

# **People's Research for Empowerment and Community Change (PREACH): An Experience in PAR\***

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## **Introduction**

The basic problems of the Filipino people - massive unemployment, underemployment, mass poverty and dependence on foreign economy still remain. Philippine society is still plagued by inequality in wealth and power which breeds social conflict. And since the more immediate concern of majority of Filipinos today is economic upliftment, people's power must be translated into people's participation in the planning and implementation of economic programs that truly serve the needs and aspirations of the majority. Thus, the importance of building self-reliant and self-determining people's organizations cannot be over-emphasized.

While there have been countless development projects and researches implemented by various agencies, these have not significantly improved the impoverished conditions in the countryside and in the urban centers. This failure is partly due to the fact that the people directly affected by these projects were not asked to participate in the research and in the planning and implementation of the projects.

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In line with the thrust of building self-reliant communities, research has to serve as a practical instrument in developing the people's potential for their socio-economic upliftment and empowerment. This action-research project, therefore, was conceptualized as a tool for improving the lives of the poor, the disadvantaged or those who have less access to the basic services and economic opportunities. As an academic institution engaged in developing a new breed of community organizers and social workers who are better equipped with knowledge and skills that are more responsive to the changing conditions and demands of Philippine society, the College of Social Work and Community Development initiated this action-research as an extension service to depressed communities.

## **Project Objectives**

The People's Research for Empowerment and Community Change (PREACH) was an action-research envisioned to contribute to the understanding of community conditions and the development of appropriate actions that can assist the people in their empowerment and initiating community changes. The general objectives of the project are:

- First, to develop a community-based data bank on the socio-economic, political and environmental concerns which shall serve as the basis of people's action in uplifting their conditions;
- Second, to develop the people's potentials necessary to effectively carry out innovative changes in the community;
- Third, to initiate, strengthen, and assess the community organizing activities undertaken in connection with this participatory action research; and
- Fourth, to develop and test-out a mechanism for the integration of the research, extension and teaching activities of the College through participatory research.



Given these objectives, it was expected that the action research would result in the following outputs/impacts:

- \* Improved data base for the community members' use in their efforts to uplift their conditions.
- \* Developed leadership and organized groups to respond to their immediate and long-term needs.
- \* Improved understanding and commitment to participatory research among the people and the academe.

## Methodology

The research adopted the community organizing process as summed up in the following activities:

1. *Community Entry, Integration and Preliminary Social Investigation*

This was not just a preparatory phase to the data gathering, but more importantly, the foundation of the researchers'/organizers' involvement with the people in the community. It was at this stage where the project staff established rapport with the people, got the feel of the community and identified with them. The preliminary social investigation facilitated the process of defining the specific direction of the research. Thus, while the socio-economic, political and environmental conditions were determined, the areas needing more emphasis and focus were identified by the people themselves.

2. *Identification and Training of Local Researchers and Community Leaders*

Contact persons and community leaders in the research area were given trainings on leadership, planning, research and organizing. They were also formed into core groups and were

mobilized to respond to the community problems and needs.

3. *Focused Social Investigation and Data Gathering*

Based on the existing needs of the community, the researches undertaken by the local researchers and leaders were focused on the formulation of project proposals, participatory census and data gathering to enable them to organize and implement community activities. The data gathering employed different methodologies like informal discussion, survey, group interviews, focused group discussion, observation, and workshops.

The researches undertaken in the area were not a "one-shot-deal" thing. As the need for more information surfaced, more data gathering took place. Also, all the research outputs were compiled and consolidated to come up with the community-based data bank.

4. *Establishment of Mechanisms For Action*

The research outputs became inputs to the community in resolving the problems and needs. In mobilizing people to act on the identified issues and needs, organization of committees and even sectoral groups were initiated. Community planning was done to ensure effective implementation of identified solution to the problem. At this stage, the project staff acted as facilitators and trainers.

Establishment of linkages with other organizations, government and non-government institutions was facilitated by the project staff to ensure coordination, cooperation and support. In a way, this served as a preparation for the phasing out of the project.

5. *Evaluation, Summing Up of Lessons and Program Endorsement*

Toward the end of the project, the project staff, with the active involvement of the people synthesized and evaluated the



experiences, lessons, research outputs and other gains from the project. To avoid abrupt phasing out, the task of community organizing was endorsed to government and non-government organizations with whom the project had established linkages.

PREACH started its operation in November 1988 and ended in May 1990.

## **Research Framework**

### ***People's Empowerment: The Expression of Pro-People and Transformative Development***

To men and women who are committed to the development of people's potential and in transforming the pyramidal socio-economic and political structures, the popular adoption of participatory approaches can be considered as a significant gain. People's participation has become an integral component of several programs, even among government-initiated ones. Concomitant with the widespread acceptance of participatory development is the ascription of different meanings to the term, even to the extent of using it for the maintenance of the status quo.

The pro-people and transformative nature of participatory development is concretized as the people themselves collectively act to initiate changes for their betterment. As Julius Nyerere, former president of Tanzania, and former chairperson of the South Commission, puts it:

... People cannot be developed, they can only develop themselves. For while it is possible for an outsider to build a man's house, an outsider cannot give the man pride and self-confidence in himself as a human being. Those things a man has to create in

understanding of what he is doing, and why; by increasing his own knowledge and ability, and by his full participation -- as an equal -- in the life of the community he lives in. (Nyerere, 1973)

Poverty is a result of unjust socio-economic and political structures and to mitigate it, these structures have to be transformed to give way to people's development. To alter the basic power relationship and obtain greater access to society's benefits, wider participation and higher level of performance among people's organizations have to be sustained (Taruc, 1980).

Usually, the people belonging to the lower strata of the society, those who are in poverty are powerless, unless they are organized. They do not possess power like wealth, education and influence. Instead their power lies in the fact that they belong to the majority. When they are organized, they can wield power to change their condition (Palacios, 1977).

Addressing people's needs is not an easy task. Transferring power from the hands of the oppressor to those of the oppressed is hindered by the people's culture of silence as a result of centuries of domination. How can this be shattered? Maglaya (1982) recommends organizing the people to confront their oppressor and win victories for themselves. Organizing people for power will help establish participatory and powerful people's organizations to achieve both a liberation of consciousness and the creation of actual instruments of power. Power then becomes the people's means of finding redress to their grievances and acts against the conditions that oppress and dehumanize them.

Morales (1986) provided a meaning of empowerment that can transcend individual or group centered development towards the more macro social system.

By empowerment we mean a long-term strategic process of transferring economic and social power from one center to another and/or creation of new centers of



socio-economic power complementary to or in competition with the tradition centers.

Empowerment, therefore, is a dynamic process of shifting the balance of social power from one center to another and/or creation of one social class or group of classes and may very well also imply the shift in the economic or political importance of one area or region to another, resulting in a different configuration . . . .

Power redistribution means transferring substantial decision-making power to the people. This implies harnessing of the people's own potentials to enable them to take responsibility for their own development. Self-reliance and self-management are seen as inherent in the process of community development (Morales, 1986).

Three types of rural organizations were then suggested by Morales to empower the people, namely community organizations, mass-based sectoral organizations, and socio-economic organizations or corporations.

With the comprehensive goal of people's empowerment and the complexity of its process, the role of external institutions in a local community is to facilitate the creation of conditions and opportunities so that the people's potential may develop and find expression. Without belittling their capacity in doing development tasks, the people and their organizations have to grow into self-managing groups. At the outset, this requires support from external sources to facilitate the development of the people's potentials for leadership, organizing, management of socio-economic undertaking, technology development and in doing investigations or researches to guide them and to serve as basis of their actions.

### ***Participatory Research as a Tool for Empowerment***

The people themselves have to learn or develop skills in research methodologies to ensure their control and full participa-

tion in development process. Similarly, the professional researchers themselves have to learn from the people's conditions and experiences. The emergence of alternative research approaches, that is, data gathering not for data gathering's sake, but as an approach to community organizing ... problem centered and is directed towards the resolution of problems affecting the community (Torres, 1987) was born out of the dissatisfaction with most traditional and academic-centered researches that seldom benefit the people (Simbulan, 1985). Thus, there were even expressions that researches done for mere intellectual curiosity's sake is neither prestigious nor fundable (Castillo, 1974).

The popularity of participatory approaches has been greatly influenced by the Freirian theory of dialogical method of social analysis and conscientization.

If I perceive reality as the dialectical relationship between objectivity and subjectivity, then I have to use methods for investigation which involve the people of the area being studied as researchers. They should take part in the investigations themselves and not serve as passive objects of the study . . . . . This method of investigation which involves study - and criticism of the study - by the people is at the same time a learning process. Through this process of investigation, the level of critical thinking is raised among those involved (Freire, 1970).

An annotated bibliography on participatory research by Veneracion, et. al. (1984), provides a good summary of how Hall, one of the early advocates of PR, realized the fundamental shortcomings in the social science research methods where human behaviour is studied by adopting the methods of the natural scientists in studying plants, animals, chemical and physical properties. Hall (1978) then defines participatory research as a three-pronged activity: a method of social investigation involving the full participation of the community; educational process; and a means of taking action for development (Veneracion, 1984).



Participatory action research that combines social investigation, conscientization and collective action is considered as a tool in empowering the poor because it is geared towards educating and organizing the underprivileged for power (Almazar, 1987). As Guerrero, et al. also put it:

... research design, research orientation or bias ... emerges or evolves result of the dialogues and interaction with all the people affected by the research effort. PAR stresses the dialectic process of action, reflection, and back to action. Thus, PAR tends to be corrective, ameliorative and interventionist in its approach, but interventional with the full involvement of all people affected by these interventions. Action-intervention follows, and oftentimes become part of the research process (Guerrero, Tungpalan, Caragay, 1989).

Systems or models to operationalize the participatory action research have also been developed. Applying the Freirian model, Hope and Timmel (1984) make use of a non-formal listening survey to surface generative themes that become the center of dialogical discussion to heighten people's awareness and, subsequently, to draw them into action. A model that adopts PAR at the community level has been developed to institutionalize the problem-solving process by developing the capabilities of the people in research, planning and implementation. Known as Community Information and Planning System or CIPS, the model is being used by several NGOs in their projects (Polistico, 1988). The PAR approach of the Asian Social Institute utilizes dialogue or group meeting as an alternative form of data collection technique. Through qualitative, non-directive, free-flowing explanation by the respondents, the data collection becomes a dialogical interaction between the project team and the community residents (Tan, 1982).

At the University of the Philippines, College of Social Work and Community Development, community-based researches and programs have been integral undertakings since the 1970's though the term PR was not yet popular. This has been made possible by integrating research undertakings in community

organizing activities done in connection with fieldwork instruction. Later, more action oriented researches were developed which used community organizing as a method.

As observed in most of the researches undertaken, the research problems and designs originally come from the professional researchers, and these served as an entry point to the community in facilitating access to socio-economic services and organizing activities. As the research project progressed, community problems, needs and issues that surfaced as a result of social investigation became the new research problems which the community residents and the professional researchers worked on to come out with corresponding actions.

There are three considerations for the College's institution of community-based programs, particularly those involving field instruction: first, is the perceived necessity of praxis in the learning process of social work and community development students; second, the College's recognition that the University should become responsive to the needs of the Filipino people, especially the poor and the disadvantaged; and lastly, the belief that the people should be actively and responsibly involved in their own development (Alcid et. al., 1981).

The built-in component of developing the people's capabilities makes participatory action research more complicated, but more relevant than a conventional and knowledge-centered research. Its fruits are much more fulfilling as one sees a formerly stagnant and passive community grow into a progressive and self-managing social unit, with the people becoming more capable of determining and pursuing the kind of development they believe is just and most appropriate.

## **The PAR Process**

The matrix in the next page outlines the major phases undergone in the research.



# THE SOCIAL INVESTIGATION AND ANALYSES PHASES IN PARTICIPATORY RESEARCH

RESEARCH PHASES	GENERAL DIRECTION	TIME FRAME	CONTENT	DOMINANT METHODOLOGY	ROLES	
					PROJECT STAFF/COs	COMMUNITY/ PEOPLE
I. Pre-entry Social Investigation	Generation of Information necessary to understand the community prior to entry of project to the area.	Prior to community entry (November 1988)	Socio-Economic and Political Profile of region, province, municipality and community  Development programs	Review of existing literature, documents and reports about area  Ocular visit and survey	Primary actors and users of the information	None  Subject of the research
III. Integrative Social Investigation and Analysis	Generation of information necessary to properly relate with people and behave in the community  Identification of potential leaders	Upon community entry and onward  Very dominant during the first few weeks after the entry  (Late November onward)	Socio-economic and political conditions of the community  People's perceptions on the research project and research staff  Leaders, leadership roles, patterns and characteristics	Informal discussion held during house to house visits, "pag-iis-tambay" and other integrative activities  Group meetings  Participation in socio-economic activities	Co-actors in data generation  Primary users of the information	Co-actors, but not users of the information

RESEARCH PHASES	GENERAL DIRECTION	TIME FRAME	CONTENT	DOMINANT METHODOLOGY	ROLES	
					PROJECT STAFF/COs	COMMUNITY/ PEOPLE
III. Participatory Social Investigation, Analysis and Action	Surfacing and analysis of community problems, needs and issues that have to be attended to  Training and development of people's capability	When integration of external researchers/ COs have been achieved  When people themselves voice out their concerns (January, 1985 and onward)	Community resources  Community problems, needs and issues  Project proposals development  Strategies and methods of mobilizing the people	"Pulong-bayan"  Committee meetings and other small group meetings  Groundwork and follow-up  Formal training  On-the-job training  Structure building	Facilitators  Trainors  Technical advisers  Co-users of re-search results	Actors  Co-users of re-search results
IV. People-Initiated Social Investigation, Analysis and Action	Resolution of community problems, needs and issues upon people's initiatives  Strengthening of people's capability and mechanisms for participation and empowerment	When people attain capabilities and basic orientation in social analysis and organizing and mobilization	Same as above  (Action-oriented social investigation and analysis)	People's analysis and reflection  Community meetings, dialogues, negotiation, review of documents, documentation and mass mobilization	Observers  Advisers	Actors  End users and beneficiaries of the re-search-action results



A. Program Entry and Initial Organizing Activities

1. Program Entry

The actual entry of the program in the barangay took place after the Municipal Mayor acknowledged the program's intention in the area. Through his facilitation, the program staff was properly introduced to the barangay officials who accommodated the first batch of students. As outsiders trying to become new members of the community, living with the formal officials of the barangay had been advantageous in establishing credentials; that the new faces in the community were legitimate program staff and volunteers. The initial integration activities were done by going around the community, accompanied by the youth and children of the formal leaders. House to house visits, informal talks with the people, "pag-iistambay" and the like were done to facilitate the integration and conduct of social investigation. Meetings per sitio were also done to formally introduce the program and individuals involved.

On the part of the program staff and students, it was a very difficult period because of the problem of distrust the people generally had with the outsiders. There were even circumstances where the program staff and students were frankly asked by the residents if they were members of the New People's Army.

Aside from person to person and house to house integration, meetings per sitio were also done to formally introduce the program and the individuals involved. However, the fear and suspicion among the people did not easily subside. The same condition prevailed until the coming of the second batch of students, which have taken much of the time and effort of the program.

Despite the stereotyped branding, the program

pushed on. Precautionary measures were done to avoid encounters with a pseudo-military man who kept on creating fear even among the staff and students. There were even instances when this man pointed his gun to the students while telling them to leave the community.

In another sitio where subversive branding was not a problem, a series of community meetings transpired. In the initial community meeting held in summer, the people identified three problems and needs which they wanted to act upon, namely the construction of one well, construction of three public toilets, and hog-raising to augment the family income. Three committees were formed by the people to be responsible in planning out actions to meet the needs, but with the understanding that the deepwell project would be prioritized.

In the succeeding week, the committee on deepwell construction started the collection of donations from the residents and from outside sources. However, the amount collected was not sufficient to finance the project. Some leaders of the committee outrightly expressed that the program staff should finance the remaining balance, but this was discouraged since it would just reinforce their dependency.

## 2. Community Entry of the Second Batch of Development Workers and Students

Since the program was already operating, the formal entry of the second batch of staff and students was not difficult. The staff formally entered the community by paying a courtesy call to the Mayor and the Barangay officials. The first three months had been geared towards establishing rapport with the people through house to house visits and participation in social and economic activities. To facilitate integration, the students who previously stayed in a staff house



were distributed to host families.

Separate "Pulong-bayan" meetings in the most depressed areas of the barangay were held to orient the people about the program. Also, it became a venue to facilitate discussion on the community situation and to arrive at some recommendations about the identified problems and needs.

Except in one sitio where committees had been formed, working committees were later on formed in other sitios to handle each particular project or activity suggested. These series of meetings also facilitated the integration of the staff with the people.

The integration process was affected by the people's impression and suspicion that the staff were radicals.

Some factors that contributed to these were the following:

- a. The community survey conducted by the first batch of students

In an effort to come out with a community study, the community survey done by the first batch of staff and students was given a totally different meaning. Since the survey included questions on the ownership of bancas, carabao, land, etc., the people mistook it as an effort to inventory the community resources that can be "channelled to the rebels". Even the spot map prepared by the students was given the same interpretation.

- b. Previous experiences of the people with the rebels

Since many of the residents came from rural areas in the Visayas and Mindanao

where rebels were a common sight, the community residents said that the activities of the staff and the volunteers were similar to those done by the rebels. Mere association of the activities with the rebels contributed to the unlikely perception by the people.

- c. Conscious effort of individuals to discredit the program due to personal interest

A more enlightening reason that can explain the continued suspicion, despite the explanations done by the student and staff, was the branding of the latter as subversives by a pseudo-military man in the area. This man did house to house visits and discouraged the people in the community from entertaining the staff and students. As it turned out, the man was an extortionist who did not want his business to be disturbed. The people themselves were afraid of him because of his delinquency and the outright display of his gun. Fearing that the staff and students might expose and oppose his wrongdoings, the pseudo-military man tried to discredit them by calling them subversives.

It was acknowledged that whatever organizing initiatives the project would undertake would remain futile unless the people's trust was gained. Hence, the strategy pursued was to gain more transparency by showing to the people the project's concern in facilitating development in the community. While confronting and correcting misimpressions and responding to people's queries, the project staff concentrated on the more important concern which was to work with contact leaders who were interested in



pursuing developmental activities responsive to the community's problems and needs.

**B. Identification of Contact Persons and Training of Leaders**

During community integration, the staff and students, acting as community organizers (CO), made conscious efforts to identify contacts who could provide and/or validate information about the community and its people, and who could later on act as local researchers and community leaders. Initially, the Barangay Captain and his councilmen were formally approached. The 'tambayan' and informal discussions in house-to-house visits proved to be a good venue for the staff to ask the people to name persons whom they considered as leaders. The staff were also able to identify leaders in the community by recognizing those who had shown deep interest and active participation during community meetings and project activities. Lastly, the leaders were identified through the people themselves who elected their leaders during formal meetings.

Some of the criteria used in identifying the leaders were the following:

1. credible and with wide sphere of influence in the community;
2. responsive to change as shown by their interest in new ideas and participation in the activities;
3. comes from the low or middle-income group;
4. articulate with basic communication skills; and
5. manifests interest and concern for the poorer sector of the community.

Most of the leaders identified had a low level of social consciousness. Although there were some residents who were more socially and politically critical about their present situation,

the staff could not just simply associate with them as this might reinforce the impression on them. The staff also considered the leadership style of the people who were political personalities. They were political-party-oriented and looked up to personalities for their political orientation. Prior to the holding of the barangay elections one summer, the staff took the initiative to integrate with the candidate who had the highest probability of winning the election to facilitate integration and coordinative work with the new barangay council. This proved to be successful since the new Barangay Captain became very supportive of the program after the election.

Since the people generally attended meetings when the people they considered as their leaders were present, the staff ensured the presence of the leaders during "purok" and committee meetings. With high attendance, the occasion became an appropriate venue for the Staff/CO to meet the people, establishing greater credibility of the Staff/CO and enhancing greater cooperation in dealings with the community residents.

As the CO/project Staff gained the friendship and trust of the contact leaders, education and redirection of certain concepts were infused. Among the methods used in doing this were the following:

1. Discouraging the people from approaching political figures in sourcing funds on a personal basis;
2. Involving non-leaders in activities to hasten the development of their leadership potential; and
3. Establishing mechanisms for actual practice of the leader through participation in committees, organizations and projects preparations.

In coordination with other non-government organizations which had a support program through community education in the same locality, formal trainings were conducted to synthesize



educational inputs/learnings the people had gained during informal meetings like committee work, groundwork and assembly meetings.

The formal training activities primarily served as venues to synthesize the concepts in leadership, organizing, and project development which were topics of discussions and actions during casual conversations and committee meetings. Also, relevant concerns not discussed during casual and informal meetings because of the inappropriateness of the situation and the lack of "timing" were included in the formal training. This type of activity normally resulted in action plans to implement socio-economic projects or organizational plans.

There were attempts to include topics in training that aimed to promote social awareness and conscientization on political and local issues. This was done carefully through the use of proper language. Community antagonists were properly selected so as not to offend the participants. Thus, the people were able to identify the oppressors in the community such as the large fishpen owners and the proponents of development programs that adversely affect them. They were pinpointed to be the reasons for the small catch in the lake. However, these were not extensively deepened due to certain constraints. Having been able to remove the initial impression that the staff was subversive, it was very difficult to discuss critical issues in a larger group. Since the staff recognized the "budding" condition of leadership and organizing efforts, unwarranted discussion of sensitive community issues with the people who had just placed their trust on the organizers might prove ineffective. Conscientization therefore was approached on a one-on-one basis rather than in a public and heterogeneous group composed of individuals with different perceptions and values to organizing work.

### C. Social Investigation and Analysis

There were four phases observed in doing social investigation and analysis. The first phase was the **Pre-Entry Social**

**Investigation** in which the program staff generated information about the community and its background to facilitate entry into the community. This was done through the review of the socio-economic profiles, documentation of development programs and reports on the previous organizing activities done in the area. Ocular visits and initial talks with the contact persons also facilitated the understanding of the area. This understanding served as input to the formulation of tentative plans and schedules by the program staff.

Upon community entry, that is, when the staff started to live with the people in the community, **Integrative Social Investigation** and Analysis took place (see the matrix). Social investigation and community studies were done by the staff, now acting as community organizers (COs), to aid them in their organizing work. More specifically, the social analysis done in this phase helped in:

1. Interpreting and appreciating community events at the research project;
2. Determining entry points for doing participatory investigation where the people would have greater involvement;
3. Coming out with strategies and tactics on how to relate with the people in the community; and
4. Identifying potential leaders who could also be developed into local researchers.

As integration activities progressed and the confidence of the people was attained, the approach in social investigation became more participatory by involving the contact persons in data gathering. However, the results of these investigations remained primarily in the hands of the COs. The information gathered was continually assessed, confirmed and reassessed to guide the COs in their moves, particularly in relating to people and handling certain community issues.



The integrative investigation of the staff paved the way towards the third phase, **Participatory Social Investigation, Analysis and Action** which is educational and action-oriented. The experience of the people and the COs in this phase included the investigation necessary to resolve community issues and to prepare proposals for socio-economic projects, as well as the participatory community census. As discussed in the following section on the mobilization of people to meet community problems and needs, several projects were implemented later. At the same time, it became an educational experience for the people as they learned the basics of planning, management, and organizing.

The fourth phase in the P.A.R. is the **People-Initiated Social Investigation, Analysis and Action**. This is the phase when the people themselves, out of their own initiatives, resolve to act on their problems, needs and issues. They conduct community research and analysis to guide them in their actions and to strengthen their capability and mechanisms for instituting community changes, thus people's research for empowerment and community change.

Historically and traditionally, the conduct of community census was a "top-down" activity where the need, the instruments, and the use of the results were largely in the hands of the people in the decision making positions. The community people usually ended up as objects and respondents only. Also as observed during initial stages of stay in the area, the community had no census of its own. Population was projected using the old census data and the municipality's population growth rate.

At first, the COs felt that they needed a community-wide census to enable them to come up with a more solid and comprehensive basis for education and action. However, this was not done during the early phase because the people were more concerned with concrete projects that would respond to their immediate needs. Since the demand for socio-economic projects were very valid, and because the program had come out with some concrete output in the community to sustain credibility,

project-based mobilizations were carried out rather than the participatory community census (PCC). The groundwork was laid however, for the leaders to see the importance of a community census.

**D. Building and Strengthening Organizational Mechanisms for Participation**

Developing the capability of the community to enable them to pursue their development requires mechanisms so that the people will be able to participate in the development process. Community structures like people's organizations, committee systems, network and alliances are examples of mechanisms which have been proven as effective means of harnessing participatory development. As experienced by the program, the task of building and strengthening organizational structure was done through the following:

**1. Formation of small group issue-specific structures**

At the early stage of the community organizing program, the type of structures that emerged were small groups with about 4-8 members who were concerned with handling a specific project or issue in small clusters within the community. The small groups were action oriented in the sense that they aimed to respond to the immediate concerns of the community or group of households in the community. These concerns included deep well construction and repair, doormat making, basket making, garbage dumpsite issue, repair of a chapel, and benefit dance fund-raising project.

**2. Formation of sitio-based neighborhood and sectoral organizations**

Unlike the small group formation which was composed mainly of the people who were affected or concerned about a specific issue, problem or



need, the neighborhood and sectoral organizations had greater memberships. They were concerned with the various aspects of the area and had coordinative and facilitative functions in resolving the perceived problems and needs.

3. Strengthening and consolidating existing organizations

In other sitios where the residents were relatively more well off, the strategy adopted by the COs was the strengthening of existing organizations, particularly the youth. These areas were more urbanized, physically and in terms of occupational structure. While there were people who are still engaged in fishing and related activities, majority were already in the service and industrial sectors.

4. Establishing linkages to facilitate access to resources

At this stage of organizing, the community and the organizations that emerged were not capable yet of building resources to implement their own development programs. The program also was not a long range program that could sustain the support to the community. Thus, to generate and facilitate access of the people to the resources needed, training of leaders in negotiating and linking with development agencies was done. As experienced, the project proposals developed by the people had been a very useful tool in linkage building.

Local initiatives to establish linkages, specially with other people's organizations in other barangays and at the municipal and provincial levels were also encouraged. The outside organi-

zations with whom the people established linkages was something which the local organizations decided by themselves.

#### E. Community Mobilization in Responding to Community Needs

The "pulong bayan" done in each sitio was successful in generating discussion at a sitio-level. Among the basic problems and needs mentioned were the need for deepwells, toilets, livelihood projects, proper sanitation, the repair of chapel, roads, the dumping of garbage in the vicinity, the poor catch in the lake, the water lilies, and so on. To have something to start with after each meeting, committees were formed to take charge of specific problems or related problems. Membership of the committees were constituted through volunteerism. If nobody volunteered, the members were elected at large.

The committee formed in each sitio became the partners of the COs in further analyzing the problems identified. Planning with the people was later done until simple project proposals were completed. These proposals became the tool of the people in approaching agencies and individuals for resource solicitation. In cases where project proposals were not needed, the committee came out with simple letters stating the plan or intention of the solicitation.

Towards the second half of program implementation, the identification and planning of community projects was done through development workshops. The same method was done to finalize the proposals.

Resource generation was done through the following methods:

1. Contributions from the residents in the area;
2. Solicitations from people outside of the community;
3. Holding of a benefit dance;



4. Presentation of the project proposals to development agencies, including the CSWCD program, Office of the Mayor, and other offices in the municipality and the Parish.

Since there were funds available in the program for community-based projects, delegates from the community were trained to present their proposals and negotiate for funding. Thus, during the meeting with some program staff, the people had to defend their proposals. Through this process, the people were able to implement development projects. The role played by the program staff was to facilitate the venues for discussions, planning, and resource generation. Also, assistance was provided in some technical aspects like formatting of proposals, typing and ensuring technically and financially viable projects. This assistance could be considered as on-the-job training to the people since the staff's inputs were given during the actual discussion with the people concerned.

Another way by which mobilization for community projects was done was by assisting existing organizations in coming out with an action plan through leadership trainings. Efforts were made to strengthen the organization through training, groundwork, and follow-up activities to motivate and sustain the member's interest.

#### F. Linkage Building and Program Phase Out and Evaluation

The program formulated a phase out plan, in coordination with other concerned entities. The objectives of the phase out was to tap and establish linkages with different agencies which could provide support for existing groups and projects in the area.

##### 1. Strategies in formulating the phase out plan

- \* Series of consultation meetings were done with the Mayor's Office and the Department of Social Welfare and Development. The focus of the consultation was more on

program complementation by the two lead agencies operating in the area.

- \* Dialogues with some of the leaders of the sitio-based organizations were conducted at identifying the groups' future plans.

## 2. Mechanics of the phase-out plan

The community-wide core group served as the coordinating body to all sitio-based organizations. The program provided technical assistance in terms of monitoring of group development and project implementation.

## 3. Participating institutions for the phase-out

The following groups were tapped to assist the program even after the phase-out:

- \* A partner NGO in the area
- \* Mayor's Office
- \* Department of Social Welfare and Development Region IV
- \* Parish Church
- \* Provincial People's Organization

## 4. Evaluation

One of the comments expressed by the volunteers who were fielded in the area, and who had been a part of the process, was that the organizing work was output-oriented. This observation came during the period when trainings were held almost every weekend; when proposals for a number of socio-economic projects were being prepared and followed up; when participatory census was on-going; and other projects like deepwell, public



toilets, etc. were being implemented. There were, indeed, voluminous tasks being done.

Despite the number of staff and volunteers covering the whole community, the workload seemed to be overwhelming. As observed, after the completion of one activity, the next day was set for the preparation for the next activity.

As a consequence, group assessments and reflections with the people had not been given sufficient time. By the time the community organizers and the people involved were about to assess and reflect, they already felt exhausted, leaving very little time for assessment. On the other hand, the staff and volunteers were able to experience group assessment and learn from the process.

A formal evaluation, like the participatory evaluation of the basket weaving project, was held in summer but this was not repeated in other undertakings. Reflections and assessments were done on an individual basis and group assessment was inadequate. As experienced during the evaluation of the basket weaving project, the people were open to the idea of evaluation, even to criticism and self-criticism. Unfortunately, the voluminous tasks during the succeeding periods railroaded the process towards the more action oriented tasks.

Thus; there was the need for balancing action with reflection. Aside from the activities and trainings they have undergone, a more systematic reflection and assessment would have been equally educational for the people and the staff.

Different schemes were used for the evaluation:

- \* One on one evaluation with the COs
- \* Small group evaluation with the COs
- \* General evaluation with all the involved leaders and participants
- \* Team Evaluation
- \* Project Level Assessment and Evaluation
- \* Summative Evaluation by all the Volunteers-Staff Involved

## THE OUTCOME OF THE P.A.R. EXPERIENCE

### A. ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF A COMMUNITY-BASED DATA BANK

1. ***The development of a community-based data bank involves a long process of developing the people's capability in having access, control and use of the information necessary in the resolution of community problems and issues.***

As external catalyst, PREACH had identified four phases in assisting the people in developing a community-based data bank. This has been elaborately discussed in the PAR process.

2. ***The Laguna Lake area is under pressure because of competing and conflicting uses. The rapid urbanization and industrialization has had detrimental effects on the environment of the Lake and on the people dependent on it.***

The sector that is mostly affected by the deteriorating conditions of the lake are the small fisherfolk and their families whose sustenance greatly depends on the lake. In most cases, the catch is good only for a day's meal.



It is significant to note that the occupational structure of the people in the barangay indicates a decreasing number of families depending on the lake. Forty-two percent of the married residents in the area are skilled laborers engaged in work not related to fishing while only 24.5% are fisherfolks, fish vendors, fishpen workers or dock workers. Among women, 24.6% are working in non-fishing related occupations compared to 7.8% fish vendors. The figure for the other household members is 29.8% to 10.10%, in favor of the off-lake occupations. This can be attributed to the diminishing capability of the lake to provide a viable source of income and the accessibility of Metro-Manila where the service and industrial sector can absorb migrating labor.

3. ***The inadequacy of the lake as a viable source of livelihood is aggravated by the people's inability to maximize available resources.***

For one, the small fisherfolk's access to the lake resource is limited by the large fishpens in the area. Going out into the deeper and interior part of the lake becomes more difficult and expensive due to the circuitous path they have to take. The positioning of the big fishpens has made pathways narrow and dangerous. Small fisherfolk are not allowed by the fishpen owners to go near the pens, or else they shall be shot.

4. ***Social services to ensure a more livable and less difficult environment are lacking.***

Especially in Purok 6 where the poor families concentrate, the housing and environmental conditions are very poor. When the PREACH project started, only one household had a toilet in a sitio of 39 families. In two(2) other sitios with about 100 families, only three had toilets. The ratio of source of drinking water to users was one (1) well to about thirty (30) families.

Worse, some of the wells were contaminated. Communicable diseases broke out in the late 1988 and early 1989 which resulted in the death of some children and in the illness of a number of residents.

While the area is serviced by a cemented road, this does not reach the far sitios. Thus, during rainy season, the road is muddy and at times impassable because of the flood.

Education for children is difficult not only because of economic reasons but also because of the long distance and difficult path the children have to pass through in going to school.

Housing cannot be improved because majority of the residents are squatters. Investment in housing is considered unwise because of the possibility of eviction. This is also the primary reason why many were reluctant to construct toilets in their own houses.

5. ***The people of the community have a generally low level of socio-economic and political awareness as evidenced by the following:***
- a. preference for individual work rather than collective efforts, particularly in economic undertakings;
  - b. attributing the causes of their poverty to such factors as lack of education, "gulong ng palad", and other personal limitations, than relating it to the socio-economic and political structures that perpetuate oppressive relationships;
  - c. passivity and dependence on traditional leaders and "politicos" for the resolution of community problems; and



- d. initial distrust of organizers and change agents, and their tendency to be easily overwhelmed by the baseless "red scare" propaganda.

These conditions have resulted in difficult organizing work and conduct of the participatory research. Considering the dominance of individualism over collective concern and action, mobilization of the people took place after a long process of groundwork, motivation and re-education.

B. ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF PEOPLE'S POTENTIAL TO EFFECTIVELY CARRY OUT INNOVATIVE CHANGES IN THE COMMUNITY

- 1. ***A balanced and complementary mixture of formal and experiential trainings provides a more appropriate means of developing people's capability.***

Capability building done in connection with the PREACH Project had been based on the prevailing needs and situation arising in the community. While formal trainings on leadership, project proposal making, organizing and research were conducted, the more experiential approach provided actual situations for enhancing the people's knowledge, skills and attitude. In fact, the former were used as venues to synthesize learning already obtained by the participants during "on-the-job" or experiential trainings. The latter included skills in facilitating, committee work, research, project proposal making, fund negotiation, policy formulation and technical skills in door-mat making, basket weaving and swine raising.

- 2. ***The development of critical consciousness among the contact leaders had been adversely affected by the "red scare" and branding of PREACH staff and organizers, who were all from UP, as subversives.***

Having a critical consciousness, or the ability to analyze the different social forces that maintain the existing socio-economic and political system and how these affect an individual's position in society, is an attribute that a community leader must possess. This is a prerequisite for individual transformation and subsequently, empowerment. While the task of developing critical consciousness was perceived as a responsibility of the PREACH staff/organizers, the situation did not warrant a more sustained effort towards this. The staff/students found it difficult to focus on this because of the red scare directed against them. They were oftenly told by formal leaders and some men not to do conscientizing activities, nor even associate with people who were branded by some people as "local subversives and radicals".

As an adjustment to the usual tactic of branding people who work for innovative changes as radicals, conscientization activities were undertaken on a one-on-one basis. It was also realized that this task can be best done by the local people whose social awareness had been developed, rather than the external organizers.

C. ON STRENGTHENING AND ASSISTING COMMUNITY ORGANIZING EFFORTS DONE IN CONNECTION WITH THE PARTICIPATORY RESEARCH

1. ***How the people of the community responded to the integration and organizing efforts of COs and researchers highly depended on the benefits and advantages the people perceived they would get in the process of integration and organizing.***

Generally, there were two groups who had different reactions to organizing and research efforts by PREACH staff and students. On one hand there were those who believed that they would be benefitted as individuals, as a group or as a community. They were more open and willing to participate in the PREACH project. On the other



hand, the people who believed that the organizing effort would be a threat to their interest and consequently, a disadvantage, did not just act as observers but worked actively against the PREACH project and organizing effort as a whole.

Individuals who looked forward to personal gains and had lesser concern for the more common benefits were the next group of people who became less active in the organizing process. As their personal interests were exposed by the people themselves, these opportunists became critical of the initiatives and joined the group of antagonists.

2. ***Given the limited resources of the research project, small socio-economic projects were instituted with the active participation of the concerned residents.***

However small, projects such as doormat making, *kaing* making, piggery, beautification of the chapel, deep well repair and toilet construction were the results of the people's planning and action. These were identified by them, planned by them, negotiated for funding and implemented by them. As organizers, the PREACH staff and students assisted the people by facilitating group meetings for planning, ground-work for fund negotiations and motivating the people to actively participate. Technical tasks such as documentation and typing were, however, undertaken by the PREACH staff/students.

These small projects had brought in some financial gains, and more importantly, an experience in collective work they can replicate when similar situations come.

3. ***Collective efforts based on temporary and immediate concerns are bound to last only as long as these concerns exist.***

Collective efforts and experiences are a good "resource" to bank on, but these have to be sustained to ensure continuous, progressive and effective organizing. The initial collective undertakings in the form of impact projects were short-lived because they were concerned only with the temporary tasks and responded only to the immediate needs. Thus, the organizational mechanisms for actions such as committees and small groups for fund raising, chapel beautification, deep well and toilet construction, doormat and *kaing* projects were also short-lived.

There are several reasons that can be cited for this. First, the subversive branding and military harassment experienced by the project staff hampered the latter in pursuing and developing critical consciousness among the people. Secondly, the people simply wanted programs that can benefit them, minus the "social awareness and consciousness things". On the other hand, the PREACH staff and students had no concrete resources for the programs, but only capabilities for building and enhancing commitment, skills, social awareness and pro-people and collective consciousness. As a tactical move, the external researchers and students responded to the people's desire to venture into socio-economic projects.

4. ***A basic but simpler mechanism for people's involvement in the area was instituted.***

A simpler, less ambitious set-up was formed to continue what had been started. Support and outside agencies, whether government or non-government, might contribute to the flourishing of the core group, but the fact remained that this group would turn into self-managing group only if the members and leaders were committed to collective work as a means to achieve a common vision.



D. ON THE DEVELOPMENT AND TESTING OF MECHANISMS FOR THE INTEGRATION OF COLLEGE'S RESEARCH, EXTENSION AND TEACHING ACTIVITIES

1. ***The PREACH experience has shown that the teaching function can be done, hand in hand, with the extension program by providing a venue for fieldwork instruction for both social work and community development.***

From the second semester, 1987-1988 to summer 1990, the program was able to field forty-two (42) students. The maximum number of students that could be placed in the program was determined by the staff while the selection of the students was determined by the Office of the Fieldwork Instruction of each department. On the other hand, a total of seven (7) faculty members were involved as field supervisors.

In addition to the integrated fielding of students, the PREACH project was a frequent venue for Diliman-based SW and CD classes needing exposure in community setting. This was facilitated by several factors. Because it was a college-based program, arrangements could be easily made. However, in some instances, this also becomes a weakness as some protocol in holding exposures were not observed by some exposurists. The accessibility of the place made the area attractive for overnight or one-day exposure.

2. ***Four areas for integration of the social work and community development fieldwork program have been identified, namely:***
  - a. Program Orientation - coming out with a unified program orientation that meet the expectations and conform with the vision of the two disciplines in servicing communities.

- b. **Area Placement --** placing the students in one area under the same program. During the first semester of implementing the project, the SW and the CD students were placed in separate areas or communities as requested by the faculty who felt that the integration in the placement should be done at a slow and step by step phasing. In the succeeding semester, only one community was taken as project site and students from both disciplines worked together in teams.
- c. **Methods of Supervision --** integrated supervision of students from the two departments can have two schemes:
  - o Team supervision by faculty supervisors coming from each department. Through joint supervision, differences in methods or styles can be discussed and ironed out with the students from both departments.
  - o Single faculty supervising both the SW and CD students.
- d. **Academic Requirements --** the two departments can come out with common knowledge, skills and attitude expected to be learned and experienced by the students in working with communities. Thus, despite differences in the curriculum, course requirements of the student will not have wide disparity.

Integration of the various areas should lead to a greater appreciation of community work and of the other discipline. As Quieta observed during the project evaluation "our experience would indicate that we can really integrate the field placement of the SW and CD students under one administrative supervision by the field placement agency. As proven, the same learning opportunities can be provided to SW and CD students. The only dif-



ference is the curriculum. The unit loading differential between the CD and SW has implications to the amount of time spent for field work and supervision by faculty. If we really would like to have a holistic kind of integration, then we should move towards standardizing the practicum courses of both departments. It should be noted that the college has so far been successful in integrating CO courses and the same thing can be done to attain full integration".

## Recommendations

1. ***Considering the increasing number of organized sectors and communities, external support organizations which have greater access to development resources (fund, technology, information, etc.) have to develop support programs which are in line with the needs and demands of the organized communities:***

Support organizations such as the academe, non-governmental organizations and other institutions wishing to assist communities in their development have to continue their efforts but the specific situation, needs and demands of the community should always be primal in program development. The tendency of unorganized communities to be dependent or mistrust development initiatives by outsiders should also be kept in mind. In this situation, the PAR program must focus on the basic organizing work, with the help of local community organizers to facilitate the whole process.

For organized communities, the role of outside institutions like the academe is to serve as support group to the people's organization. The PAR program can augment the needs of local organizers by providing them the necessary supports in terms of material assistance, skills development, linkages, etc. Instead of playing an "offensive" stance in the community with respect to the kind of program to be implemented, these support organizations can be reactive to the people's needs and demands, thus ensuring a more appropriate development cooperation.

2. ***More researches and resources for extension have to be directed to action-oriented researches where the people from depressed communities can be involved, trained and mobilized towards the resolution of their problems and issues.***

Participatory researches which are community-based should be a priority in the research agenda. Documentation should focus on both the output and the processes undergone to further refine methodologies in doing PAR. There is a need to allot more resources for participatory researches because these do not only cater to the academic needs of the researchers, but can also be instrumental in educating and mobilizing the people for their development.

Identification of the partner community prior to the development of proposals as well as the involvement of the local people in the conceptualization and designing of the program are necessary in order to ensure the appropriateness of the PAR program to their needs. Simultaneously, it will empower people as they learn the skills in project development and research methodologies.

3. ***Implementation of participatory action research requires more flexibility. Conceptualization of an action research project, therefore, should provide a general direction in which the people can have a chance to participate and redirect the research agenda in their favor.***

In a participatory research, an outside researcher serves as a facilitator, catalyst, promoter and a learner. Academicians or university researchers must be willing to take these roles. The scheme should ensure involvement of the people in the implementation. The possibility that the idea conceived in the proposal or design might change due to varying community situations should be an inherent assumption. At the same time, there is the need to formulate a system of managing PAR projects which allow greater flexibility but without sacrificing the quality of the output and the resource allotted for the research.



4. ***While socio-economic projects can be used as impact projects to uplift the people's conditions, these projects should also be used as instruments in enhancing social awareness and in transforming oppressive structures and relation at the micro level.***

The Philippines needs more participation in economic production, particularly of goods and services that would respond to the basic needs of the poor majority. Launching socio-economic projects, therefore is a must. However, these initiatives should not be left as mere production of goods and services, but should also be able to enhance social awareness and consolidate groups in the community. Support have to be provided to initiatives that promote collective actions and which can challenge oppressive economic and political relations such as usury (5-6 mode), dependency on political elite (the barangay captain, mayor, congressman or governor), abusive trading relations (comprador and middle men), and destructive competition and monopoly. Linking small socioeconomic enterprises of the people with larger and more stable enterprises with the same orientation should be sustained. The support system has to be made viable and operational.

5. ***Participatory research and extension programs that will be carried out by academic institutions should not only be supported by material and non-material resources, but should also be capable of coming out with stands or positions regarding certain issues pertaining to the community.***

Working with communities entails dealing with issues of varying magnitude. Some issues are easy to handle and PAR staff can easily make positions on them. However, there are community issues where concrete positions are required from the PAR proponents, but the latter could not come out with these because of the inadequacy of the structures and unclear processes to be undergone. For example, the proliferation of large fishpens near the lake shoreline is an issue that will confront the owners, and possibly the politicians in power. However, based on the PREACH experience, this issue was not projected because of the unpreparedness not only of the community, but of the project as well. Can the academe come out with an institutional stand against practices, policies and programs of the



"power elite", or of the government, if these are not supportive of the people's agenda? If yes, how? As usually practiced in some sectors of the academe, collective or institutional stand are not made in the pretext of "academic neutrality" but such noncommittal is actually just a way to evade confrontation with those in power, if not to support them. We believe that this practice should end when a stand has to be made in support of the poor, the oppressed, the deprived and the exploited.

6. ***Coordination with both the government and non-government organizations increases greater opportunities for the people to avail themselves of the resources, addition to the enhancement of better working relationships among the project implementors.***

Once again, the PREACH experience proved the advantage of working together with non-government and government organizations to maximize the benefits that can be redirected to the community. Experiences show that much of the material and non-material resources which should have benefitted the poor do not reach them because of so many obvious reasons. If the people are organized and equipped with skills in resource generation, investigation, negotiation and even confrontation, much of these resources can be enjoyed by them. For programs which have short-term duration, coordination with the local institutions can provide support mechanisms and continuity upon the termination of the program.

7. ***The integration of the social work and community development field instruction should be laid down as one of the College thrusts.***

The integration of the field instruction of the two departments in a community setting will help in strengthening the College orientation and program in community organizing. It will facilitate greater appreciation of the two disciplines and will help in the maximization of the College's resources. The integrated fieldwork committee should be revived, but its members should be composed of the people who are actually involved in the implementation of the integrated fieldwork program.



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