



Human Factors in National Development: *Workshop Outline*¹

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Following are three conceptual matters useful for planning and evaluation of development activities. During the workshop, the participant is free to consider these in his or her own frame of reference:

1. Differentiating relief and development in terms of the following generalizations:
 - A. Relief. Humanitarian efforts to restore a pre-calamity condition. (Essentially a return to status quo.)
 - B. Development. Efforts in economic and human resource change that provide a basis and process for affective improvement in the quality of life.
2. Recognizing the limitations and hindrances to development that exist in vested interests in oppressive social, political, and economic situations.
3. Recognizing and making applications of two key principles of working within constraints to establish realistic bases for social change: (a) Self-help involvement of the clients, and (b) a relationship of reciprocity between development workers and clients.

Preparation Reading: Item 1

Good Guys are Sometimes Bad Guys (and Vice Versa!)

The tendency to simplify the world into “good guys” and “bad guys” is characteristic of the American view of life. America’s Christians are especially prone to this tendency because their cultural bias is reinforced by Jesus’ observation that those who are not *for* him are *against* him. Thus, the “bad guys” are those we are contending against and the “good guys” are helping us—those that we have decided to work with. At least we tend to begin with these assumptions.

Worse yet, Christians are often overly optimistic about anyone who seems to be helping. We tend to impute high and altruistic motives to people who seem to be doing “the right thing”. And when we have decided that what *we* want to do is “the right thing” we are vulnerable to being victimized by anybody clever enough to manipulate our good intentions into his or her own purposes.

All of this is complicated by a natural human tendency (not confined to Christians) to treat people who have trouble speaking English as if they were mentally retarded, deaf, or both. It seems to escape us that many of the people we deal with in development work are not only bright, but they are often very, very clever. And, depending on their values, they may or may not be heading in a direction similar to our hopes.

¹ Workshop on Human Factors in National Development 1976. Location unknown.

The dilemma is that although trust and vulnerability are important qualities for the development worker, one must be protected against the complete demoralization that can result from being victimized by betrayal. Perhaps the compromise is to be mildly cautious. But be careful that caution doesn't become paranoia!

Knowing the cast of characters might help. People of the following sorts will be encountered by the development worker. Some will be easy to spot; others will be hiding in various disguises:

1. Those with vested interest in the status quo:
No matter how sad may be the present conditions and welfare, it's a safe guess that someone has learned to get rich (or at least get power) from within the present structure. Development threatens such persons: they will likely threaten development!
2. Those who will gain personal advantage from the degeneration of the status quo:
Perhaps the cruelest blows to development come from those who would prefer to see *more* misery, not less. Political motives are often the cause; especially in a pre-revolutionary situation, political extremists will do *anything* to make matters degenerate further. From such depths will arise the true revolution, their argument says.
3. Those who see ways to gain from the development activities:
As Americans, we sometimes have unrealistic views of human nature. We tend to forget that even Americans like to get salaries for helping others. So we seem surprised to find that others want to dip their own cups in the grain sack.
4. Those who see no alternatives to the status quo and, thus, do not comprehend development:
Things that the outsider calls "problems" are usually so much a part of accepted everyday life that there is no sense of importance for changing them. One of the basic axioms of development work is that outsiders don't solve people's problems. People have to grow into their own awareness of need. The outsider facilitates best by helping people to find their own agenda and move it ahead at their own pace.

Exercise 1: Reflecting on Previous Experience

Writing these responses will help you get more clear about your own experience. Please be honest. What you write will be private unless you decide to share it. Don't lose this good occasion to get to know yourself better!

1. Word Association. List six words or phrases that come to mind for each word below.
Note: *The context is national or international aid.*

Relief

Target Audience

Benefactor

Development

Clients

Facilitator

2. Highlights from the Bright Side. Describe, briefly, one or two successful incidents of development efforts—from your experience or from stories you’ve heard. What was behind each success?

A. _____

B. _____

3. When Things go Wrong. Describe, briefly, one or two incidents of seriously flawed development efforts. What went wrong?

A. _____

B. _____

4. What’s in it for Me? Assume you are asked to explain why you’re involved in development work; can you feel comfortable with asking yourself, “What’s in it for me?” Why, or why not?

Exercise 2: Exploring Oppression

When I teach you to skate so I can rent you my skates, that's OPPRESSION. [Opportunism.]
When you tell me you like me so I'll need you to tell me, that's OPPRESSION. [Dependency.]
When we give to others so they'll give to us, that's OPPRESSION. [Exploitation.]

1. Suggest a definition of oppression as it occurs in nation-to-nation relations:

2. Suggest how a particular development program or project might be oppressive:

3. Which of these declarations sound oppressive? Which suggest liberation?
(Mark them "O" or "L")

- A. Here's what you need..... _____
- B. I'll tell you how _____
- C. We need to search. _____
- D. I need to learn..... _____
- E. Perhaps we can make a trade..... _____
- F. I'd like to help you find your way..... _____

4. Consider how you reacted and how you made your judgments about the declarations in "3" above:

- A. What are the clues that something is potentially oppressive?

- B. What are the clues that something is potentially liberating?

C. Why are some declarations ambiguous? What else would you want to know?

5. Which of these practices are oppressive, and why?

A. Two applicants for a job driving as a truck driver apparently differ only in educational background. One has two years; the other, because he has five years of schooling, is given the job.

Oppressive? Why/Why not? (Use reverse side if necessary.)

B. Two women are in prison for the same offence. Bail for one is set at \$500, but her family has no money or property; bail for the other is set at half a million dollars, her family has property and is able to post the bail. One of these women spends Christmas in jail.

Oppressive? Why/Why not? (Use reverse side if necessary.)

C. Fishermen have been introduced to the pressure lamp. Those who still cling to the old burning-reeds technique are able to catch much fewer fish. Only one man in the village has the cash capital to buy the needed lamps. He rents them to the fishermen and also charges a high rate for fuel.

Oppressive? Why/Why not? (Use reverse side if necessary.)

6. What's the common denominator among the three examples in "5" above?

Exercise 3: The Rogues Gallery

- I. What is there about each of these sectors (or what a leadership person does in the sector) that constitutes oppression? If it will help you think, consider one or the other of the stereotyped characters suggested. List two or three oppressive acts or attitudes for each sector.

Composite Portraits of Various Oppressors

1. Oppressive Government:

A. Governor Grabber

B. Mayor Miser

2. Oppressive Education:

A. Professor Elwood Elite

B. Miss Makum-Reed

3. Oppressive Religion:

A. The Reverend Superspirit

B. Bishop Luke Downonyu

4. Oppressive Public Services

A. Mrs. Gree D. Busoner

B. Dr. Koss Lee Health

5. Oppressive Trade (Business):

A. Trader Vic (alias, Tim Izer)

B. Mr. Grane Byer

6. Oppressive Bureaucracy

A. Superintendent Sue Presser

B. Mr. J. Formel Gatekeeper

II. What we don't know can hurt us. And it can hurt others, too. We should be aware of the ways that development efforts sometimes add to the oppression in a society. Groups of four or five people will be formed; each group will be assigned to look at one of the sectors. The sector you are considering: _____

As your discussion progresses, a group recorder should write down several ways that a "development" activity might actually be adding to oppression from this sector. (Use reverse side if necessary.)

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Is your sector similar to any other sector? If yes, which and in what ways?

III. Studying oppression is, of course, a negative activity. Thus, we need to turn it around to the positive. What can a development planner do to avoid strengthening the oppressors? Better yet, what can be done to reduce oppression? Discuss in your group: What step can the development planner take, within the constraints of real socio-political conditions to neutralize or reduce oppression in the sector you have been considering? Identify procedural suggestions or platform statements. (Use reverse side if necessary.)

1.

2.

3.

4.
