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RURAL POVERTY-ORIENTED MONITORING & EVALUATION

SIMPLE IS OPTIMAL?

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Summary Overview

This paper tries to examine monitoring and evaluation in relation to target groups and impacts. Some priority for this is supported by the need to counteract systematic biases of perception away from the poorer and rural groups; by the "talents effect" whereby development activities tend to favour those who are already stronger and better off; and by the concentration of effort and analysis in monitoring and evaluation on inputs, activities and outputs to the relative neglect of effects and especially impacts.

Target groups may be defined in top-down ways, for example by per capita income or per capita consumption. However, for operational purposes other categories such as occupational or ethnic group, physical status, family status, or geographical or residential location may be both simpler and more practical.

In assessing impacts, and other things being equal, indicators which are easy to measure are to be preferred. They should be chosen separately for each programme or project. One widely applicable indicator may be satisfaction or dissatisfaction felt by those in a target group. Others which may be widely applicable are the nutritional status of young children, in-and-out-migration, and "stock" items of wealth. To be cost-effective few indicators of impact should be measured and there may be many cases where none should be measured.

Different development activities justify different mixes of approach in monitoring and evaluation related to target groups and impacts. Programmes, projects and other activities can be roughly classified according to the length of hypothesised causal chains from output to impact, evaluation being easier, cheaper and more reliable where these are shorter; and harder, costlier and less reliable where they are longer. Attributing net impacts to outputs as causes is made difficult by the length of these chains, by multiple and alternative causation, by the with-or-without conundrum, and by the problems of unseen losers.

Some of the choices about who should carry out monitoring and evaluation and what approaches should be used can be presented in the form of a matrix. Informal investigations, simple in the sense of involving few people and being open-ended, may be the most cost-effective way of analysing the complexities of change and causality. More work is needed on methods of monitoring and evaluation, including how to identify target groups, choose indicators, involve the rural people, carry out informal investigations, and conduct ad hoc "quick-and dirty" surveys. This requires further exchange of experience, field trials with experiemental approaches, and training and reorientation for staff.

It requires judgment to see where, and to what extent, simple is optimal. It is neither easy nor a panacea. There are also cases, especially in research, where comprehensive detailed measurements may be essential. But this will rarely, if ever, be justified in the monitoring and evaluation of impacts where there is no research objective. Unfortunately it is often easier to decide to collect more data than less; and it is more reassuring to have some indicators than none, or many indicators rather than just one or two. The test is what works, with what costs and what benefits. Simple approaches to monitoring and evaluation, if well conceived, may be more cost-effective than heavy data collection. Unless those engaged on monitoring and evaluation are attacked for being unscientific, unprecise, subjective and naive, they may ask themselves whether they are being simple enough.

Anti-Quotations

"There are no straight paths in the world"	Mao Tse-Tung
"Truth is never pure, and rarely simple"	Oscar Wilde
"For every problem there is a solution that is simple, direct, and wrong"	H.L. Mencken
"We do not want another load of regurgitated pap"	UN official, to the writer.

Terms of Reference

1.1 The full terms of reference of my consultancy are given in appendix A. In brief, I was asked to prepare a working paper for the Inter-Agency Panel on monitoring and evaluation of poverty-oriented development activities. This working paper was to contain concrete proposals on:

(i) operational definitions of key elements of poverty-oriented rural development activities (e.g. target groups and types of impact sought);

(ii) a set of indicators against which rural development activities could be evaluated; and

(iii) recommendations on how these could be incorporated into the UN agencies' reporting systems in order to reflect their activities in poverty-oriented rural development.

1.2 This is a huge task, and one may at once question the prudence and judgement of anyone willing, with whatever reservations, to accept to attempt it. Monitoring and evaluation, and more so writing on monitoring and evaluation, appear to have taken off into self-sustaining growth. They are now sophisticated professional activities. The neophyte is intimidated by this new professional culture and weighed down by the burgeoning literature. To add to this already formidable mass of paper is at best a questionable activity. The reader will judge whether the small steps suggested below lead forwards, sideways, backwards, or, as last straws, downwards. I can only say that I have been helped by the more recent papers originating from FAO, ILO, WHO and the World Bank, and have been impressed by the self-critical monitoring and evaluation of monitoring and evaluation which some of them reflect. I draw on these freely. In addition, I am especially indebted to the reports of earlier consultants commissioned by FAO to go into related questions within the context of FAO's concerns - A. Roth (1977), Johan Holmberg (1978), and John MacArthur (1978). They will, I hope, forgive my selective plagiarisation of what they have written. I am also grateful for discussions with staff of FAO, ILO, UNRISD and WHO, and for communications from World Bank staff, all of which have contributed usefully to what follows. Responsibility for the opinions expressed, and for errors and omissions, is of course, mine alone.

Purpose

2.1 This paper will be pointless unless in some way, however indirectly, it makes a contribution to the welfare of the poorer rural people in third world countries. The causal chains whereby this might happen are very long and tenuous. In relation to this purpose, the paper might be a positive or a negative event. If at any time it appears likely to be negative, it will be best to abandon it quickly. Staff time should not be wasted.

Definitions

3.1 The reader must know what I mean by words. Much has been written on what meanings to give words in this field. Recent work in UN agencies (e.g. ILO 1978, WHO 1978) together with the draft glossary of evaluation terms (Sohm 1978) prepared by the Joint Inspection Unit show some variation but a good deal of commonality. It would not help, and might hinder, to enter this debate. Hopefully to avoid this, I shall adopt, more or less, the logical framework of a goal hierarchy as developed by USAID and the definitions developed by the December 1976 Copenhagen meeting organised by the World Bank (ACC TFRD 1977). I do not think the latter are quite the most useful, but the costs of a further (repetitive, dull, scholastic) debate seem to me to outweigh the benefits of minor changes which might anyway never be agreed. The reader familiar with the Copenhagen definitions may wish to skip them. They are:

Project Outputs - The (physical) outcome of project activities. Examples of outputs of a rural development project are: acreages irrigated, farmers trained, cooperatives established, credit provided, kilometres of road constructed, health facilities constructed, schools constructed, and so on.

Project Effects (Immediate Objectives) - The outcome of increased use made of project outputs. Examples of the effects of a rural development project are: increased production, higher crop yields, increased employment, more traffic, increased use of health services, higher attendance at schools, and so on.

Project Impact (Development Objective) - The change in the standard of living and the increased capacity for self-sustained development of a group of beneficiaries or communities, resulting from project effects. These changes can be measured by increased income and consumption, improved diets, reduced incidence of diseases, increased literacy, increased local participation in planning and decision-making, and so on.

Monitoring - The continuous gathering of information on project inputs and objectives, and on conditions and complementary activities that are critical to the success of the project. It utilizes benchmark information collected during the design/preparation phase, and continues throughout the project's lifetime when it includes the comparison of this information against original objectives and standards; it alerts project management and policy-makers to implementation problems requiring corrective action and it may provide the necessary information for the instigation and preparation of on-going evaluation.

On-going evaluation - The continual analysis during project implementation of project outputs, effects and developmental impact. The purpose of on-going evaluation is to provide project management and policy-makers with any analytical support that might be necessary to enable them to assess and, if required, adjust policies, objectives, institutional arrangements and resources affecting the project during implementation. On-going evaluation studies may also feed into the preparation of projects in other regions.

Ex-post-evaluation - An analysis after completion of a project (or a distinct phase of it) of its effects and impact. Among other things it may draw on information provided by monitoring and ongoing evaluation, though supplementary special studies may sometimes be needed. The purpose of ex-post evaluation is to provide policy-makers information and analysis for future planning and/or to inform donors and the general public on project results. The depth of the analyses and the nature of the reporting will depend on its potential end-use and benefits.

3.2 In addition, I accept the World Bank's definition of Rural Development.

> "Rural development is a strategy designed to improve the economic and social life of a specific group of people - the rural poor. It involves extending the benefits of development to the poorest among those who seek a livelihood in the rural areas. The group includes small-scale farmers, tenants and the landless." (IBRD 1975:3).

3.3 Interpreting my terms of reference in the light of these quite widely accepted definitions, attention is directed towards the poorest rural people as target groups, and towards the on-going and ex post evaluation of impacts; and these are the main concerns of what follows. The reader is asked to bear in mind that this means, in this paper, a relative neglect of those who are less poor and of monitoring and evaluation of inputs, activities, outputs and effects - all of which are much more widely treated in the literature.

Rural Trends

4.1 The main thrust of this paper is supported by a view of the present position and trends with rural poverty and of attempts to perceive and reduce it. To be brief, these will be put as largely unsupported assertions. They are:

(i) rural poverty in most countries is not diminishing significantly and is often getting worse. Some of the most disturbing evidence for this comes from Asia (see especially Poverty and Landlessness in Rural Asia. (ILO 1977)). Rural populations, despite rural-urban migration, continue and will continue to grow very rapidly in most countries (see appendix B for examples), and most dramatically in some parts of Africa.

(ii) the extent of rural poverty is systematically masked by mutually reinforcing factors, including:

  (a) the movement of poor people into fragile marginal environments with bad communications where, largely unseen, they survive temporarily by "mining" the environment;

  (b) biases in the perceptions of observers (professional, disciplinary, urban, peri-urban, tarmac, roadside, developed region, class/elite, educated, male, and seeing users as against non-users of services, farmers as against landless labourers, and residents as against migrants) which divert attention and information sources towards those rural people who are better-off to the neglect (often unrecognised) of those who are worse-off;

(c) the seasonal nature of much rural deprivation and impoverishment and the simultaneous operation of many adverse factors during the rains (appendix C (i)) when they are least likely to be recognised and tackled (appendix C (ii)). 1/

(iii) the "talents effect" (Pearse 1977) - so named after the biblical parable of the talents ("Unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance; but from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath") 2/ - operates in rural environments and with many rural programmes and projects, the main benefits from which are often captured by those rural people who are more powerful and less poor.

.2 These three points reinforce the need for monitoring and evaluation which identify hat is really happening in rural environments, and in particular who is benefitting, how and hy, from what. They direct attention to effects and impacts and to the poorer rural people.

Types of Programmes, Projects and Activities

.1 The range of programmes, projects and activities relating to or potentially relating o rural development is very wide indeed. There may be no neat categorization. But nonitoring and evaluation needs and opportunities will be different as between, at one extreme, three-week project identification mission to a country, and, at the other, a ten-year area evelopment programme. We find three dimensions varying together: first, the length of ausal chains or hypotheses between an output and benefits to poorer rural people; second, the ime required for the changes to take place; and third the difficulty evaluating the impact or otential impact of the output. In attempting usefully to classify programmes, projects and ctivities in relation to M and E approaches, we can list them roughly in descending order along hese three dimensions - from long to short causal chains; from long to short periods for impacts o follow from outputs; and from difficulty to ease of evaluation. This gives us, approximately, he following sequence:

(i) short visits to third world countries by international staff concerned with rural development.

(ii) technical surveys in rural areas. These are often resource identification, mapping, and pre-investment activities.

/ See also papers to the Conference on Seasonal Dimensions to Rural Poverty, organised jointly by the Institute of Development Studies at the University of Sussex and the Ross Institute of Tropical Hygiene at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, July 1978, available in limited supply from the Secretary to Rupag, IDS, University of Sussex, Brighton BN1 9RE, United Kingdom

/ The Bible, St. Matthew, Chapter 25 (Authorized Version).

(iii) advisory services and training. These often involve an individual or a small team of international staff, described as technical assistance or technical cooperation.

(iv) infrastructural projects. These involve the building of roads, the installation of electricity, etc.

(v) area development. Programmes and projects which are concerned with several aspects of the development of an area. Examples are many World Bank projects and some projects of FAO.

(vi) spread and uptake. Programmes and projects in which the intention is to spread more widely a service available and liable to be used by only part of the population. These include formal education, primary health care, agricultural extension, adult education, water supplies, vaccination, and so on. These programmes and projects are generally intended to extend benefits outwards to more of the poor people who may or may not be able or willing to take them up.

(vii) direct and exclusive. Programmes and projects in which output, effect and impact are closely linked because of direct contact with a target population which is unequivocally poor. Examples are:

- all, or almost all, WFP projects. In many of these the food provided and the work required in exchange will attract only those in need;
- UNHCR projects for rural refugees;
- UNICEF and WHO projects for vulnerable groups and groups at risk (e.g. pregnant and lactating women, school children, etc.);
- rural settlement, e.g. UNDP/FAO-assisted transmigration in Indonesia.

5.2 These categories are a preliminary attempt to organise the disparate activities which might be considered. The reader who finds them unsatisfactory is invited to invent his own.

Rural Monitoring and Evaluation: Costs and Benefits

6.1 Rural monitoring and evaluation has costs and benefits. Weighing these, especially in the light of experience, should enable us to suggest principles which might apply to the choice and design of monitoring and evaluation procedures and practices.

6.2 (a) Costs The costs of monitoring and evaluation include:

(i) financial costs. These vary widely within the family of international organizations. They are typically low, so far, for direct and exclusive programmes and projects (e.g. WFP in 1976 was spending on evaluation only about 0.05 per cent of the costs of all operational projects) and high for area projects where monitoring and evaluation surveys are involved (sometimes of the order of 3 per cent of the project costs in the case of the World Bank).

(ii) costs in staff time and temper. However much those who design monitoring and evaluation claim that what they propose (and I cry mea culpa) is simple and easy and will take little time, monitoring and evaluation procedures tend to be cumulative, onerous, and demoralizing. There may even sometimes be dangers of the "saturation psychosis" observed in the Canadian civil service when staff were saying that either they could do their jobs, or they could operate management systems, but not both (Laframboise, 1971).

(iii) opportunity costs of research resources in third world countries. Commissioning third world institutions to conduct baseline or other research may divert them from less routine and less quantitative work from which the benefits may be greater.

(iv) delays. The specification of target groups and indicators, and associated baseline surveys, may delay projects. This may be a net benefit; or the costs of delay may outweigh the benefits.

6.3 (b) Benefits The benefits from monitoring and evaluation are changes from which the rural poor will immediately or ultimately benefit. There appear to be four main sets:

(i) direct improvement of the project, programme or activity

(ii) individual improvement through learning on the part of staff and organizations (both national and international and including inputs into staff training) leading to benefits from subsequent changed perceptions, priorities, and behaviour.

(iii) management control within international and national organizations.

(iv) public relations and fund-raising activities by the international organization, the national government, or an NGO.

(iv) should not be denigrated. It is a necessary part of aid. But it is as well to recognize that there may be a tension between it and other benefits. There may be pressure for good news, as so often with M and E. Are M and E staff sometimes caught between (iv) with its demand for favourable feedback, showing successful anti-poverty achievements, and an easily unseen and sometimes rather dismal reality?

Rural Monitoring and Evaluation: Problems, Experience and Lessons

7.1 Monitoring and evaluation of inputs, activities and outputs is an important activity and relatively easy to carry out. Much of it takes the form of routine reports. It lies largely within the control of the project or programme. The principles which follow apply

to it; but they apply more forcefully to effects and impacts, to what happens once we leave the domain of official control, and enter the receiving environment.

7.2 Here we must look briefly at what may be involved in an evaluation of impact. Indicators of well-being, level of living, quality of life, participation, nutritional status and the like can be suggested; and can be measured. Various evaluation designs are possible (for a recent outline see Imboden, 1978:148-152). One of the more common (notably for area programmes and projects) is before-during-after surveys which, IF the data are

relevant
and comparable, before, during and after
and accurately measured
and accurately processed
and sensitively and perceptively compared

(which conditions may rarely if ever all occur together - and never in my limited experience), should then allow the observer confidently to identify and quantify some of the changes which have occurred. But changes measured do not of themselves enable the observer to identify them as net benefits resulting from programme or project outputs.

7.3 There are three sets of problems here.[1/]

(i) multiple and alternative causation

In order to link an impact with an output through an effect, one may have to speculate about, search for, analyse and evaluate several alternative, complementary or conflicting patterns of causation. For the sake of clarity I shall describe these as causal chains, while recognising that causation in practice may involve complex interactions at each stage or link. Three points can be made:

(a) an impact may be linked with an output through more than one chain. For example, an improvement in nutritional status among one to four-year-old children might be causally linked to a new water supply through EITHER reduced infection OR increased food availability in the late dry season resulting from lower calorie expenditure fetching water OR effects on mothers' time use, enabling mothers EITHER to spend more time on food preparation OR to feed children more regularly OR to grow more vegetables; or it might be linked with some or all of these. Alternatively, some effects might be positive (growing vegetables), and others negative (increased

1/ I apologise to the reader to whom this is all old hat. I have to work this through in my own mind, and there may be a few readers who find this helpful. It is, I fear, all very obvious; yet perhaps sometimes relatively neglected.

infection because of pollution of the new water supply).

(b) causal chains may have several steps. A common example is a chain postulated between increased agricultural production and improved nutrition, which might lead either through production to storage to cooking to consumption to improved nutritional status or through production to processing to sale to receipt of cash to expenditure of that cash on food to storage to consumption to improved nutritional status.

(c) impacts may have other causation. Many impacts (perhaps most) have multiple or alternative causation. The improvement in nutritional status of one to four year-olds already discussed might be attributed to factors leading to a decline in morbidity in one or more of several diseases, or to a rise in the quantity and quality of food intake, or to a reduction in intestinal parasites, or to any of the "causes" listed under (a) above, or to various combinations of these or other factors with or without complementarities. Impacts may thus be related to outputs either positively, negatively, or neutrally. The relationships will moreover be different for different individuals, families, groups or areas, and at different seasons.

(ii) the with-and-without conundrum

In the latter 1970s, most rural areas and people are in a state of rapid change. To assess the causal relationships between outputs, effects and impacts requires a judgement about what would have happened anyway without the outputs. Evaluations of impact might be too favourable (wages would have risen anyway) or too unfavourable (wages would have dropped even more than they did). With every evaluation there has to be a subjective judgement of this sort unless there is a complex (and probably infeasible) research design.

(iii) the unseen losers

There seems to be no exact antonym to "benefits" and this lack of a word may make it easier to neglect the adverse effects of development initiatives. We can, however, ask whether unanticipated outcomes are more often than not, like genetic mutations, adverse; and if so, whether there is, through inevitable failure to pick them all up, a systematic bias towards over-favourable evaluation. In particular, do those who lose from projects tend to be unseen? Are there built-in tendencies to miss and leave out precisely members of the would-be target groups who are afflicted by outputs and effects - the poor women whose livelihoods are destroyed by the Modern Rice Mill; the woodcutters and carriers who supplied the towns with firewood until

the forest wood lot took over their market; the water carriers who survived the dry season by carrying water until the new water supply displaced them; the tenants ousted by improving landlords; the traditional fishermen undercut by the trawlers? May such people be lost in evaluations because by the time any ex post surveys are carried out they have left - by dying or migrating; and because of a tendency to identify the more visible indirect beneficiaries more readily than less visible indirect losers? How many agencies, in their evaluations, subtract losers from beneficiaries? Or use the net livelihood effect in pre-investment appraisals?

7.4 In rural monitoring and evaluation these difficulties of comprehensiveness and interpretation are sometimes paradoxically compounded by an over-collection of data. Because rural change is so complex and because so many unanticipated effects can be expected, intelligent academics and evaluators make longer and longer lists of data required, over-loading questionnaires, diminishing the quality of the information obtained, delaying or even preventing data processing, and making it less and less likely that the data will ever be used. All too often rural surveys are weighed down by premature elephantiasis. The experience with the Special Rural Development Programme in Kenya is a warning. A large survey neither provided usable baseline data nor was processed in time to influence project identification. The main benefit from the survey (apart from additional knowledge about some rural areas in Kenya) was what some of the senior staff learnt about the rural areas coincidentally in the course of carrying it out. The World Bank is believed to have had similar experiences with large-scale surveys commissioned from university and research institutions.

7.5 The lessons are, however, hard to learn. They fly in the face of the wisdom of Chairman Mao, Oscar Wilde and H.L. Mencken in the anti-quotations. They are:

(i) to be sparing in demands for information, and to assess in advance whether it will be reliable, and who is going to use it, when and how for what purpose and with what costs and benefits. If those questions were rigourously asked in advance, many large-scale surveys might never be undertaken.

(ii) to concentrate attention on the much cheaper interpretative evaluation of what is happening in rural areas. This may be carried out by the rural people, by national researchers, and by project staff themselves.

(iii) to develop methods for "quick-and-dirty" ad hoc surveys - for rapid appraisal of rural situations. This has hitherto not been a subject for serious analysis or for the collation of experience; and yet it is a widespread, important and underdeveloped activity.

7.6 These three lessons can be summed up in the words: "simple is optimal". But those who pursue these approaches must expect to be attacked for being unscientific, imprecise, subjective and naive. If they are not so attacked, perhaps they should question whether they are being simple enough.

Identifying Target Groups

8.1 There are two families of approaches to identifying target groups of poor rural people. For lack of a more elegant phrase, these may be described as top-down approaches, mainly of use for statistical, public relations, and propaganda purposes; and bottom-up approaches, mainly of operational use for programme and project identification, monitoring and evaluation. The two families are linked, and the top-down family helps set bounds within which the bottom-up family can be identified.

8.2 The idea of target groups is sometimes attacked because it tends to treat poor rural people as objects. There is substance in this criticism and recent emphasis on participation (ACCTFRO 1977) should help to correct this. Moreover, there is force in the argument that the poorer rural people will have to help themselves, and that official effort should be directed towards that end. A further danger is that a target group approach might lead to the idea that development was wholly encompassed by benefits to a poor minority. But such criticisms should not be allowed to obscure the advantages of thinking in terms of target groups. For example it may evoke the image of archery, and of us, the overprivileged, overpaid experts standing at a safe distance and shooting benign arrows (with sedatives? stimulants?) towards those poor rural people over there. If we pursue this image, we find that somehow our arrows do not quite reach them but are fielded by stronger people who stand closer to us and in the way. If one did not have targets, one might not notice or mind particularly where the arrows went. As it is, having the targets, and having monitoring and evaluation, we can be confronted with our failures and learn from our successes. We do not like pulling harder at the bow, or, God forbid, moving closer to the targets, or radically revising our ideas about the whole procedure, but we will be forced into this if we are repeatedly shown that our arrows go on falling short and being captured by others.

8.3 The point is this. Whatever its defects, the idea of target groups, clearly identified and defined, keeps the focus on those who are poorer so that we can know whether and how much they benefit or lose. I do not see any good alternative to specifying whom it is intended will benefit, and how; and then monitoring and evaluating, in various ways, what happends, who gains and who loses.

8.4 A further distinction is useful. In defining and identifying target groups there is a difference between approaches which start with those who are worse off, leaving a boundary at an upper end; and those which start with those who are better off, or some intermediate group, leaving a boundary at the lower end. The first - poorest first - approach has been attempted in some parts of India, identifying, for example, the five

worst-off families in a village; the second - poorest last - approach is much more common even in poverty-oriented approaches to rural development, especially when uptake of a service such as education, health or credit is concerned. Spread and uptake approaches are usually poorest last; and direct and exclusive approaches are more often, though by no means always, poorest first.

8.5 MacArthur (1978) has identified four approaches to identifying target groups which have a primarily top-down character (and two others - by social and occupational group, and by geographical area, which have perhaps a more bottom-up character). The top-down four are:

(i) a threshold minimum level of per capita disposable income;
(ii) mimimum levels of per capita consumption;
(iii) arbitrary percentage fractions of total populations;
(iv) definitions based on the notion of basic needs. 1/

A threshold minimum level of income has been a starting point and is still mentioned as a guideline. The ACC Task Force accepted the $75 per caput limit proposed by the World Bank, and this has now, it seems, been raised to $100 to take account of inflation (ul Haq, in Finance and Development. June 1978, cited by MacArthur). There has been much intelligent analysis of the problems to which this approach gives rise. Comparability between countries and regions is complicated by differential inflation, by currencies over-valued in relation to the US dollar, and by difficulties estimating the value of subsistence production. The World Bank has now moved to (ii), an estimate of minimum consumption needs, country by country, as outlined in appendix D. This produces, in US dollar terms, different poverty thresholds for different countries, for example $90 for Bangladesh, $65 for India, and $155 for Thailand. I do not have the data, nor am I competent, to comment in detail on the methodology of this approach, except to observe that the shift from income to consumption requirements and from global figures to country-specific figures, appears to narrow errors in comparing levels of living and to get closer to definitions of operational use.

8.6 The main value of top-down specifications of target populations may be to enable figures to be given at national and international levels in order to get a measure of magnitudes of poverty, and to help in planning, in educating the public and in fund-raising. They also have preliminary value at the local operational level since they all direct attention downwards to the poorer people, to the have-nots. Even if an observer in a village cannot say who is above or below what line, at least he will know that his target is those with less, those who are worse-off. This is the right starting point.

1/ For detailed discussion of these four see MacArthur 1978 pp. 7-15.

8.7 The next step of specification at the operational level will, however, almost always have to be in other terms. The most obvious are:

(a) by occupational or ethnic group. C.T. Kurien, considering rural Tamil Nadu, and after considering groupings by income, has stated that "The nature of poverty can ... be more properly understood by identifying the poor mainly in terms of their occupational characteristics", (1977:120), and elsewhere he concludes, for the late 1960s, that "It is reasonable to assume that the acute poverty group consisted of the small dry farmers and many groups of rural artisans" (ibid:133). Sometimes there is an overlap between occupational and ethnic group, as with some caste groups and sub-groups, or with those who live-off the forests in many parts of the world. Landlessness, or having only a small piece of land, or being a tenant or share cropper, fall under this head as well as under (e).

(b) by physical and family status. Target groups may be those who, in medical terminology, are "at risk" physically. (These may be people identified individually or in communities, as with the risk approach for maternal and child health care (WHO 1978b)). They include the sick, the aged, the indigent, the very young, school-age children, widows, and the handicapped. A physical indicator such as stunting (low height-for-age) in children may provide a practical means, within a community, of identifying families which are, over the longer-term nutritionally deprived.

(c) by geographical location. Remote areas, areas with low and unreliable rainfall, and areas with short unimodal seasons, may have concentrations of poverty. In such areas there are often whole communities which are very poor.

(d) by residential location. Within a village or within a community, the poorer people may be concentrated in one area, often distinguished by a lower standard of housing and sanitation.

(e) by lack of wealth. Lack of an item of wealth (i.e. "stock" as opposed to "flow" items) may often be the best identifier of a poor group of people. Landlessness is the most common, but to this may be added, for example, lack of a well, of access to irrigation water, of capital, of tools, or of shelter; and indebtedness.

(f) by lack of education or training. A target group may be those who are illiterate, or who lack certain skills.

(g) by lack of basic needs. These may be identified on a zonal, community, family or individual basis. The basic needs normally listed are:

adequate food adequate shelter adequate clothing certain household equipment & furniture	certain minimum requirements for a family or individual for consumption
safe drinking water sanitation public transport public health facilities public educational facilities cultural facilities	essential services provided by and for the community at large

(h) by season. A whole population, or part of it, may be vulnerable mainly at certain seasons.

8.8 There are, thus, many different ways in which target groups can be identified. Some overlap and can be used together. The target may be specified as fishermen without nets, or women heads of households without draught power, or groups at risk (pregnant and lactating women, for example) in an unhealthy geographical area, or blacksmiths in a zone where a new sort of plough has been introduced, or landless labourers in a poor region for certain months of the year.

8.9 As so often in M and E, one is driven back to project formulation. The key is that, for rural development as defined, target groups should be identified early on and be designated as intended beneficiaries. If this is not done, the talents effect will be more likely than ever to siphon off the benefits for those who need them least. This conclusion in turn points to the importance of reconnaissance surveys and of the perceptions and decisions almost before a project has been thought of. There is always scope for steering projects once they have started, and changing direction and incorporating new groups on the run; but the poor will usually benefit most if they are identified unambiguously at the outset.

Choosing indicators

9.1 Indicators are measures of change. There will be indicators for inputs, activities and outputs, but the main debate and the main difficulties over indicators concern effects and most especially impacts.

9.2 It helps to be clear from the start what the purpose of measuring indicators is. It is, in the terms of this paper, to make things better for poorer rural people. In order to do this, the indicators must, when measured, be justified in cost-benefit terms for direct improvement to the project, programme or activity, or indirect improvements through learning on the part of staff, or improvements outside the project, programme or activity; or management control, or public relations and fund raising activities, or some combination of these. An immediate question then becomes - who is going to do what with the data, interpreting it how, and in consequence

behaving in what different ways. It is sobering here to note Imboden's perhaps extreme conclusion that "Experience shows that information generated by evaluations is rarely used in the decision-making process and that most evaluation results are dismissed as irrelevant to real issues and concerns." (Imboden 1978:164).

9.3 But how, in the field of rural development, can this be avoided?

9.4 The greatest danger is proliferation. It takes ten seconds to add an item to a list. It may take hundreds of hours to collect the data. And, following Macpherson's Law,[1] the more the data collected, the less likely it may be that it will be accurate, or processed, or analysed, or used.

9.5 Many lists of indicators have been compiled by thoughtful, experienced and intelligent people. Research projects have been mounted and books have been written on the subject of indicators. A recent honourable example is Measurement and Analysis of Progress at the Local Level, in two volumes (Scott 1978, and Bukh et al. 1978) published by UNRISD and reflecting the outcome of a major international comparative research project. In the overview and with commendable conciseness, indicators in general terms are suggested for health, nutrition, housing and related amenities, education and learning, transport and communications, employment, wealth, income, consumption, leisure and its use, cultural activities, and religious activity. It is evident that the country case studies produced long lists of indicators and that there are serious problems in leaving anything out.

9.6 The following points may help:

(i) substantial visible information can be gathered quickly and cheaply, for example concerning standards of housing. There may be a case for project staff collecting some such information as part of their familiarisation. (Project managers and their counterparts in particular might benefit from simple survey procedures which forced them into contact with the target groups and enabled them to learn from them and about them);

(ii) rural people know a lot and remember a lot. Major physical changes can be picked up through them retrospectively with some confidence;

(iii) much past survey and government reporting information often exists, if new arrivals would only look for it;

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1. The Law of Cussedness, a Scottish discovery. MacPherson's Law finds expression in many fields of human experience. A culturally specific example is that the chances of a piece of bread and jam falling with the jam side downwards varies directly with the furriness of the carpet. The Irish version is known as Murphy's Law, that everything that can go wrong will go wrong. This is sometimes amended by O'Reilly's corrolary - that Murphy was an incorrigible optimist.

(iv) on-going government reporting often collects much information which can be used, and sometimes government data collection can be improved through a project input or request;

(v) with specialised programmes the data required to indicate change are sometimes very obvious (e.g. morbidity rates).

9.7 But beyond this there is the question whether there are indicators of such universal cost-effectiveness that they should be measured for all programmes and projects in rural areas. Certainly there is universal or near-universal agreement that certain things are good - life, the absence of disease, a stable food supply and other basic needs, - and that their opposites are bad. But once we try to measure these we are into questions of costs and benefits, complicated (MacPherson again) by the tendency for some of the more universal indicators to have more multiple causation, making interpretation of change more difficult. Such indicators may be of use for monitoring general progress, as is the implication of the UNRISD study. Their use for the monitoring and evaluation of particular projects and programmes is more questionable.

9.8 One suggestion can, however, be made without reserve. Involving the people is part of current rhetoric for good reason. The satisfaction or dissatisfaction of members of a target group with programme or project results is likely always to be an important indicator. Interpreting it may require skill, judgement and a sense of change over time. But except in technical scientific matters (trace elements missing in the soil, the microbial aetiology of a disease, etc.) people usually know what is best for them and are the best judges of whether they are benefitting or not. The ways in which such opinions can be elicited requires analysis of experience so far and further thought, inventiveness, and trial. But that it is right and useful to have direct feedback from the poorer people does not seem a controversial point.

9.9 Much more problematical is the general use of other indicators of impact. With the strict caveat that costs may exceed benefits, and that interpretation of causality may be difficult, three sets of indicators (a personal list) can be suggested for consideration. In each case measurement or assessment is fairly cheap and reliable compared with some alternative indicators. The three are:

(i) nutritional status of young children. Considerable analysis and discussion on this subject within the UN system, and between UN and national staff, appears recently to have reached consensus on which anthropometric measurements can be used for which purposes. (e.g. WHO 1976; Waterlow et al.1977: Leowski, 1978; and the outcome of the 1 - 4 August 1978 meeting in WHO of investigators of nutritional surveillance). Since these measures (combinations of weight, height and age) are not too difficult to obtain, monitoring nutritional status in projects appears feasible without great cost. Causality is complex; but findings from recurrent surveys will raise questions and lead into issues relating to other aspects of the welfare of rural people including the family and questions concerning women.

(ii) in-and-out-migration. In-and-out-migration may be good indicators of a project's impact. If there is substantial outmigration, with a population displaced by change, it is easy to give an overfavourable evaluation of the status of the remaining population compared with a base year. Conversely, a large influx of poor people may make it appear that levels of living have dropped, when a project has been successful in providing additional livelihoods. Further reasons for monitoring migration are that it should pick up the losers from development and change; and that many in-migrants will tend to be in the target groups.

(iii) wealth. "Flow" items (nutritional intake, consumption, income) are very difficult to measure. "Stock" items (capital in its various forms - land, house, tools, bicycle, lamp, torch, etc.) are much easier to gauge and count. In any particular environment, it should be possible to find one or two stock items which the poorer people would like to have (what they would next buy if they had the money) but do not have. Monitoring the presence of these over time may be a good proxy indicator for rising incomes among the poorer people. Moreover, stock items usually act as buffers against accident, illness and other disasters, and so are also measures of security.

9.10 While these indicators might perhaps always be considered for inclusion, the most cost-effective approach is probably to decentralise responsibility for choosing indicators so that they can be related to the characteristics of the programme or project and to local conditions. The main danger with such decentralisation may be that too many indicators will be chosen. There may therefore be a case for a central monitor whose task is to try to restrain the numbers of indicators and the cost of their collection.

Types of Monitoring and Evaluation for Types of Programme, Project and Activity

10.1 I have earlier suggested seven categories for programmes, projects and activities, listed in approximate descending order of length of causal chains from outputs to impacts with the target group, of time required between output and impact, and of difficulty of assessment. These were:

1. short visits
2. technical surveys
3. advisory services and training
4. infrastructural projects
5. area development
6. spread and uptake
7. direct and exclusive

10.2 Those who may carry out M and E may be listed as:

a) members of the target group (s) of poorer rural people
b) other less poor key rural informants
c) programme/project staff (government, international)
d) other government staff
e) other international staff
f) staff of an academic or research institution
g) external individuals or teams.

10.3 M and E activities might be categorised in many ways. For present purposes, the following may do:

(i) self-evaluation
(ii) key indicator identification
(iii) before-during-after omnibus survey
(iv) before-during-after key indicator survey
(v) routing reporting
(vi) project/programme review
(vii) informal investigation
(viii) ad hoc specialist survey
(ix) evaluation research
(x) ex post evaluation

10.4 These three sets of categories will need to be refined. In the meantime, they can be used to draw up matrices (e.g. the table on P.21) can then be filled into reflect judgements about appropriate approaches for particular programmes, projects or activities.

10.5 The following points can be made about the categories of M and E activities:

(i) <u>self-evaluation</u>. This may be most appropriate with short visits. Those who make short visits could be required (on the plane returning) to complete a one-page form, stating which rural groups could be expected to benefit from the visit, through what causal chains, and entailing what assumptions. The form could be circulated to colleagues on return and discussed. This simple exercise should make staff think more about who would benefit from their work and what further action would be needed for those benefits to be realised.

(ii) key indicator identification. If the high costs of omnibus surveys are to be avoided, a special operation may be needed to identify one or more key indicators. If a suitable methodology can be devised, this might be carried out by programme or project staff themselves, the exercise being also a valuable familiarisation experience for them. In some cases, one possibility might be for them to conduct a small survey which would establish a Guttman scale for the possession of items of stock (bed, table, lamp/torch, radio, bicycle ...). But key indicators will be specific to area and project/programme. A checklist of indicators and a guide on how to decide between them might be prepared for the use of staff.

(iii) before-during-after omnibus survey. This approach is expensive and of questionable value. Before condemning it out of hand, however, it will be useful to learn from the recent experience of the World Bank.

(iv) before-during-after key indicator survey. This should be cheaper than (iii) and more cost effective. But it will not pick up unanticipated effects; there may therefore be a case for complementing it with one or more other approaches. In particular, informal investigation will be useful to assess the relationships between outputs and impacts.

(v) routine reporting. Routine reporting cannot be expected to include impact. But where causal chains from output to impact are short, well understood and predictable, output may be treated some of the time as a proxy for impact. This applies mainly with the direct and exclusive category where, for example, there may be a strong presumption with a well-administered food-for-work programme that nutritional status among a participant target group will be better than it would have been without the programme. In such a case, routine reporting of conditions in the area, of the types of people coming forward, and of food issued, might be taken as sufficient M & E subject to some informal investigation.

(vi) project/programme review. This refers particularly to mid-term reviews as conducted in the UN system.

(vii) informal investigation. If the "simple is optimal" thrust of this paper is right, then this is the most crucial M and E activity. The simplicity rests in the numbers of people (one, or a few) and the style of approach. What is suggested is sensitive and perceptive exploration together with the rural people. The method would be an abbreviated version of the approach of social anthropologists - an openness to information, a use of unstructured interviews to identify unasked questions, a search for unanticipated outcomes, an attempt to understand what causal chains had been operating how,

connecting what outputs with what impacts. All this, of course, sounds painfully unrigourous. But my best judgement is that, with the proviso that those taking part must be suitable for the task, it should be highly cost effective. Mention of the approach of social anthropologists may suggest persons who are outsiders to the culture concerned. This often need not, and should not, be the case. For example, university students who originate from a rural area, or who have strong affinities with those who live in it, should often be very well qualified for this sort of task providing their education has not cramped their vision or alienated them from rural life. There should be no disciplinary monopoly of the skills required for informal investigation. All disciplines and professions concerned with rural development in practice use "quick-and-dirty" methods. The need now is to recognise, analyse, and improve those methods.

(viii) ad hoc specialist survey. As a programme project proceeds, particular aspects may repay investigation which is beyond the means or ability of programme/project staff.

(ix) evaluation research. In a few cases, detailed and intensive research is likely to be justified. The payoff may be much greater from skilled and detailed research into a very few projects, examining their impacts, than from spreading more superficial work more widely. Such work on the health impact of improved water supplies (in Lesotho), and on the social and economic impacts of a road programme (in Nepal) have already shown that considerable resources are needed for this sort of work, but that it may shed light on the general utility of a whole sector of development activities. One set of subjects for research is the covariance of indicators and the identification of generalisable proxy indicators which are cheap and reliable to measure.

(x) ex post evaluation. This category overlaps with some of the others. It is especially applicable to technical surveys, since their outputs (maps, knowledge of natural resources, etc.) will have no impact unless and until they are followed with projects or programmes.

Table Matrix for Choice of M and E Activities

	M and E ACTIVITY									
Who By ↓	(i) Self Evaluation	(ii) Key Indicator Identification	(iii) Before-During-and after Omnibus Survey	(iv) Before-During-and after key Indicator Survey	(v) Routine Reporting	(vi) Project Review	(vii) Informal investigation	(viii) Ad Hoc Specialist Survey	(ix) Evaluation Research	(x) Ex Post Evaluation
a. Target Group										
b. Other Less Poor Key Rural Informants										
c. Programme/ Project Staff										
d. Other Government Staff										
e. Other International Staff										
f. Staff of an Academic or Research Institution										
g. External Individuals or Teams										

11.1 Conclusions

Some tentative conclusions are that:

(i) different combinations of approaches are likely to be cost-effective for different situations.

(ii) omnibus before-during-after surveys are unlikely often to be cost-effective.

(iii) complete commonality and uniformity in identifying target groups or choosing indicators would make no sense, but common check-lists and methodologies would be useful.

(iv) methods for informal investigation need to be developed, described, and disseminated.

(v) evaluation research is required further to analyse causal linkages and to identify proxy indicators.

(vi) involving rural people in M and E requires the collation and analysis of experience, a repertoire of approaches, and field testing and development of such approaches.

(vii) decentralised decision-making concerning target groups and indicators requires the training and reorientation of staff. This may be the most important single point.

Future Action?

12.1 The Panel may wish to consider the following as possible ways forward, and an agenda for discussion:

Activity	How	Who
1. Comparison, collation & refining of experience gained by agencies to-date in: a) monitoring & evaluation b) target group identification c) impact assessment	Writing & exchange of notes & papers leading to	Key field staff in different agencies; or M & E staff where they have field experience; or both.
2. Improve, invent & develop methods for: (i) target group definition (ii) key indicator identification (iii) informal investigation (iv) involving rural people in monitoring & evaluation (etc.)	Workshops Working parties Field experiments & trials	Persons with extensive rural experience. National research institutes. Field staff
3. Training and orientation of staff so that they can and will identify the poorer target groups and choose good indicators.	Experimental research & training programmes, including staff as field investigators.	Unconventional individuals with extensive rural experience.

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Appendix A: Consultancy on Monitoring and Evaluation for the ACC Task Force on Rural Development

TERMS OF REFERENCE

Background

The ACC Task Force on Rural Development at its March 1977 meeting had recommended that each organization of the UN family prepare an inventory of all its activities concerned with poverty-oriented rural development. In this connection, the Task Force recommended that the agencies' activities could be examined according to four broad criteria: (a) whether they identify any target groups; (b) whether there is reason to believe that the eventual benefits of the project will accrue to individuals from among the rural poverty groups as defined; (c) whether the project is in a geographical area which is predominantly poor under the target group definition; (d) whether the project attacks problems or issues which are normally associated with rural poverty. While stressing the need to further develop more definite and descriptive indicators of the whole concept of poverty (as well as an evaluation system to assess the impact of programmes on such groups), the Task Force recommended an initial definition of "absolute" poverty as a yearly income of less than $75 per capita and of "relative" poverty as one-third or less of the national average per capita income.

A major constraint in preparing the inventories was the difficulty of identifying the specific benficiary target group in terms of rural poverty, or of classifying rural development activities according to their anti-poverty orientation. Several agencies clearly identified the need for incorporating "poverty target group criteria" as well as the appropriate built-in "monitoring and evaluation system" in their development programmes and projects at the formulation stage. In this connection, several agencies including ILO, FAO, UNDP were developing monitoring and evaluation systems for their programmes as a whole, and some with special emphasis in respect of their poverty-oriented rural development activities.

Inter-Agency Panel on Monitoring and Evaluation of Poverty-Oriented Rural Development

The ACC Task Force at its March 1978 meeting while recognizing the danger in seeking to promote coordination and uniformity of approach for its own sake, nevertheless recommended that an attempt be made to develop a common inter-agency approach to monitoring and evaluation to ensure compatibility of reporting systems in the future. The Task Force called for the establishment of a small inter-agency panel of professionals with experience in monitoring and evaluation from ILO, WHO, UN and FAO to consider, first, concrete proposals regarding operational definitions and a set of indicators against which rural development activities could be evaluated, and then recommend how these could be incorporated in agency reporting systems in order to reflect their activities in poverty-oriented rural development.

FAO was to submit proposals to this inter-agency panel on monitoring and evaluation after due consultation with the agencies concerned. These consultations will be carried out with the consultant to be appointed. The agencies are being formally approached for nomination of selected individuals to join the panel. It is assumed that the first meeting of the panel will be held early in November 1978.

Purpose of the Consultancy

The ACC Task Force stressed the need for a more clear definition of the concept of target population as this would be of great value to the agencies in designing future programmes. There was also need for further examination of the conceptual problem of how to measure benefits accruing to such groups. The effects of technical assistance projects in particular were not amenable to measurement merely on the basis of numbers of people involved, but neither could they be gauged solely on the basis of a budgetary allocation or expenditure, as the quality, effectiveness and impact of activities were not necessarily directly commensurate with the level of resources devoted to them. While the Task Force recognized that the measurement of impact was primarily the responsibility of governments, this did not obviate the need for criteria against which poverty-oriented rural development activities could be evaluated, and therefore for examining ways in which agencies and governments could cooperate in evaluation at the country level.

The consultant, after full review of the relevant reports and documents, and consultation with such panel members and agencies selected for the forementioned Inter-Agency Panel on monitoring and evaluation of poverty-oriented rural development activities, will prepare for consideration by such panel, a working paper containing concrete proposals on:

(i) operational definitions of key elements of poverty-oriented rural development activities (e.g. target group and types of impacts sought);

(ii) a set of indicators against which rural development activities could be evaluated; and

(iii) recommendations on how these could be incorporated into the UN agencies reporting systems in order to reflect their activities in poverty-oriented rural development.

Appendix 8 : Some Rural and Urban Population Projections (millions).

	1975		2000		% increases 1975 - 2000	
	Rural	Urban	Rural	Urban	Rural	Urban
Algeria	8.4	8.4	10.7	26.0	27	210
Bangladesh	68.7	5.0	127.0	17.3	85	246
Botswana	0.6	0.1	1.0	0.4	65	459
Brazil	44.5	65.3	50.3	162.2	13	149
Colombia	9.9	16.0	11.1	40.4	12	152
Costa Rica	1.2	0.8	1.7	2.0	43	150
Cuba	3.6	5.8	3.8	11.4	5	96
Egypt	19.6	17.9	23.1	41.5	17	132
Ethiopia	24.8	3.1	42.2	11.4	70	265
Fiji	0.4	0.2	0.4	0.5	6	111
Ghana	6.7	3.2	10.2	11.0	53	242
Honduras	2.2	0.9	4.2	2.7	90	220
India	481.5	131.8	717.3	342.0	49	160
Indonesia	109.8	26.2	162.8	74.7	48	185
Iran	18.3	14.6	25.6	40.6	41	180
Jamaica	1.1	0.9	1.0	1.8	-14	93
Jordan	1.2	1.5	1.6	4.3	34	185
Kenya	11.8	1.5	24.6	6.4	109	326
Malaysia	8.4	3.7	12.1	9.9	43	172
Mauritius	0.5	0.4	0.4	0.8	-4	86
Mexico	21.8	37.4	28.7	103.6	32	177
Namibia	0.4	0.3	0.5	0.8	16	190

(cont. overleaf)

(Appendix B-2)

	1975		2000		% increases 1975 - 2000	
	Rural	Urban	Rural	Urban	Rural	Urban
Nepal	12.0	0.6	20.9	2.2	75	271
Nigeria	51.5	11.4	94.0	40.9	82	259
Pakistan	51.6	19.0	84.6	62.3	64	228
Philippines	28.4	16.0	44.1	45.6	55	185
Rhodesia	5.0	1.2	10.1	5.1	100	309
Rwanda	4.0	0.2	7.9	0.8	96	403
Sri Lanka	10.6	3.4	13.1	8.2	24	143
Sudan	15.9	2.4	30.0	8.9	89	271
Tanzania	14.4	1.0	29.8	4.25	107	307
Thailand	35.1	7.0	62.2	23.4	77	236
Upper Volta	5.5	0.5	9.2	1.7	67	244
Vietnam	36.1	7.4	53.5	22.3	48	202
Zaire	18.1	6.4	26.0	23.4	44	266
Zambia	3.2	1.8	4.6	7.0	44	280

Notes

1. Source: FAO based on data a few years old. More recent figures would probably generally show slightly lower percentage increases, but without affecting the general orders of magnitude.

2. Percentages are based on the original figures which were in thousands, and which have here been rounded to millions to one decimal place.

Appendix C(i) Hypothesised Covariance of Some Factors By Season

Factors		Dry			Wet			
		Early	Mid	Late	Early	Mid	Late	Harvest
Diseases	C-S Meningitis			-				
	Malaria					-	-	-
	Diarrhoea					-	-	-
	Guinea Worm					-	-	-
	Skin Infections					-	-	-
	Filariasis	-						
	Schistomsomiasis	-						
	Yaws					-	-	
Energy, Food and Nutrition	Agricultural Energy Demand	(-)			-	-	-	-
	" " Men		+		-			-
	" " Women	(-)	+			-		-
	Food stocks	+	+		-	-	-	+
	Prices for food purchase	+	+		-	-	-	+
	Food quality	+	+			-	-	+
	Body weight/ energy balance	+	+		-	-	-	-/+
Economic	Debt and repay-ment factors			(-)	-	-	-	-
	Screws and ratchets	+	+	-	-	-	-	(-)
Social and Demographic	Child care	+	+		-	-	-	-
	Deaths	-	+	+		-	-	-
	Neo-natal as % of births					-	-	
	Conceptions		H	H				
	Births						H	H

Notes: + = a positive condition or effect
- = a negative condition or effect
H = high

Source: Draft Review of the Conference on Seasonal Dimensions to Rural Poverty, Institute of Development Studies, University of Sussex, 1978.

Appendix D

Country-Specific Poverty Income Levels
Methodology and Uses of Bank Estimates

1. This note has been prepared in response to a request at the meeting of the Board of Executive Directors on December 22, 1977, for information about the procedures used by the staff to estimate poverty levels in member countries.

2. Current analysis and estimation of poverty stem from work initiated during the preparation of the paper entitled "Rural Development and Bank Policies: A Progress Report", which was discussed and approved by the Board in December 1974 and subsequently published as the Rural Development Policy Paper. In that paper the following was said on the measurement of rural poverty (p. 3, para. 1.10):

> "..... There is no uniquely correct way of measuring the extent of poverty or of rural poverty. In President McNamara's Nairobi Speech, emphasis was given to programs for increasing the productivity of 'that approximately 40 percent of the population of our developing member countries who have neither been able to contribute significantly to national economic growth, nor to share equitably in economic progress.' Our illustrative calculations build from this baseline, taking into account absolute poverty - defined by income levels below which minimum adequate standards of nutrition, shelter and personal amenities cannot be maintained, and relative poverty - reflecting extreme differences in levels of living between the top and bottom strata of a developing society. The latter often afflicts countries higher on the income scale to a greater extent than it does the poorer countries."

3. Following the broad guidelines indicated above, a series of country-specific estimates have been prepared by the country programme economists, utilizing the results of national studies where these have been undertaken. These estimates now cover more than 70 countries. For "absolute poverty" the procedures involve the following main steps:

a. identifying the components of a food "basket" (or baskets) representative of that consumed by low income groups;

b. estimating the quantities of that food basket necessary to provide the minimum calories and protein necessary for nutritional needs;

c. costing that mimimum food basket; and

d. adding an estimate for the monetary equivalent of non-nutritional essential needs (clothing, shelter, energy, etc.).

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(c) together with (d) thus constitute a cost or expenditure level necessary to maintain a minimum standard of living, i.e., a poverty threshold; those groups of the population whose sustainable expenditures (equivalent to net income) fall below this threshold constitute the absolute poverty group or target group.

4. The deficiency of data in most member countries, together with a degree of imprecision inherent in the concept of absolute poverty, imply that such estimates must necessarily be considered only very approximate in most cases. For example, the basket of food commodities to be taken as representative of consumption patterns may vary from one part of a country to another, reflecting different dietary patterns and habits; differences in levels of expenditure, both within and between countries; affect the variety and composition of diet that can be afforded; calorie requirements vary significantly according to the activity pattern of work and scientific estimates of requirements are still judgemental within a 10% to 15% margin; finally, prices of commodities vary significantly through space (urban/rural/farmgate/market) and time (seasonal scarcities) and are often not reported in sufficient detail to enable a full calculation of appropriate averages.

5. Conditions in some member countries are such that the absolute poverty threshold, thus measured, embraces a majority of the population; in other cases - particularly at the upper end of the middle income countries - absolute poverty afflicts only a small fraction. In such cases, to give focus and emphasis towards poverty in the orientation of Bank lending, a second criterion, one of relative poverty, has been utilized to identify groups most in need. Relative poverty as defined for this purpose includes households whose income is equivalent to one third or less of the average household income of the country as a whole. Relative poverty tends to include more people than absolute poverty for most countries in the EMENA and LAC regions, while absolute poverty dominates in African and South Asian countries. Methodologically simpler to estimate than absolute poverty, the estimates of relative poverty are nevertheless only as good as the estimates of the national income accounting data from which they are derived. The latter are still very deficient in many cases.

6. Thus far, the major use of these somewhat crude estimates is as an aid in monitoring the orientation of Bank lending towards low income beneficiaries, in particular, through rural and urban development projects. Thus, for each project where estimates are feasible, an assessment is made of the pre-project range of incomes among targeted or presumptive beneficiaries. Thereafter an attempt is made to estimate the number of beneficiaries in the target group and the expected impact of the project on these beneficiaries. In the context of projects located in rural areas, a project for which the majority of benefits is expected to accrue to the poverty group on the basis of these calculations is classified as a rural development project. The poverty line for this purpose uses the absolute or relative poverty criterion, whichever is more comprehensive in the country concerned. Using this approach some 129 projects or 59% of all agricultural projects were classified as rural development projects over the period FY75-77. In total, some 65% of the beneficiaries of these projects cluster around and below the poverty line established for the respective countries. The total beneficiaries for these three years were estimated at about 10 million rural families or close to 60 million individuals. Similar criteria are followed in monitoring the urban poverty programme.

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7. Estimation of poverty thresholds, including improvement in estimation techniques and updating to reflect changes, is now established as an integral part of country economic work. As the present crude estimates become further refined a number of other potential uses for such data may be taken up involving for example, cross country comparisons of populations in poverty and analysis of trends. However, for the purposes described in this note, crude estimates are sufficient and in this context there is probably little to be gained from their further refinement.

8. For illustrative purposes, recent estimates of the per capita poverty threshold for some countries in Asia - all converted from a national currency base to US dollars using official exchange rates - are as follows: Bangladesh US$90, Burma US$40, India US$65, Indonesia US$95, Pakistan US$83, Philippines US$155, Sri Lanka US$76 and Thailand US$93. These estimates refer to rural areas; estimates taking into account the generally higher living costs in major urban centers are prepared separately.

Source: Agriculture and Rural Development Department, World Bank, Memo of 19 January 1978

Summary of Points Discussed with ILO, WHO, UN, the World Bank & Others on Monitoring and Evaluation of Rural Development

(by B.S. Mhajan, FAO; November 1978)

(i) Discussions on monitoring and evaluation with the several agencies and persons in Geneva, New York and Washington proved extremely helpful in clarifying the precise nature and extent of involvement of the major UN organs (including the World Bank) presently in rural development activities. Discussions also centred around identifying the operational implications of using the concept of "target groups" needing special assistance, the problems associated with the implementation of monitoring and evaluation systems in the developing countries, the dual role of the members of the UN System in discharging their accountability to their own governing bodies on the one hand and assisting the developing countries in instituting viable monitoring and evaluation networks on the other, ways and means of processing the results of monitoring and evaluation to ensure their effective use for improvement of on-going projects or programmes and in the formulation of new ones.

(ii) The main points that emerged from these discussions are summarized below. These will be further elaborated in a Working Paper which will be submitted to members of the Inter-Agency Panel on Monitoring and Evaluation of Rur Development for discussion at its meeting scheduled for 1-3 February 1979. 1/

(iii) With the exception of the World Bank, the UN System has had a very limited direct involvement in assisting comprehensive rural development programmes in the developing countries. Most of them, particularly FAO, have been concerned with several essential components of rural development, aimed more at increasing the capabilities of the government agencies and national institutions for planning and implementing these components of development within the framework of each country's own perception of rural development than at direct interventions with the rural population. It was pointed out during these discussions that UNICEF and WFP, and of course the World Bank through their loans for specific programmes, are possibly the only UN bodies administering substantive assistance programmes in which sections of the rural population can be identified as direct beneficiaries. Even in the case of these organizations it is not clear to what extent the focus on the relatively poorer sections of the rural population has been maintained in prac , and with what results.

(iv) The extent of such direct interventions at the grassroots level has been progressively increasing however in recent years in field activities sponsored or assisted by FAO and WHO, though the bulk of their technical assistance and related activities are still aimed at government civil servants and national institutions.

(v) ILO's involvement in rural development programmes is associated with their wider concern with employment and the strategy of basic needs, more at the global policy level than at the level of field projects and programmes. Their concern with specific components of rural development at the country level is restricted to

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1/ The Members of the Panel include representatives of ILO, WHO, UN, World Bank and FAO.

assistance in the formation of cooperatives, identification and implementation of public works programmes and other non-farm activities (including handicrafts and cottage industries) designed to generate better employment and income opportunities for the under-privileged segments of the rural population.

(vi) WHO is concerned with primary health care (including nutrition), improved water supply for drinking purposes and eradication of specific diseases. As such the concept of a "target group" in respect of WHO activities is not particularly influenced by the pattern of income distribution, but the nature and level of services promoted must indeed take into account the need to make these services accessible to the entire rural population in the area concerned.

(vii) The UN's major concern with rural development appears to be at the level of development planning (including testing of monitoring and evaluation systems) and providing technical assistance in these fields.

(viii) World Bank's loans aimed at promoting rural development in a more general sense have covered a wide network, including support of irrigation, rural credit and extension programmes, on-farm crop production and livestock development, crop storage and processing, dairy development etc. More recently there has been increasing emphasis on comprehensive area development programmes covering farming as well as non-farm activities and community services, with a deliberate bias in favour of the poorer sections of the rural population in the area concerned.

(ix) FAO, by the very nature of its mandate has all along been concerned with improving the agricultural production and processing capabilities in the rural areas in the developing countries. As stated earlier, FAO's direct interventions with the rural population as such are still limited and there is no deliberate focus on any specific target group (based on income considerations) in its activities. This situation may undergo some change due to increasing sensitivity towards the needs of the rural poor, but the Organization's comparative advantage will always lie in providing assistance in improving the production potential of <u>all</u> sections of the farming population.

(x) The first practical step towards identifying a specific "target group" would be to ensure that in the drawing up of each rural development project or programme pointed attention is drawn to benefits and beneficiaries. Any assumptions made in the identification of these benefits and beneficiaries due to lack of data at the time of project preparation or because of factors outside the direct influence of the project or the programme concerned should also be clearly spelled out in the project design for periodic reappraisal and possible revision in targets being aimed at during project implementation. Identification of specific "target groups" is the sole prerogative of the government concerned, but it was generally agreed that focus on the poorer sections in the rural areas should not confuse long-term development (as measured by growth in national production and productive employment opportunities) with meeting the immediate consumption needs of a section of the population in the spirit of charity. The development strategies must indeed ensure equal and increasing access to employment opportunities, public utilities and social services for all sections of the population. By assisting in generating clear information on benefits and beneficiaries throughout the project cycle the UN System and other external agents can facilitate analysis of results as required to determine the manner in which the benefits are being shared among various segments of the beneficiaries.

(xi) Monitoring and evaluation thus assumes a significant role in directly or indirectly drawing attention to the evolving situation in a country in regard to various segments of the rural population and its operational implications in the planning and implementation of future development programmes. To ensure success in this context, the Panel should in the first instance concern itself only with monitoring and evaluation in the course of implementation of a project (including terminal assessment immediately after the completion of a specific budgetary allocation) and defer detailed consideration of ex-post evaluation of impact to a later date. Monitoring and evaluation in this limited sense, if it is viewed as part of the entire project cycle beginning with identification and preparation of project design, will considerably facilitate assessment of results both during and after the implementation of the project.

(xii) In the interest of simplicity and practicability monitoring (of progress in the delivery of inputs, starting of specific activities etc.) and evaluation (of assumed results, including identification or benefits and beneficiaries and progressive reappraisal of objectives, assumptions and targets in the light of relevant findings and developments) should be viewed as an integral part of the implementation plan of the project or programme concerned. The responsibility for carrying out monitoring and evaluation should lie in the first instance on project/programme managers except that they should have access to outside expert assistance for discharging this responsibility effectively and for a more detached analysis and interpretation of results.

(xiii) It seems doubtful if the Panel members can afford the time individually or collectively to undertake a detailed inquiry to recommend a set of operational and objectively verifiable "indicators" to be used in the monitoring and evaluation of specific components of rural development and their ultimate impact on the well being or otherwise of various segments of the rural community. A synthesis of the work already done in this context and further research can best be handled by various organs of the UN System individually, using outside consultants and institutions like the UN Research Institute for Social Development, as part of a coordinated programme. The Panel however should explore the possibility of developing and recommending a viable follow-up programme to the ACC Task Force for this purpose.

(xiv) Monitoring and evaluation of rural development activities within the UN System cannot be considered in isolation from the development of in-house expertise and institutional capability for evaluation of development programmes within each of the major organs of the System. But the Panel cannot engage itself in the consideration of this wider issue, except to draw attention to the implications of the existence or otherwise of such capability for the specific work entrusted to the ACC Task Force on Rural Development, particularly in regard to monitoring and evaluation of rural development per se.

(xv) There appears to be general support for convening one or more seminars for promoting exchange of ideas on monitoring and evaluation of rural development activities among representatives of developing countries which have made a firm policy commitment to an integrated approach to rural development. The Panel will also consider specifically the feasibility of introducing monitoring and evaluation as an integral part of the rural development projects or programmes in one or more countries being assisted by the ACC Task Force.

(xvi) It was generally agreed that the Panel members should feel free to bring one or more colleagues from their respective organizations to the first meeting if they so desire as long as their costs of participation are met entirely by the organizations concerned. It was also agreed that the Panel would submit a substantive, even if an interim report to the Chairman of the ACC Task Force on Rural Development immediately after the scheduled completion of the first meeting on 3 February, leaving the future status of the Panel open for decision by the Task Force at its meeting early in March 1979. It was stressed by several persons that the Panel's report should take due account of the work already accomplished by the Task Force and its Working Groups.

B.S. Mahajan
14 December 1978