

Integrated Approach to Local Rural Development

Report of an Interdisciplinary Seminar
Makati, Philippines
31 March - 3 April 1975

Editor: Marilyn Campbell

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Integrated Approaches for Development Programs: Dangers and Prospects¹

Sook Bang, MD

Chief, Fertility and Family Planning Section, Population Division, United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific

In the early 1960s, when the new contraceptive technology was introduced at a low cost, family planning was a fashionable symbol for solving population problems in relation to the economic development of many Asian countries. However, starting in the late 1960s, when family planning acceptance in many national programs attained a plateau and the added input did not seem commensurate with a marginal increase of output (family planning acceptance), many experts and many meetings recommended that family planning must be integrated into health services and other developmental programs including rural development.

Thus from the beginning of the 1970s, "integration" became a fashionable symbol for solving population problems. There is, for example, an interest in integrating family planning with maternal and child health services or with other development programs such as education and social welfare; and in placing family planning activities within community development schemes.

One of the main concerns, however, is how many integrated family planning projects are "real" integration rather than "symbolic." We have few studies and reports to explain the real meaning and practice of such integration. We have very little data on the "success and failure" of such integrated programs in achieving the desired goals, for instance, in terms of family planning acceptance, fertility reduction, and other developments, especially in different

political, economic, social, and cultural settings within the ESCAP (United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific) region.

This paper is an attempt to point out some dangers involved in the so-called "integrated approach" in family planning and to suggest some means of avoiding these dangers to make the integrated approach more effective in developmental activities including rural development.

Dangers of "Symbolic" Integration

Integrating family planning into other developmental programs has become a new symbol, representing the newest panacea in population planning. Behind this new symbol, however, there are several possible dangers threatening the hard-won gains in fertility control over the decades.

The first possible danger of the new symbol is a repetition of past disillusionment that promises simple solutions to the complex and pressing problems of population and development.

The second danger of the idea of integration is the fact that this new symbol may contribute to current political competition among existing organizations for access to the new financial resources available for population/family planning programs, but with little "trickle-down" effect.

The third danger of a symbolic program of integration is that it may dissipate resources on activities such as training of staff, production of information/education/communication (IEC)

¹This paper does not necessarily reflect the opinions of the United Nations.

materials, and elaborate accounting procedures without ensuring that these activities have an impact on actual contraceptive services to the people.

Finally, many new programs may begin as pilot or experimental projects to test the feasibility of integration. However, perhaps one thing we should have learned from a quarter century of such experiments is that they almost never fail. The reasons for this are easy to comprehend. Experimental and pilot projects are usually politically supported and they are accorded greater financial and physical resources than would be available on a larger scale. They have better leadership. Also, pilot or experimental project staff gain a greater sense of importance from being involved in such an endeavour and thus they often put more time and energy into their work.

We can predict that the new symbol, integration, will mean to many persons or agencies that new resources will be poured freely into organizational expansion to support the growing administrative personnel. Meanwhile, it is quite possible that the masses of rural people, whom the program is intended to serve, will receive only intermittent and inadequate services.

Evaluation toward Effective Integration

We can offer here three general principles of evaluation structures and processes that, we consider, lead to successful integration. They are identified largely from what we consider to be the bases of the danger that integration may be only symbolic and may fail to provide more services.

First, *the amount of integration itself must be carefully assessed.* The argument for integration is that it implies a structural or programmatic innovation necessary to increase the services available to local populations. Thus we must assess the quality and quantity of actual integration and must carefully assess the actual amount of integration among the specialized units directed to work together. There are a number of dimensions of integration and a number of identifiable ways to measure integration.

Here it is sufficient to identify integration as a variable to be measured. This is important, yet it is often neglected.

Second, *program outputs should be measured by noting the short-term services available to the client population.* This too appears to be a simple rule but it is often neglected. We must

be especially cautious of such intermediate evaluation criteria as numbers of people trained, numbers of contacts made, sizes of audiences reached, items of publication produced, or job descriptions. They are only important if they result in an increase of real services to the client population. We must also be suspicious of the argument that results will only come in the long run. As a well-known economist once observed, in the long run we are all dead. What counts is whether or not people get and use services *here and now.*

Third, *assessment of programs should be done in their natural settings.* This rule comes from our observation that pilot projects or experiments never fail. Failure only comes in the extension to a wider area. Pilot and experimental projects do have their place, of course, for they can be effectively used to discover how to do something we wish to do on a larger scale, with a careful assessment of the quality and quantity of the inputs. However, if we wish to know something about how specialized program units can be coordinated or integrated, and how this affects the service provided, we should examine existing programs in their natural settings rather than through pilot projects.

In fact, we have in the ESCAP region a wide range of programs in all development areas. These programs currently show wide variance in the amount of interagency coordination or integration, and in the quantity and quality of services provided.

Eight basic questions should be asked of any program or set of programs:

- (1) What are the goals of the larger integrated program, or of the specialized elements of the program?
- (2) How many different agencies are involved in the project and what is the nature of their inputs?
- (3) What is the nature of the coordination and communication among the various agencies?
- (4) What is the nature of the personal resources available for the project?
- (5) What is the size and array of inputs into the project or program?
- (6) How much and what kinds of evaluation have been done on the project?
- (7) What have been the outputs of the project?
- (8) Who has received the most benefit from the project?

In summary, the danger is that new ideas for integration, for increased communication activities, and for more community-based activities may become simply a new set of symbols giving promise of some simple magical solutions to complex and difficult problems. New programs and new approaches should mean more than expansion of administrative

structures, more jobs, more payments and power for a growing corps of administrative personnel. If the aim of the integrated approach to rural development is to provide better services to the rural masses, we should do our best to find ways and means of integrating all the available developmental activities to ensure maximum benefits for all.