

II. THE BATTELLE PROJECT IN HONDURAS

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Background: The PDP I Project

The PDP I project in Honduras is nearing completion after considerable delay. No PDP II project is planned for the country. The evaluation team was asked to assess the PDP I project and to consider it in relation to the RAPID project which contracted to The Future's Group.

Under the PDP I project, the Central Regional Center for Population (CCRP), in Bogotá, Colombia, provides technical assistance to the National Planning Council (CONSUPLANE) of the Government of Honduras to develop and implement a national planning model called SERES.* This model factors population dynamics into development plans. Developed in Colombia, it is being applied to Honduran data. Its use is an example of technical cooperation among developing countries.

The PDP I project began in 1978 in the Statistics Department of CONSUPLANE; apparently, it was completed at the end of 1979. It was limited to the health and educational sectors. Changes in leadership at the CCRP and changes in staff at CONSUPLANE caused delays. Supplemental proposals to continue the development and application of the model were submitted to both the CCRP and CONSUPLANE in 1979 and 1980. Other activities were described, including presentations and a national seminar. A deadline of July 31, 1981 (after which PDP I funds would no longer be available) was specified. Approval of the contract with CONSUPLANE was long delayed, primarily because of problems within Battelle and at AID/W, specifically, in the Latin America Bureau. Pressure has increased to complete the work on time because the deadline could not be extended.

Current and Proposed Activity

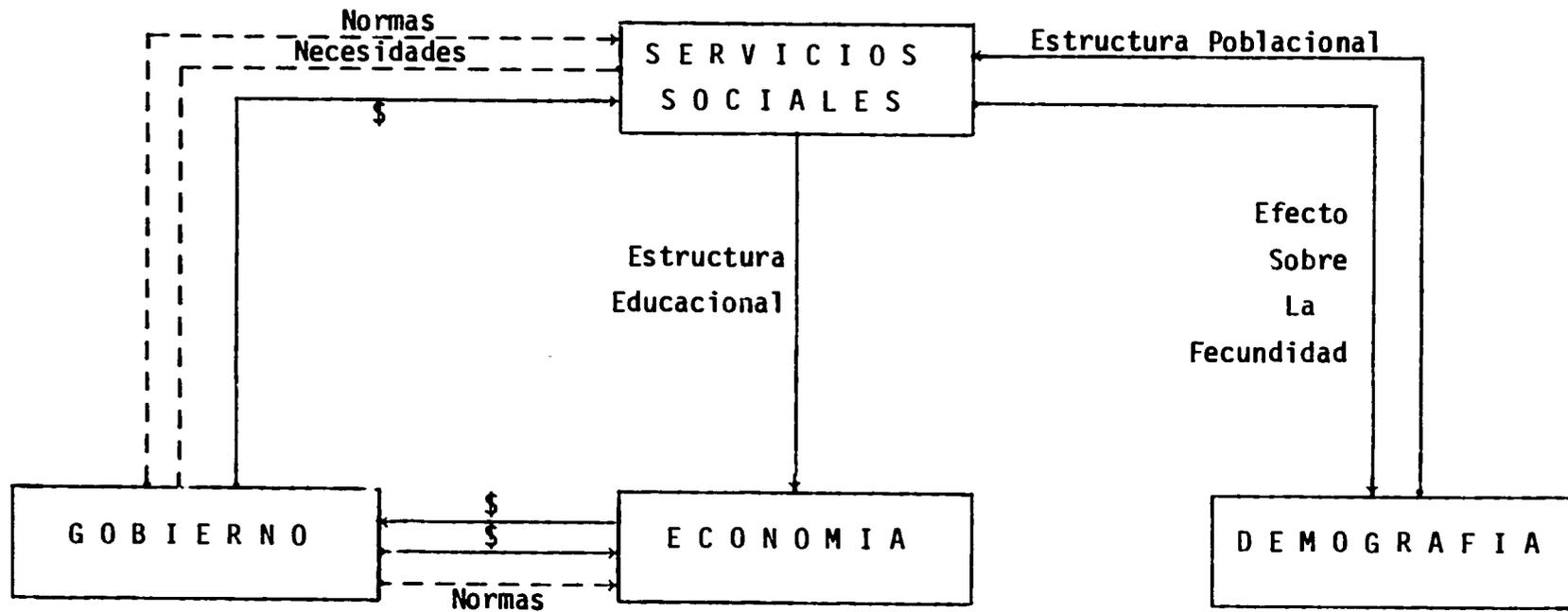
Under the current contract, the SERES model is to be used to assess the impact of public expenditure programs on the economic and social development of Honduras and the impact of demographic growth on the demand for social services. (See Exhibit C.)

Those with a knowledge of the sources of demographic data in Honduras agree that the data are poor. The UNFPA's expert adviser on population,

System for the Study of Social Relations, Economics, and Demographics.

Exhibit C

INTERRELACIONES BASICAS DEL MODELO DEMO-ECONOMICO Y SOCIAL DE HONDURAS



who created the Population Unit in the Statistical Department at CONSUPLANE, played an early role in determining the population parameters for the model. She acknowledges that after 1974 (the year of the last census), one simply has to guess about the data. Luz Estela Sarmiento, director of the Statistics Department and the person to whom the project was contracted, also pointed out this problem. The technical complexity of the model, the lack of descriptive materials, or output, and the absence of the staff who are working on the project (they were in Bogotá working with the CCRP) made it difficult for the team to review the technical aspects of the model. The evaluators had to rely on a translator because they could not speak Spanish. The language barrier also prevented them from learning more about the program.

Since the departure of Ramon Daubon, the first person to monitor the Battelle project, Battelle has done no technical monitoring. This is done solely by the CCRP. Non-technical project monitoring has been done by Battelle, although little time has been spent in Honduras.

There is little demographic expertise in Honduras. The population Unit, which employs several demographers who were trained by the UNFPA's expert adviser, is physically isolated from the Statistical Unit to which it belongs, and it has not been working on the SERES model (although, initially, there was some input from the expert adviser). Both Mrs. Sarmiento and the personnel at the mission with whom the team spoke were very positive about the CCRP as a source of technical assistance.

To date, there have been few opportunities to demonstrate the usefulness of the model in policymaking or budgeting. The National Development Plans for 1979-1983 were written in 1978; the model did not become operational until 1979. The location of the model in the Statistics Department of CONSUPLANE would, one would think, ensure that it is used to the fullest in development planning. However, the Statistics Department is primarily a resource for other departments that aid specific sectors (e.g., health and education), and it does not make a direct input into planning. Moreover, although CONSUPLANE was intended to be a super-ministry and could be powerful, it is weak. (The Finance Ministry, in fact, has the greatest power.)

CONSUPLANE has had little influence since the military government was installed, and activities were at a standstill in the transitional period that preceded the November 1981 election. The role of CONSUPLANE depends on the person who heads the Ministry of Planning. It is the opinion of some staff in the mission in Tegucigalpa that the interim period was an ideal time to work on alternative development strategies to prepare for the new government. But nothing was done. One person at the AID feels that it was unrealistic to believe that data would be used for national planning after the election. In this person's view, Congress would be politically responsible to a pluralistic government and the Planning Council would be weakened further.

The Statistics Department plans to make several informed presentations of the CONSUPLANE model in the short time remaining to the project (it ends in July 1981). These presentations are called for in the agreement. Priority will be given to the national seminar that has been planned for July. Central government planners are expected to attend this conference.

In addition to demonstrating the model, the Statistics Department has an advisory role. Mrs. Sarmiento explained that the model is designed so that the ministries can do the simulations themselves. The technical staff at CONSUPLANE are to advise the technical people in the other ministries. Additional resources will be required to ensure that this is done.

There is some uncertainty about the use of the model for development planning following elections, but personnel at both AID/Tegucigalpa and CONSUPLANE agree that the model can be of great use because its foci are the Honduran national budget and the costs to deliver social services to a rapidly growing population. John Kelley, chief of the Urban Development Division and assistant director of the Office of Human Resources, AID/Tegucigalpa, feels that the model would be more useful if it were interactive. He thinks that there is in Honduras the program capability for this. The presentations, he feels, would be more effective if they were done on computer recording terminals (CRTs). He does not favor explaining the model and then showing the tabulations from the computer center. He also thinks that the SERES model has more credibility than the RAPID model for planners. How effective it is depends on how well CONSUPLANE uses it and presents it to other ministries. There have been no formal presentations of the model; thus, its impact cannot be determined.

Promotion of RAPID and SERES

Should the two models be promoted in Honduras? Although both RAPID and SERES are expected to increase awareness of population issues, they are not competitive. The SERES model does more than build awareness; it is more analytic than RAPID, and thus more useful for detailed planning. RAPID, in contrast, presents gross relationships based on simple assumptions to demonstrate that rapid population growth may be detrimental to economic development. Although the audiences for both models may overlap, planners would not, it would seem, be interested in using RAPID to project, for example, budget expenditures for different government sectors. Interestingly, the RAPID model, which is based in a private family planning association (which receives all of its money from sources outside Honduras), does not use family planning data in the presentation. The SERES model, housed in a statistical agency of the government, does have a family planning subroutine.