

second summit meeting in Kuala Lumpur in August 1977.

While it is generally agreed that after 10 years of existence, ASEAN has succeeded in breaking down psychological barriers between its members, its record in the field of economic co-operation remains poor compared to the progress of organizations like the European Economic Community. But ASEAN cannot be judged solely against the performance of comparable groups. It was set up as one of many means to achieve political stability conducive to economic development in a region that has been plagued by discord and poverty; and threatened by foreign domination. Regular ministerial meetings and consultations within ASEAN have, to a certain degree, helped to bring about a sense of common identity, and improved bilateral relations within the Association. Only time can tell how successful ASEAN will be in the future, and whether it will serve as an example to the rest of Asia.

In any case, ASEAN or non-ASEAN, the over-riding problem in most countries of Asia is that of raising the level of rural life — not by “do-goodism” but by a real transformation of the rural economy.

While the per capita GNP in some Asian countries has increased significantly in the last decade, the living conditions of the farmers in those countries have scarcely improved, and have even deteriorated in some areas. In addition, the economic development of the urban sector has produced the abberation of community and cultural decay, increased crime rates, and the alienation of youth deprived of traditional values with no satisfactory substitute.

In such circumstances it is not surprising that people begin to question the validity, even the relevance, of the development goals based on foreign models. Without any concrete improvement in their living conditions they become more and more skeptical about the development policies of their own governments, and inevitably start to look for some better alternative. Political upheaval results, and that again slows down development.

For most of Asia, therefore, the most pressing need is that of the political will to devise structures that accelerate economic modernization without sacrificing socio-cultural values; and increase productivity while at the same time ensuring that the sharing of a nation's wealth is not lopsided. Perhaps, it would be wise to follow the wisdom of the Buddha, who said: “The duty of a ruler is to protect his people. He is the parent of his people and he protects them by his laws. . . Indeed, his ruling is not perfect until his people abide in peace. They are his country's treasure!” □

## Learning by doing social science research

Jacques Amyot

**I**T has always been part of the IDRC philosophy that research projects can and should contribute to training, and that practical experience in doing research under competent supervision is one of the best ways to learn how to do research.

The “learning by doing” formula is used in different ways in different kinds of IDRC supported research projects. When the University of Papua New Guinea undertook a study of rural-urban migration patterns in 1974 there were no local social scientists available to direct the research. So expatriate staff of the University used students of local teachers' colleges as field staff to conduct interviews and administer questionnaires.

The experiment worked out very well. Besides providing obvious benefits to the research, this approach resulted in the training of a pool of experienced research assistants who can be applied to future research projects by university and by government. In all probability the most capable will be absorbed into government, given the demand for administrators, but their research experience should stand them in good stead in their government posts.

More usually in Asia however, the use of junior personnel in research projects is more directly related to their own career development in the social sciences. These may be students enrolled in an academic social science department working under the direction of teachers in whose research they are involved; or they are recent graduates at a junior level, perhaps still doing course work on a part-time basis towards a higher degree, who have accepted research positions in a research institute. Many of these will eventually move into senior positions as social science teachers and researchers.

A study of the food distribution systems of the Pacific Islands undertaken by the University of the South Pacific in Fiji, was used as a means to set up a program of graduate studies, which the University lacked. Although many students were employed as part-time enumerators, three college level graduates were selected for full-time involvement in a research and training program built around the research project. The program was fully integrated with the university program of instruction leading up to a formal degree.

Some research projects have training as their main emphasis, for example the Jakarta Social Research Training Program based in the Faculty of Social Sciences of the University of Indonesia. The keystone of the program is an Advisory Committee composed of Indonesian social scientists who determine policy, select the personnel and the trainees, and administer the program through a secretariat.

The program is an effort to meet the acute need to upgrade social science faculty in Indonesia. The Committee expects that the program will contribute to the identification of good Ph.D. candidates and in fact, scholarships for higher study are sought for the most promising graduates. Others return to their home institutions to resume their duties immediately on completion of their course.

In 1973, recognition that there was no mechanism available in Southeast Asia to stimulate and encourage more junior social scientists to undertake research projects in population and to develop their research skills led the IDRC and the Ford Foundation to jointly establish the Southeast Asia Population Research Awards Program (SEAPRAP).

Special efforts are made to attract young and relatively inexperienced researchers to the program, which is administered and coordinated by an Asian social scientist based in the IDRC Asia Regional Office in Singapore. Senior social scientists within the region serve as advisors to awardees, and a Program Committee of five senior Southeast Asian social scientists formulates policy, screens and selects applications for awards.

It is no accident then that one of the criteria for evaluation of research proposals received by the IDRC is their potential for training: does the project include junior researchers who will benefit from involvement with the project for their own professional development. □

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