

RAC SUB-COMMITTEE EVALUATION REPORT

POOR RURAL HOUSEHOLDS, TECHNICAL CHANGE AND INCOME DISTRIBUTION
IN LDCs

CONTRACTOR: CORNELL UNIVERSITY, PURDUE UNIVERSITY, AND
MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY

Subcommittee:
Dr. Earl Heady, Chairman
Dr. E. Skinner
Dr. W. Falcon
Dr. M. Elmandorf

Extract from Minutes of the 70th
meeting of AID's Research Advisory
Committee (RAC), November 13-14,
1980, Washington, D.C.

Project Evaluation Summary (PES)

BACKGROUND: The project was submitted by Purdue, Cornell and Michigan State as an unsolicited proposal in 1976. Its purpose was "To provide LDCs, AID and other donor agencies with a better understanding of the effects on the welfare of the Rural Poor of factors such as, technical change, agrarian structures, availability of public services, effectiveness of labor markets, constraints on the adoption of new technology, and trade, taxation and other development policies". Another consideration was the opportunity to develop and test methodologies for measuring the effects of rural development and other economic development policies and programs upon the rural poor. The proposal was twice reviewed by AID's Research Advisory Committee (RAC) in 1976 prior to AID's approval.

The principal study areas selected were Sierra Leone and Nigeria (MSU), Indonesia and the Philippines (Cornell), and Brazil (Purdue). Much of the data were already available to the universities through surveys or studies carried out prior to the submission of the project proposal.

EVALUATION METHODOLOGY: For the past year, RAC has been undertaking reviews of completed research projects which RAC had reviewed prior to approval and implementation. This review was based on the report entitled "Poor Rural Households, Technical Change, & Income Distribution in Less Developed Countries", March 1980, submitted by the three universities. This report was reviewed by a sub-committee of the RAC consisting of: Dr. Earl Heady, Executive Director of the Center for Agricultural Development and Economic Development, Iowa State University; Dr. Mary Elmandorf, Anthropologist, Consultant to the World Bank and Fellow of the Research Institute for the Study of Man; Dr. Walter Falcon, Director of the Food Research Institute, Stanford University; and Dr. Elliott Skinner, Dept. of Anthropology, Columbia University. The sub-committee report was presented at the RAC meeting in Washington, D.C. on November 14, 1980, and is attached to this PES.

EVALUATION SUMMARY: The criticism raised by the RAC sub-committee are by themselves, a thorough summary of the project's strengths and shortcomings. In general, the criticisms centered on: 1) An apparent lack of uniformity and coordination in the type of data to be used and the analysis of it, and 2) lack of an analysis treating the policy implications of the project's findings. Despite the shortcomings, the sub-committee report stated that the study "lays out the most detailed data yet available from several world locations on the relationship of technology to income levels and distribution, and the relationship of education, land, age, location and other variables to income. "The sub-committee said the study was a positive contribution worth the cost of the project. There are implicit recommendations for utilization/dissemination of project findings, as well as for follow-up on policy analysis.

External Factors

There were no external factors affecting this project.

Inputs

Not applicable for this project.

Outputs

Three individual reports and one summary report were prepared as required by the project. These reports have been submitted. The summary report is enclosed as an attachment.

Goal/Subgoal

Not relevant

Beneficiaries

The ultimate beneficiaries should be small farm operators. Distribution of the results of this project should enhance understanding of factors affecting adoption of technology, labor market problems, barriers to participation of landless workers, and other problems facing the rural poor. Therefore administrators (AID, contractors, host government official, etc) working directly with the Small Farmer and rural poor should be able to plan programs that will better impact upon the target group.

Unplanned Effects:

There were no unplanned effects on this project.

Lessons Learned

The experience of managing this project demonstrates the problems of coordinating and monitoring projects with several contractors. It is very difficult to obtain consensus on goals, procedures and methods. Over a period of three years, interests of one or more of the contractors may change, leaving a void.

Specifically, on this project, the principal investigator (PI) at two of the institutions changed several times. Thus, the feeling of responsibility to the project was lost. Some assurances that the original P.I. would complete the project needs to be required.

The objectives of the project should be concisely stated, with sub-objectives given as necessary. Broadly stated objectives makes it difficult to measure accomplishments precisely.

Some type of improved reporting procedure may be needed for research projects. Interim targets or milestones should be identified in the project paper. These targets could then be used to measure progress as stated in progress reports.

Special Comments or Remarks

Attachment A: RAC subcommittee Evaluation Report

Attachment B: "Poor Rural Households, Technical Change and Income Distribution in Less Developed Countries. A summary Report of Findings From West Africa, Southeast Asia and Brazil."