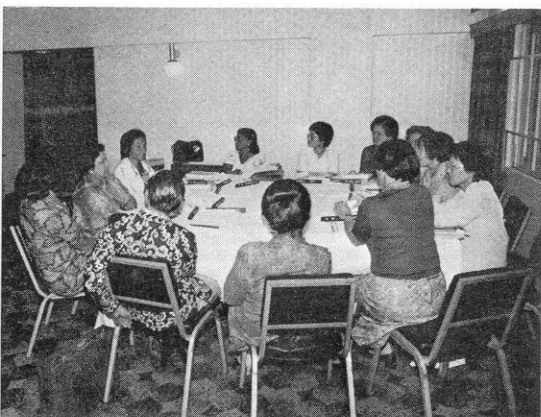
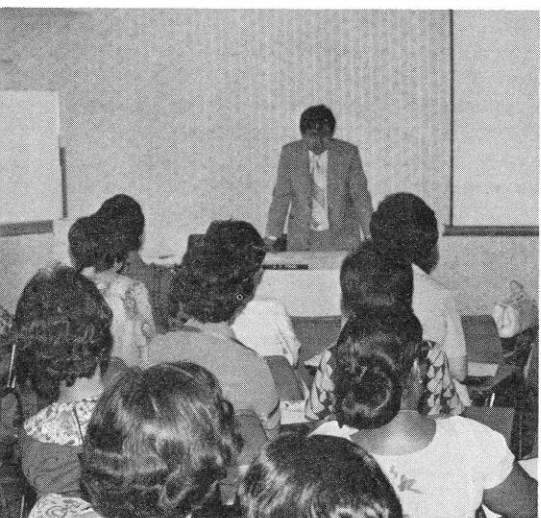


Evaluating Asia's nursing needs

Reginald MacIntyre



Above: participants divided into smaller groups to identify the most urgent priorities. Below: IDRC Asian Regional Director, Jingjai Hanchan-lash, at the workshop opening.



How can a group of professionals accord priority to one or two projects out of many when computers and masses of statistical data are not available to help in the elimination process? This was the problem faced, in mid-February, by 21 senior level nurses from schools of public health, health ministries, universities and hospitals in Indonesia, Korea, Malaysia, Nepal, Sri Lanka, the Philippines and Thailand. They met in Singapore to identify the most pressing research needs related to the nurse's role in health care in Asia and to draw up a research proposal.

At the workshop, which was sponsored by the IDRC, the participants learned about the problems of health care delivery and the roles of nurses in other countries, and how to apply modern techniques, like the nominal group method, to problem solving.

Divided into two groups, the nurses identified the research projects they thought the most urgent. These were listed and discussed and the participants then selected, and rated on a scale of 5 to 1 in order of priority, the five projects they felt were most worthy of support. The totals were tallied and the five projects receiving the highest score were again rated by the nurses, this time on a scale of 100 to 0. After further discussion, the top two projects were chosen for definition, elaboration and possible support.

Although the participants may at times have felt that they were developing "instant projects", all realized that the long 8-hour days and the discussions that ensued during the evenings were equivalent to countless hours of hard toil that would have been needed in other circumstances in order to isolate the areas of research that all could enthusiastically support. The nurses did arrive at a consensus and developed two detailed proposals that they hope will find support from international donor agencies.

The first proposal was entitled "Identification of Nursing Needs and Requirements in Relation to Health Services of a Rural Population". The main

study areas would be the health problems, the nursing services needed, an assessment of services already available to the community, defining target nursing needs and determining a proper nurse population ratio. The work would be carried out through detailed surveys. Procedures were worked out for every step of the proposed three-year project, from an initial review of the literature through the design and testing of the forms, training of the data collectors, processing the data, interpretation and analysis and finally the reporting of results.

The second proposal was for an "Evaluation of Nursing Components in Rural Community Health Services". It was equally comprehensive with the overall objective of improving the community health services made available through the health centres. The group felt it was necessary to have a detailed study made of the amount, type and effectiveness of supervision at the various levels, and to determine the attitude of workers in order to offer concrete suggestions to health planners, policy and decision makers and institutions responsible for training the supervisors.

At the end of the workshop one of the group leaders, Mrs. Nelida K. Castillo from the Philippines Department of Health in Manila, said: "This is the first nurses' workshop in Asia where each participant was able to contribute concrete proposals, and present their own data and arguments to improve nursing practices in their country. The learning process was stimulating because each person had to be prepared to defend a project proposal, and thereby learn by actively participating rather than passively listening."

The second group leader, Miss Kasil Oh, an Assistant Professor at the Nursing Research Institute, College of Nursing of Yonsei University in Seoul, Korea, said she had "a beautiful feeling to be learning from my Asian associates how to solve our problems. At first I felt the problems belonged to others or were the responsibility of society, but as the workshop progressed, I realized that I could be part of the solution process."

In their assessment of the week-long workshop, all the participants felt they had benefitted greatly from having gained experience in the research identification process and the development of a research proposal and having learnt, and used, the nominal group method.

A Nepalese nurse, Uma Deri Das, told me as we parted: "This workshop is going to give something to Nepal". I think she's right. □

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