE OR/TA) began a 30 months extension from July, 1995 - January 1998. During the first phase of the project (1990-1995) a total of 55 studies and 23 workshops were conducted in nine countries (see Appendix 1). Within India, the project head office is located in New Delhi and there are also offices in Baroda, Gujarat and Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh. A dissemination and communication strategy was developed which guided the communications activities of the first phase. The products developed created a coherent framework for disseminating the results of studies and informing a diverse range of audiences within each country, and internationally.

## **DISSEMINATION STRATEGY**

The dissemination Strategy was updated after the first five years and keeping in view the new mandate for the extension phase. By 1998 the following objectives of the dissemination program will be achieved:

- The lessons learned from OR will be disseminated to a range of audiences using communication materials and processes appropriate for each group.
- The institutionalization of OR communications methods and procedures will be developed in each ANE OR/TA country.
- The utilization of OR results by policy makers and program managers (locally, regionally and internationally) will be enhanced.
- The exchange of experiences and results among OR projects will be supported.

The ANE OR/TA project evaluation recommended exploring the development of additional dimensions during the extension phase, such as an audience needs assessment, developing local capacities for dissemination, conducting more follow-on efforts to enhance the utilization of OR results and disseminating results from clusters of projects that synthesize the OR experience regionally. Responding to the new mandate, it was proposed to conduct an audience

communications needs assessment to maximize utilization by cost effective communication channels and tools.

## **NEEDS ASSESSMENT OBJECTIVES**

The term needs assessment refers to the process of assessing needs, specifically the collection of data bearing on the need for services, products or information. There are several reasons for conducting needs assessments. Successful, established programs often recognize that needs assessments can help them to prioritize their efforts for the greatest possible programmatic effect or for more cost-effective investments. Results from needs assessments are used to make decisions about internal programming and resource allocation. Well-targeted needs assessments can do much to identify the needs of frequently overlooked subpopulations. Given the right planning, needs assessment can also form part of a program evaluations effort.

The Communications Needs Assessment in India had the following objectives:

- To identify policy makers and program manger's specific information needs,
- To refine project audience segments according to their information needs, and
- To assess current ANE OR/TA dissemination activities.

## **AUDIENCE, CHANNELS and MESSAGES**

### **Audience**

The target audience for the OR/TA project in India can be categorized into three levels:

#### 1. Decision and Policy Makers

- National and state government officials
- Private and NGO Executive Directors
- International service organizations (e.g. PSS, IPPF)

#### 2. Service Institutions and interest groups (locally and regionally)

- Staff of local service delivery agencies
- Researchers (universities, research institutions and projects)
- Other special groups (women's organizations, media, clients of family planning and reproductive health services and, others)

### 3. Donors and International Organizations

- USAID Washington and local Missions
- Other donors, such as UNFPA, ODA and the World Bank
- Cooperating Agencies (CAs)

The project target audience in India is as wide ranging as anywhere else, only much larger. There is a close contact between the India project staff and Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MOHFW) at the central level and at the state level, in particular, in Uttar Pradesh. Several other government agencies and institutions such as - Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR), National Institute of Health and Family Welfare (NIHFW), Population Research Centers (PRCs), International Institute for Population Studies (IIPS), Registrar General and Census Commissioner (RG & CC), Ministry of Women and Child Development (MOWCD), Medical colleges and others have been active collaborators and partners in projects to date. The primary sectors of the audiences - USAID, donors, U.P. Project Cooperating Agencies, and other important players such as UNFPA, UNICEF, World Bank, NGOs, Women's groups, and the media have been closely associated with our work. Currently the India target audience list has over one thousand active members.

### **Messages**

Each of the above audiences require tailored messages for easy understanding and utilization. Some general principles are useful for developing messages for each type of audience. Problem specific and program specific messages will differ for the host country audiences and the international community. Language plays an important part in communication of messages and their utilization.

### **Channels**

Currently the ANE OR/TA Project is using many conventional and some innovative new channels to reach a diverse range of audiences. They include: **ALTERNATIVES**, Research Summaries, final reports, policy briefs, working papers, articles in professional journals, personal communication with decision makers, workshops and seminars, the OR Home page on the Internet, and local and national media.

## **METHODOLOGY**

Since we are working largely with the public sector, it is important that we understand the needs of the policy makers and program managers, and use channels and products that best cater to the needs of the project audience. In all eighteen people were interviewed. These included policy makers, program managers, bureaucrats, head of institutions, NGOs, donors, universities, research bodies, planners, and consultants. To assess the information needs for this audience it was decided to conduct in-depth interviews with a selected range of actors (see Appendix 2). These interviews were complemented by participant observation at the three workshops where this exercise was undertaken. A guiding set of questions were framed for the in-depth interview. The questions were semi-structured and were used flexibly with interviewees depending on the person and the time available. ( See Appendix 3).

The majority of the interviews were conducted while attending the following workshops:

- Reproductive Health and Research Priorities for Demographers organized by IASP, CORT and Ford Foundation held in Lucknow, 6-8 February, 1996.
- Workshop on Management of Family Planning Programs in Public Sector : District Level Innovations, organized by UNFPA, Ford Foundation and the Population Council held at Agra on 23-24 February, 1996.
- XIII Annual Conference of the Indian Association for the Study of Population (IASP) held at Baroda, from 26-28 February, 1996.

## **FRAMEWORK OF STUDY**

To capture the various dimensions of the situation in India it was essential to have a framework for the information needs assessment study to facilitate the understanding of the problem.

### **Context**

Recently there has been a change in perspective in the Indian Family Welfare Program. India made a commitment to the changing ethos in population programs worldwide by signing the consensus document from ICPD. Essentially, the challenge faced by India is to shift program

emphasis from achieving population targets at whatever cost to meeting individual needs for reproductive health.

The ANE OR/TA Project in India has been actively involved with the implementation of the Innovations in Family Planning Services (IFPS) project and have provided baseline data in fifteen districts in Uttar Pradesh for program and policy decisions. Currently our major effort is focussed in two Districts in Agra and Sitapur in Uttar Pradesh where a major demonstration project is underway. These two Districts are free of method specific targets and alternative indicators for monitoring and performance of the family welfare program are being developed and tested. As part of that experiment a situation analysis of these two districts was conducted. Following this, several OR interventions are being tested there, including the Pregnancy Based Approach. Under this approach a whole gamut of service delivery personnel, program manger and policy decision makers are involved. As the whole country is set free from family planning targets from April 1996, this alternative model assumes great significance for policy and program makers. It is in this context the information needs assessment for policy managers and program managers is particularly important and useful.

## **Operations Research and Policy Research**

Several Questions arise in the utilization and institutionalization process:

First, how much importance do policy makers and program managers place on research to guide their decision making?

What experience do they have on actual research-based decision making?

On the other hand, how prepared are the researchers to answer the questions raised by policy and program managers?

Also, what are the mechanisms for bringing the decision-makers and researchers together, what type of interactions are taking place and how far can these interactions be sustained?

## **Policy Process**

There is also a need to understand the policy process and the process of change. Policy research efforts study fundamental social problems in an attempt to create pragmatic courses of action for

ameliorating those problems. Of course, research findings are only one of many inputs to policy decisions. Other inputs include the views of the constituencies, testimonials, the “give and take” of colleagues and superiors, staff opinions, existing policies, and preconceived attitudes. A second aspect of the policy arena is that policy is not made in an instant, it accumulates through a series of successive approximations in which policies are continually suggested, implemented, evaluated, and revised. A third aspect of policy is that the process is as complex as the problem itself. The process is complex, because it is composed of numerous actors, operating at distinct policy making levels and juggling a series of policy mechanisms with different intended and unintended consequences.

Clearly, an understanding of the policy making process for a particular issue- including the relevant actors and policy mechanisms - is needed for the policy researcher to provide decision makers with useful information. The policy making process involves elements such as the communication channels through which the information on the policy issues flow, the critical gates and decision points through which the issues must pass, and the policy mechanisms typically used in conjunction with the policy issues. Policy mechanisms refer to the array of tools or vehicles used by policy makers to achieve their policy objectives.

## **Stakeholders**

Another aspect of the policy making context that needs to be considered is the set of key actors or “stakeholders”. Stakeholders are those individuals or groups of individuals who either have some input into the decision making process or are likely to affect policy decisions on the social problem. The stakeholders analysis identifies the organizations or individuals who are key players in decision making, examining their main interest in a policy issue, and assesses how important is the issue to their priorities. By identifying stakeholders, the actual and potential users of research study can be delineated, allowing the research effort to be molded to their needs.

## **Policy Power Structure**

The final aspect of the policy making context which needs to be understood is the power structure of the policy making process. As stakeholders are identified, it is important to

differentiate between those who are key decision makers, those who are influential, and those with little existing power who are victims of others' decision on these issues.

## The Audience Chain

It is instructive to understand that the feedback that we give to our audience becomes an input for their audiences. It is clear that our audiences have a different set of clients. This is important to understand because it will result in better utilization. It is very likely that our audiences' audience has different expectations as well as different levels of understanding. They may require the information from a different perspective. To be aware of our audience's audience will help generate information in a more utilizable fashion. Researchers can use this information to tailor their research communications and shape their final messages to address the concerns of the various audiences in the audience chain. It helps to know 'what, when and why' is expected of our immediate audience by the next level of information seekers. To understand this process better, plotting a next level of audiences in the matrix brings the idea clearly. Therefore, it is important to understand the dynamics of the information flow in the audience chain.

### *The Audience Chain*

<b>ANE OR/TA → AUDIENCES → AUDIENCES</b>		
	MOHFW	Minister/Chief Minister, Planners, Donors
	USAID	Government (Congress), U.S.A.
	Donors	Mission, Country head, Parent Body
	PC (NY)	USAID/W, CAs, U N
	Program managers	Department/Division/Unit Head
	Researchers	Institutions, Universities
	NGOs	Public/Funder/Government
	MEDIA	Editor/Politician/ Public

## **RESPONSE AND ANALYSIS**

For analyzing the responses, content analysis was applied to identify major themes, and to sort issues within each theme. The observation focused on how other researchers communicated their results.

### **Response**

One common theme emerging from all interviews was the need for bridging the gap between research and utilization. This means there is an urgent need to understand this mechanism for better utilization of research findings. Many of the ANE OR/TA products (**ALTERNATIVES**, Research Summaries, Final Reports, publications) and efforts (Seminars, Workshops, personal communications) to share information are much appreciated. The Program audience clearly sees our efforts as useful. They mentioned many positive factors which make our research more utilizable. Some of the factors include:

- Action orientation of the research
- Relevance of findings to program and policy
- Addressing appropriate questions
- OR methodology is practical yet high quality
- Not just statistics and data but qualitative information also
- Program and policy implications are clear and recommendations feasible
- Managers and policy makers are involved from the initial stage
- Information is shared with many concerned audiences
- Well documented data and observations
- Council staff are accessible

### **Concerns**

Although the interviewees had a high opinion of the value of OR, there were often specific observations about how communication efforts could be improved. These do not necessarily refer to OR products or efforts, but are generic problems related to particular situations and positions. But we can learn from these observations and improve our efforts to maximize utilization: by better dissemination and communication. Excerpts follow:

1) Some of the interviewees mentioned that if a document is sent to a specific person only, it generally stays in that office and other interested people are not able to use or benefit from the information.

2) Time is a major concern with the majority of the managers and policy makers. People at the top level of the organization do not have time to go through lengthy, bulky and complicated reports.

3) Neither are decision makers very much concerned with methodological problems and the details of research design. They essentially are concerned about the findings and implications of the findings.

4) The political boss is more apprehensive about the possibility of any negative implications of the research and its repercussions on his/her political prospects.

5) Research findings are sometimes not made public and shared with other constituents, including the media, because they do not present a rosy picture of the actual situation.

6) At times the political will, commitment or milieu is not strong for action, particularly when elections are near. But the same could be made an electoral issue by empowering communities with information, so that people are more aware of the local health needs.

7) Although the OR projects are known in research circles, and in NGO and the Government sectors, some of the interviewees mentioned they do not get to see the results in many other channels and in the language of their state.

8) One problem mentioned was the availability of overlapping data from different sources which are not quite consistent, in the sense that they present different scenarios on the same problem. Sometimes it is confusing, and makes decision making difficult. There was also a problem of

government data and data originating from other sources. For a policy maker at an official level it is a great dilemma to cite private data over government data.

9) Media is a rather poorly utilized channel. In the Agra workshop some of the media persons mentioned that they got the information from indirect sources, and did not know much about project activities. Following this discussion, the next day's Hindi papers contained four good sized and positive write ups on the workshop and related issues. There is a need to involve the media, especially the local press, to built rapport and project a positive image of the project. And decision makers are particularly sensitive to media reports. One can understand the apprehensions regarding media because it can be unpredictable, but properly cultivated it offers the opportunity for great impact.

## A SIMPLE FRAMEWORK FOR DISSEMINATION

There were other issues directly related to communication and dissemination. These could be classified into five 'Fs, namely: **Focus, Format, Frequency, Forums and Follow up.**

### *Five F's of Dissemination*

<b>Focus</b>	
	<b>Format</b>
	<b>Frequency</b>
	<b>Forums</b>
	<b>Follow-up</b>

The observations in this framework do not necessarily refer to the ANE OR/TA communication activities unless mentioned specifically, but are generally useful for dissemination efforts.

## **FOCUS**

Research communication can be extremely narrowly defined or very broad in focus. It may cover such a vast range of subjects that it is very difficult to make any use of it. It also happens that the end user is not clearly defined. On the other hand it may be that it may be relevant to only a limited number of persons. This was mentioned by a number of respondents. For the research to be useful and put to action it is important that it be focused from both the audience as well as the objectives point of view. Another problem is that during communications, researchers often do not focus only on the major findings and recommendations, and instead present the information in a non prioritized fashion, making the listener confused and unsure about what actions are warranted. It is important that while presenting, either orally or in written communication, to be focused on key findings and recommendations.

Focus demands sacrifice. To be able to communicate effectively it is important that one sacrifices the details which, though important, will take the attention away from the main findings. When dealing with people at the policy or program manager level it becomes all the more critical because of their time constraints, and one has to make the best use of the limited opportunities available. Focused communications also convey accuracy and establish credibility. It suggests thoroughness and rigor of the research as well as skill on the part of the researcher.

## **FORMAT**

There were differing opinions about which format is most useful to the diverse range of audiences. The researchers want reports with full details including methodology, research design, data collection, tables, complex analysis, questionnaires, findings and recommendations. Policy makers and program managers are often more interested in the findings and the recommendations only. Media are more interested in the human angle and want stories to relate directly to people. Newsletters, like **ALTERNATIVES**, are found useful for keeping in touch with the progress of the innovations, and the findings of the completed research. Some people mentioned the use of audio-visual formats as more effective, while others preferred posters and

education material in the form of handouts. Within workshops, presentations with OHP and slide projectors were found particularly useful when addressing a formal audience.

Almost everybody liked the one page Research Summaries format and found it particularly useful. They appreciated the concise design including the key findings and research utilization. If more detailed information and data is desired, a reference is available as to where it could be obtained. Some in Uttar Pradesh did mention that the Project Summaries would be more widely used if translated and produced in Hindi too. It was also pointed out that since most policy and program people do not have a research background, it would be useful to develop background papers and issue papers. Short fact sheets could also be useful.

## **FREQUENCY**

Another problem of information availability was the frequency of the communication and interaction. Although communication was available at regular intervals it was still found inadequate. The newsletter is published semiannually and it often contains only one article on India. Full reports are not issued till the project is finished or at least some substantial results are available. In between, essentially communication only involves personal interaction with the functionaries, while other constituencies get second preference. Sometimes it is difficult for the managers and policy makers to assess the progress and outcome of the project if this information is not available more frequently. This could be partially offset by making a short interim product which documents the process and gives more representation to local functionaries. This would help in increasing ownership of the program and enhance involvement by way of recognition of their work.

Media could be used to keep the issues in the news and enhance the visibility of the project. The local TV and radio could be mobilized to actively cover the events and generate interest in the progress of the project. Lack of momentum sometimes results because there is no news over a considerable period of time. If more appropriate formats were generated for a diverse range of

audiences, then it is also likely that the frequency will increase and thus improved media coverage will also follow.

## **FORUMS**

Some research programs are content with informing the primary audience only, e.g. MOH or SIFPSA staff only. There are several partners in the project, and if some are making an extra effort to reach multiple forums, there is a synergetic effect when all involved voice similar concerns. There are several forums still untapped in this effort, for example, the panchayat, or local government and women's groups. If the panchayat members are aware of the situation of the local health system, using OR findings could lead to improving the performance of the existing services. Another important sector is the local Member of Legislative Assembly (MLA) and Member of Parliament (MP) of the area. These people have access to the political doors and could be an important source of influence on policy. Increasing the points of access to information is needed at the moment. This adds to the effective utilization of the findings. Listening to an agenda repeatedly assures policy and program managers of its need and validity. When the interest groups voice their interests consistently, the likelihood of implementation increases.

## **FOLLOW-UP**

This area is generally felt to be the weakest by many respondents. There is currently no mechanism for effective follow-up. Often the researcher thinks it is not his responsibility to do follow-up, either of recommendations being implemented or new information suggesting alternative actions. Action and follow-up is assumed to be the prerogative of the government or service agency. Traditionally there is little follow-up on events after the final report and dissemination workshops are completed.

This is also true of the policy manager who is often shifted to another department. The new incumbent has to start afresh, as does the program manager and the researcher. There is a felt

need to maintain contact with the project staff and decision makers not only when the project is ongoing but also when it is over. This follow-up helps develop a network of valuable counterparts.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTION**

Based on the responses and observations, it is obvious that there are communication aspects to the enhancement of utilization of research results. These can be classified in two broad categories- short term and long term.

### **Short Term: Five F's**

- To focus the communication it might be useful to think in terms of **Most Significant Finding (MSF) / Most Relevant finding (MRF)**.

# **Most Significant Finding**

This essentially means presenting the most significant finding prominently, on priority, and forcefully. The policy maker is more interested in looking for something new, unique which can become highlighted to his audiences. It also is useful when facing the media. The emphasis on MSF helps retention and hence use. In general the researcher comes up with number of interesting revelations but for practical purposes it is useful to focus on the one which is the key and has the maximum chance of getting utilized.

- Specific formats could be designed to cater to the needs of the policy makers and program managers. The Research Summaries packet format was found to particularly useful. Newsletters are informative but are not particularly good for direct use, although they are helpful for keeping abreast of the work that is taking place in the field. An update

or 'current' kind of bulletin would be useful for ongoing activities and progress of the project.

- Information and communication of the research results is given usually as a one shot activity. This could lead to low utilization. The frequency of the communication should be increased to make for better visibility and retention. This could be done by making communication an ongoing process, delivered in stages. The products could be research news/ updates and periodic personal communication.
- One very important aspect of the impact process is the use of as many forums as possible. The information is often restricted to primary audience and at most to secondary level, but is not shared among many related and overlapping agencies including media. If a research story is heard in many arenas, its value is enhanced and thus makes for greater impact. In our case there are many levels and constituents which can help resonate the effect.
- Follow-up is one of the weakest of the current communications effort. This is a crucial area which needs greater attention. Personal and written follow-up enhance the probability of utilization and implementation. This should continue even when the project tenure is over. However, this should not be overdone so as to become an irritating intrusion.

There are a few other means which can help increase the effective utilization of research findings such as translating the OR material into Hindi, using local media more frequently, or using fact sheets or wall chart material highlighting salient figures of the project.

**Long Term: Communications training**

The long term inputs to increase the utilization are training the administrators, program managers and policy makers to understand the value of research. It is already well recognized that they should be actively involved in the project from the beginning.

- The Population Research Centers (PRC) should be asked to undertake research from the utilization point of view and present their results in more audience specific formats.
- The State Institute of Health and Family Welfare (SIHFW) should be asked to include communication skills training to their trainees - CMO, Dy. CMO, ANMs, LHVs.
- The Uttar Pradesh Administrative Academy (UPAAI) at Nainital should develop a course or module for understanding, orienting and communicating the population research into action for both junior and senior administrators.
- The legislative assembly and parliament should make the members more attuned to research findings about population and health issues.
- The panchayat members should be involved in the decision making process and they should be educated about their local as well as district and state population and health situation.
- Media professionals should be approached and developed as allies for presenting a positive image of innovations and reporting on the new ethos of population and family planning programs. Policy makers are very sensitive to reports in the press and other audio visual medias.
- Apart from training the program managers and policy makers about data based decision making, the researchers also need to have a communications training so that they too improve their skills of presentation and dealing with various levels of requirements of different audiences.
- Setting up of an office of public affairs/information within SIFPSA will help improve communication flow and interaction with various audiences.

Aside from increasing the likelihood that a policy relevant study will be used, close communications relationships between policy makers and researchers offer several additional benefits as well. These benefits include the following: teaching researchers about policy constraints and realities of the policy makers' world; keeping policy makers knowledgeable about information that may be relevant at future times; and keeping researchers knowledgeable about changes in the policy arena that may affect the study.

## CONCLUSION

The Communications Needs Assessment in India has given insights into the special information needs of the policy makers and program managers. It has also brought into light areas of concern which will enhance the utilization of Operations Research program in India. The study has helped us to refine our audience list according to their information needs. Our current dissemination and communication efforts have been useful and are appreciated, but some areas like follow-up, phased information and communication in the form of an 'update' and a 'policy briefing' product have been identified. A network of communicators from the population fields will be initiated and better interaction with media would be explored. These gaps will be looked into and rectified by developing new tools or modifying existing products to serve the information needs of the specific audience.

A communication process that is open and proactive does not happen serendipitiously or without ample commitment by both partners- researchers and the audience. Nevertheless, the responsibility of developing a close, communicative relationship falls largely on the shoulders of the researcher. This responsibility tends to be particularly great when the study has not been specifically commissioned by a particular user, or the ownership of potential study users has not been adequately cultivated during the study.

## **APPENDIX 1: OR PROJECT/WORKSHOPS IN INDIA**

The India OR project has conducted numerous research studies and several workshops in the first five years. They include the following:

### **Projects**

- Review of Family Welfare Program in Uttar Pradesh (1993)
- Documenting IMA Pilot Study for OCP through Private Medical Practitioners in Three States (1993)
- Review of the Family Planning and Mother & Child Health Studies Carried out in Uttar Pradesh (1994)
- Analysis of Uttar Pradesh Survey Data (Appendix 2 of synthesis paper)
- A Diagnostic Study of Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh (1994)
- Use of Private Practitioners (IMA) for Promoting Oral Contraceptive Pills in Gujarat (1995)
- Evaluation of Mobile Educational and Service Units (MESU) in Increasing Accessibility and Acceptability of Family Planning Methods (1995)
- District Level Baseline Surveys (fifteen districts) of Family Planning Program in Uttar Pradesh (1995)
- A Qualitative Study of Family Planning Services at the Primary Health Center Level in the State of Karnataka, Gujrat, Bihar, Uttar Pradesh (1995)
- Situation Analysis of Agra and Sitapur (1995)
- Bihar Dairy Project (1995)
- Diaphragm study (1995)

### **Workshops**

- Project Identification Workshop with Reference to Spacing Methods (1992)
- National Workshop on Operations Research, Bangalore (1992)
- Dissemination Workshops on Program Implications of Baseline Surveys (1995)
- Quality of Care Workshop, Bangalore (1995)
- Diaphragm Workshop (1995)
- Workshop to develop strategies to reduce teenage fertility in Uttar Pradesh (1995)

## **APPENDIX 2: PERSONS INTERVIEWED**

1. Dr. K. B. Pathak, Director, IIPS
2. Dr. K. Srinivasan, Director, Population Foundation Of India
3. Mrs. Uma Pillai, Executive Director, SIFPSA
4. Ms. Sumita Kandpal, Principal Secretary, GOUP
5. Dr. Suresh Joshi, Representative , UNICEF
6. Mr. P. L. Joshi, Regional Director, MOHFW, GOI
7. Dr. S. P. Gaur, Director, UPAAI
8. Dr. V. K. Srivastava, Director, SIHFW
9. Mr. Ramsundaram, Add. Sec., FW, GOTN
10. Dr. Pravin Visaria, Director, GIDR
11. Dr. Michael Koenig, Ford Foundation
12. Dr. Wasim Zaman, Country Director, UNFPA
13. Dr. Tony Measham, World Bank
14. Dr. Helen Simon, Director, NIHFW
15. Mr. Luv Verma, Secretary, FW, GOUP
16. Mrs. Nirmala Murthy, Director, FRHS
17. Dr. Padamanabha, ex.Registrar General, GOI
18. Dr. William Goldman, USAID/D

### **APPENDIX 3: LIST OF GUIDE QUESTIONS**

The following questions were devised as guides for the interviews. They were used and modified as per the situation, availability of time and the interviewee.

1. What kind of information is useful to you for policy and program issues?
2. What kind of questions do you have to deal with while reporting to higher ups?
3. What kinds of information do you receive from various sources?
4. How are you able to use the information available to you ?
5. Are there any delays in communications to you?
6. How often do you get information from within the system and from outside?
7. What are your constraints in utilizing the information available to you?
8. Who are your audiences and what are their requirements of you?
9. What kind of interaction do you have with actual users and functionaries at the field level?
10. How do you see media as a communication channel and how do you use it?
11. Do political authorities take an active interest in the functioning of your department?
12. Are there any communication skills training given to CMO/IAS/PCS ?
13. Have the full reports and research data been useful for your work?
14. What kind of interaction do you have with Council counterparts?
15. What kind of dissemination channels do you use for various audiences?
16. Are there any networks or forums which should be cultivated for enhanced effects?
17. How is NGO/ private research treated?
18. What kind of follow-up do you do for your communication activities?
19. What is the reaction to the new target free approach in the administrative and political circles?
20. What could be done to achieve better utilization of research findings?

## REFERENCES

Annual Report 1994-95, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Government of India, New Delhi.

Bertrand Jane T, Robert J Magnani and James C. Knowles. Handbook of Indicators for Family Planning Program Evaluation. The Evaluation Project, 1994.

CEDPA, Cairo, Beijing, and Beyond: A Handbook on Advocacy for Women Leaders, 1995.

Herrin, Alejandro N., Operations Research for Program Planning and Management, the Population Council, the Philippines, 1995.

POPTECH, Evaluation of the Asia and Near East Operations Research and Technical Assistance Project, Poptech Report no. 94-017-014, December 1994.

Maibach, Edward and Roxanne Louiselle Parrott (Eds.). Designing Health Messages: Approaches from Communications Theory and Public Health Practice. London: Sage Publications, 1995.

Majchrzak, Ann, Methods for Policy Research, Sage Publications, Beverly Hills, 1984.

Rogers, Everett M and Rekha Agarwala-Rogers. Evaluation Research on Family Planning Communications. UNESCO, 1974.

Ross, John A., and Elizabeth Frankenberg, Findings from Two Decades of Family planning Research, the Population Council, 1993.

Seidman, Myrna and Marjorie C. Horn. Operations Research: Helping Family Planning Programs Works Better, ed. M. Seidman and M. Horn, New York, NY: Wiley-Liss, Inc., 1991.

Seminar on the National Population Policy, sponsored by the Population Council, held at CSD, New Delhi, 1994.

SIFPSA, Communications Strategy for Health and Family Planning in Uttar Pradesh, 1995.

Soriono, Fernando I., Conducting Needs Assessment: A Multidisciplinary Approach, Sage Publications, Thousand Oaks, 1995.

World Bank Technical paper number 223, Strategies for Family Planning Promotion, 1994.

World Bank Report No.14644-N, India's Family Welfare Program: Towards a Reproductive and Child Approach, South Asia Country Department II, 1995.