

THE EVALUATION OF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS

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A most difficult problem for administrators is how to evaluate the effectiveness of community projects at the block and village levels, and to measure the effect of administration by the higher echelons of the programme upon activities in the blocks and villages. The difficulty stems from the nature of community development, which is "to build into" the structure of village ideas, attitudes, and institutions the idea that there is a better life and the confidence that villages collectively and individuals separately can undertake action to attain a better life. The question is : How does one measure the "building-in" of leads ? Or, What acts or events show that ideas are being "built-in" ?

In the long run it will not be difficult to decide whether ideas have been built-in; for if they have, all aspects of village life will show changes and the observer will see on every hand evidence of development, awareness, and sophistication. If the programme fails, then the similarity of "now" and of the "distant future" will be equally evident. To show that ideas have been built-in is not hard; the problem is to find out whether they are being built-in. For, the policy maker or the administrator must know how well, if at all, his designs are succeeding now if he is to shape the future rather than let it occur.

Evaluation is clearest when one can use a measure — an infinitely divisible and homogeneous quantification. Next best is a count of indivisible and like-but-not-homogeneous items. Without such quantification one can say "good" or "bad," or "better" or "worse," but it is difficult indeed to attach operational meaning to such terms; and even more difficult to get uniformity when different persons are using the terms. Here lies the crux of the problem of evaluating performance in community projects : there appears to be no way in which we can quantify ideas or the building-in of ideas. Faced with the impossibility of quantifying the characteristic we wish to evaluate, we necessarily look for some quantifiable item or event which we believe to be related to the true object of evaluation.