

A MANUAL FOR PARTICIPANT OBSERVERS IN PROCESS DOCUMENTATION RESEARCH

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Data gathering in process documentation research is achieved through participant observation. This paper discusses various steps and procedures in accomplishing participant observation work during pre-field, fieldwork and writing phases of research, to acquaint and guide future process documentation field researchers. Also included are such topics as desirable traits of a good observer, gathering and recording data, observing activities and meetings and the writing of reports.

Introduction

From mid-1977 to mid-1982, the Institute of Philippine Culture (IPC), Ateneo de Manila University, conducted a process documentation research of two communal irrigation projects (CIP) in Camarines Sur: the Aslong CIP, Libmanan and the Taisan CIP, Minalabac. The projects were pilot efforts of the National Irrigation Administration (NIA) and the Ford Foundation. From mid-1981 to mid-1983, the Research and Service Center (RSC) of the Ateneo de Naga conducted additional documentation research of the first two pilot areas listed above, and started another study of a national irrigation system in the Buhi-Lalo area of Camarines Sur. The researchers in all these projects documented the "learning process" or the interaction among the irrigation association members, community organizers in the project area and the NIA technical staff assigned to the pilot projects. Periodic reports from the research were reviewed by the Communal Irrigation Council (CIC) to gauge problems and note the progress in the use of the participatory approach in implementing communal irrigation projects. The researchers in these projects were called "PO" or participant observers.

Process documentation is the factual chronicle of the learning process experienced in the implementation of a program for development (de los Reyes 1984). Several works have already employed this strategy. In addition to those

mentioned above, the IPC also conducted another study in Laur, Nueva Ecija using the process documentation technique (Chiong-Javier 1978). Similar studies were done in the Sirawagan CIP in Iloilo (Chiong-Javier 1980), the Calabangan CIP in Sipocot (Borlagdan 1979) and the Tariric CIP in Minalabac (Quidoles 1980). For other samples of process documentation, readers can refer to the works of Felix (1979) and Volante (1979).

As a means of data gathering, participant observation (PO) has been commonly employed by social scientists and anthropologists. In most cases, the PO work was personally conducted by the principal investigators themselves. However, recent Philippine experience in process documentation research suggests that several field workers assigned to separate areas could be trained to work independently of each other and of the principal investigator. Their separate documentation reports can then be used to evaluate the whole project under the supervision of the project leader.

This manual describes procedural activities before, during and after fieldwork, and gives hints on how to accomplish these activities. While western social scientists have discussed the techniques of participant observation (e.g., Wax 1971, Schatzman and Strauss 1973, Beals and others 1977), there is very little discussion of participant observation in the context of the Philippine setting (see Jocano 1983, Fujisaka and Duhaylungsod 1983). This manual hopes to fill this gap and help guide future participant

observers (especially those who are not principal investigators themselves) in the conduct of process documentation. It may also serve as a reference material in research training programs.

Pre-field Activities

Participant observation (PO) is not an easy task. You need a genuine personal interest in this kind of work or a true dedication to the study you are presently involved in to be able to perform the job of a participant observer superbly. A serious conference with your project director (PD) is essential in obtaining specific definition of what a participant observer is in the context of your present study. Some of the questions which you should seek answers to are: what is the nature of the study? what information is to be gathered? how should the data be collected? how should the data be reported? what is your role in this study? You cannot start with nothing and hope for the data to emerge as the study progresses. Get a full understanding of the study's objectives and methodology. Like a good soldier, you should not venture into the field without adequate preparation. Below are activities which you should do before going to the research site.

Immersion in the subject matter of the research. The first step in the acquisition of a good training in the PO work is a thorough immersion in the subject matter of the research. Concentrate religiously over a substantial amount of reading material on the subject matter of your study. Examine sample reports or manuscripts prepared by other participant observers. While the PD usually supplies you with the readings, do find time to obtain other related materials to complement what you already have. For example, if your study focuses on one aspect of the fishing industry, review all available literature in fishing in general and on the aspect you wish to study more closely. You should have a thorough background on the concepts and terminology prevalent in fishing. Without this preparation, you will become a total stranger in the research

site. The language of the residents, may be the same as yours, but many terms will be Greek to you. (It is better to have a PO who can speak or understand the language or dialect of the sample community.)

Practice exercises or pretest. If you have neither done any conscious observation of any activity nor made a written report of it, schedule several sets of exercises to get the feel of the PO's job. Start in your home. Select the most active day and record everything that transpires during your family's waking hours. Include all activities and record gist of conversations, issues and problems that occur on that day. Read your written account to your family and solicit their comments on the reliability of your account.

Later, document an activity or a meeting of your club. Alternately go to any sari-sari store in your neighborhood and transcribe the verbal exchanges among the people present. Then, with the help of your PD (if the project has time and funds for this activity), conduct a pretest in a community whose residents more or less match the sample population. Aided by the suggestions in this manual, conduct the pretest or dry run as though it were real and not a mere exercise. The pretest should end with a written report of the observations. You and your PD should analyze your written work and discuss weak areas or points you missed in the report.

Familiarization with the project area. After obtaining some mastery of the subject matter and a working knowledge of a participant observer's job, familiarize yourself with the project area. Know its exact location, distance and accessibility from the nearest poblacion. Find out if published community data are available from the provincial or municipal statistics or development offices. You may also interview a key informant on community characteristics. A good source of key informants can be found in the marketplace nearest that sample community (go during market days). Sometimes drivers of transport vehicles plying the route from the marketplace to the research site know a lot about the sample community.

One of the many things which you should avoid is getting a "culture shock", especially if you have never been to a community similar to your project area. Get a clear picture of the resident's living patterns in the community you are going to live in for sometimes (Beals 1977, Wax 1971). Are there accommodations for board and lodging? Is water for drinking and other uses available? (Do not be surprised if a decent bath is not readily available.) Are there stores? Are there recreational facilities?

Preparation of ID, letters and clearances. Another activity which should be done before you go to the project area include preparing of identification documents and letters of introduction obtaining of clearances, and preparing personal belongings. The identification documents and the letters of introduction are completed in the office are signed by either the head of office or the PD. Sometimes a mere ID card would do but letters of introduction facilitate your entry in the project area. The letter of introduction is usually addressed to the barangay captain, an association official or both, and should preferably be written in the vernacular.

Clearances from the military (PC-INP), municipal and barangay officials are mandatory especially in areas considered to have critical peace and order situations. Personal presence of the head of office or the PD and the fieldworker are usually required by agencies issuing the clearance. Sometimes, however, a letter from your office head or PD which you personally deliver to the issuing office would suffice. See the provincial commander before going to the municipal mayor. If there is a military detachment near the project area, drop by that detachment before proceeding to the research site. These clearances should then be presented to the barangay captain of your project area.

Lastly, be properly equipped with personal things needed in fieldwork; i.e., clothes and supplies suited to your needs in the community. Get a checklist of all needed items so you would not miss any important ones. Medicine to safeguard your health and plastic envelopes or bags

to safeguard your documents should top your list.

The Tools of the Trade

Your basic tools in participant observation are pen, paper and an open mind. You can have your own choice of writing materials but a stenographer's notebook is advisable for its size and usability. The stenographer's notebook is small and light, the pages are not too wide, and the spaces for writing are just right. It could also be filed easily for later reference. Its cover is hard enough to serve as a writing board in places where there are no tables or writing desks. The red vertical marks in the middle of the pages are good margins for your notations. The short distance from your last work on the last line to the first word on the following line enables you to write not only phrases but maybe whole sentences of observed speakers. You should have at least two of these notebooks at anyone time. The first should be used as a field notebook and the second as a diary.

The field notebook. Always have your field notebook with you wherever you go and whatever you do in the project area. Never rely on recall or memory, even if you have a good one. The field notebook should contain every relevant data as you observe daily, including relevant conversations and interviews with informants. The entries in the notebook should be properly dated and recordings of views and opinions should be taken verbatim in the language and manner they were spoken.

The diary. The diary contains a more coherent account of your daily activities and observations. This is usually written at night before going to bed. The diary should be an orderly summary of the jottings contained in the field notebook. In this summary, delineate the different activities, issues and problems of the subject population in the project area. The diary should be kept in your residence to safeguard your data. Should you lose your field notes you could still rely on you diary for periodic reports.

Auxilliary tools. Would keeping track of all the sample population's activities, issues and problems be facilitated by a tape recorder? Pressing the record button and allowing the machine to do the documentation of verbal information is relatively easy but transcribing the recorded material is harder than you think it is. A tape recorder encourages habits of dependency and ultimately makes you an ineffective PO. The recorder does not document the behavioral reaction of the sample population. There are limitations too in what the machine can do. An accidental malfunction could lead you to nowhere.

The presence of a tape recorder in activities, meetings or interviews may have a negative effect on the participants or interviewees (Lynch and others 1974). People are sometimes wary of having their statements of opinions being recorded. This attitude could trigger lesser participation or make the participants less vocal about their opinions. The tape recorder is a good tool only if you are studying the spoken language of your sample.

One possible auxilliary tool of a participant observer is a camera. If you want to preserve an activity for posterity or think that the camera could graphically describe an event better than you do, you may take pictures of the activity. Few people are camera shy; most want their pictures taken. But you have to give them copies of the picture you have taken.

Desirable traits of a good PO. An "open mind" is one which is not preconditioned by biases and prejudices. Your mind should be like an empty film which records objects or impressions permanently. You should also be in good health to be able to record what you are supposed to observe. Be a keen observer who is conscious of everything you see, hear, smell and touch.

You should be neutral in issues. Never take sides during discussions. It is very hard to be a participant of an activity or discussion without being able to voice your opinion. If you really cannot avoid taking part, mention in your documentation whether your opinion was instrumental in the resolution of the issue.

You should be honest. Report only the facts and not manufactured data. You should have a facility of expression and a good writing ability so that your reports would be readable and interesting. You should be diligent and resourceful. You are your own supervisor and team leader so you should device a work schedule and adhere to it religiously. You should be patient enough to sit through lengthy activities or proceedings. You should, in short, show dedication in your work.

Fieldwork and Related Activities

In this section we will deal with fieldwork and other related activities, from moving into the project area to the actual observation and documentation of the different social, political or cultural processes in the sample community.

Moving into the project area. The preliminary data you gathered about the project area will help greatly when you begin actual entry into the community. Going into the community is easier if the transport vehicles reach that part of the countryside. If not, you have to hike fields, climb mountains, or cross bodies of water before reaching the project area.

If the project areas are relatively near and accessible, make a preparatory visit before bringing all your belongings and supplies. If the site is so remote and inaccessible, however, a preparatory visit is unnecessary.

When you disembark from the transport vehicle (at a point within, near or far from the project area), almost all eyes will be fixed on you. Your face and your bags will be objects of scrutiny by the nearby residents. Be amiable. Approach someone and ask where the barangay captain's house is. If the other person becomes inquisitive, do not hesitate to tell him in a nutshell about your purpose. Ask for specific directions. If you have to walk far, inquire randomly from people along the way to verify directions.

If neither the barangay captain nor his spouse is at home, locate the house of the nearest barangay councilman or someone in authority like a barangay *tanod*. Introduce yourself (show

your documents and letters) and explain further your purpose for coming to the community. Request the barangay official(s) to introduce you to someone who could provide you board and lodging. Never hope for free board and lodging in the community; times are hard, and sleeping and eating in another man's household for free is downright rude.

Looking for a place to stay. Personal safety should be the primary factor to consider in selecting a place to stay. The best and safest homes in the community usually belong to the barangay captain or other barangay officials. But do not stay with anyone who may deprive you from getting unbiased data. For example, you may withhold information on weak association president or the like. For health and practical reasons, choose a decent living quarter which is strategically located in the barangay. This means that your home should have, as much as possible, an equidistant radius to any point in the community where the sample population's activities frequently occur. In this way you will not miss meals or get enervated from frequent long walks.

Becoming a member of the community. Expect your initial days in the community to be the real test of your abilities: you have to adjust to the environment and lifestyle of the community, gather basic community and association-related data for your study, and perform the documentation process. However, do not be bothered by the thought of how to begin your PO work. Discard your feelings of being a stranger and cultivate a stance of being a part of your new community. Be one among them. Observe their habits and daily routines, their manner and performance in community life. Identify with them, think in their own terms. If the resident wear faded shirts and worn-out pants on special gatherings, for example do not wear your Sunday best. If they talk of how too much rainfall destroy their newly planted rice crops, do not give a discourse on the benefits of computers.

Request the barangay captain or association officials to introduce you to community

or association gatherings, so you could explain to them. Never get tired of explaining your job and your purpose in living with them because individual residents are wont to inquire about you and your work on your first encounter with them.

The spot map. Since you have to work alone, you will need a spot map to guide your way in the community. Spot maps are usually available from public school teachers who were involved in Operation Timbang of the Nutrition Program. Some barangay captains make spot maps, too. However, if there is no available copy, you will have to make your own. Ask the barangay captain or some knowledgeable persons to help you in preparing a spot map. Draw the physical features of the community indicating points of reference. Delineate the main roads or pathways. Do not forget the orientation (indicate where the North is). Then indicate the approximate location of all dwelling units with emphasis on the houses of key persons in your PO work.

Community data. Gathering the community data on your first week will be a great help to you in understanding other related information which you will encounter as you perform your job. (If you collected some data during your prefield activities, check them out for accuracy.) Concentrate on matters which have a direct relation to your job in the community. If your main work is observing farmers, you ought to have good background data on who farmers are, how many they are, what their tenure status are, how large their farmlots are, what crops they plant, and so on. Locate key informants (KI) such as community and association officials, teachers, line agency personnel and senior residents in the community.

History of the association. If your sample population has a formal organization, get its history. Why was the association organized? Who were the initiators? When was it organized? What were its accomplishments or failures? Is it registered with the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC)? If there is an existing copy of the by-laws and articles of incorporation,

obtain a copy so you could analyze how the organization operates.

Profile of association officials. You should know a lot more about association officials and other leaders or persons of influence in your research. Interview each of them personally and compile a profile of each of them. Gathering materials for their profiles, will enable you to know them personally, gauge their performance in association activities and proceedings, and measure the soundness of their discussions of association-related issues. Later, try to get to know everyone so that you could easily identify them in activities and meetings, and be able to credit a statement or opinion to the right person.

The spot map, the community data, the association's history and profile of leaders comprise the basic data set from which you could build on to enhance your job as a participant observer.

The task of observing activities may be easy, but writing your observations or confirming them with follow-up interviews is not as simple. In the next section we will discuss how to observe and gather information from specific activities. Here, at first, are some suggestions on data collection in general.

Notes on data gathering. There are two ways of gathering data. One is by observing activities or proceedings while your respondents are conscious that you are recording their opinions and activities. The other is collecting information indirectly, as when you go around the project area chatting with residents but subtly finding means to bridge gaps in your previously gathered data. In either case, immediate or on-the-spot recording in your fieldnotes of the information is a must.

Cultivate the habit of asking the appropriate questions. Never be satisfied with one answer. Do not confirm your data with just one or two sources, but with as many KI as possible. Resort to the "six W's" of a beat reporter: *Who, What, When, Where, Why* and *how*. Your questions should always be related to your

research. But in recording the answers, neither weed out nor interpret the information unless data analysis is a part of your job.

Never say to yourself that you know more than your respondents or KIs. Should they tell you to answer your own questions because you have been to college and they have not even finished the second grade, tell them that they know more about the subject matter of your conversation than you really do them (Lynch 1974). Always say that you are a student who wants to learn from them.

Adapt yourself to the local means of verbal and non-verbal communication. Know their idioms and body language. Be able to know whether they are cracking jokes or seriously discussing an issue. Know them not only by their names but also their aliases. If you master all of the above, you will never miss or misinterpret any information from them.

Engage in small talk or discuss any subject matter with your project population any time and place as you please, but inject research-related questions whenever possible. Say, for example: Yes, the association president's daughter is really pretty but speaking of something else, it is true that he is convening the board on Saturday afternoon?

Always review your fieldnotes at the end of each workday to ascertain whether you can read and understand what you jotted down during the day. Read your notes before writing the first word in your diary. Remember that the fieldnotes contain data recorded verbatim in the vernacular. The diary may be written in polished prose in some other language like English. Writing and reading the fieldnotes and writing the diary will make you a master of your collected data.

Notes on recording the data. A knowledge of stenography or speedwriting will greatly help in the on-the-spot recording or transcription of gathered information during activities and meetings. But do not worry if you do not have these secretarial skills; eventually you will devise your own speedwriting system to be able

to record the main points of every speaker in a meeting or interview. You should know how to use abbreviations and symbols (even personal ones as long as you could read them later) most of the time. Your entries may read like telegrams shortened even further but the meaning is retained. Whatever system you adopt will serve you best if you could read every stroke or word you write. Remember that you do not read every stroke of word you write. Remember that you do not record the spoken words alone. You also have to jot down the relevant behavior and reactions of anyone among the participants.

As stated earlier in this manual, your entries should be chronological. Do not leave blank pages between dates so that you do not inadvertently write on them data which should not be there. Have a consistent style of how you use the pages in your notebook. If you do not use the reverse side of a page, do that throughout. If you have large handwriting strokes, better skip every other line on the page to facilitate later deciphering of the handwriting.

Observing and documenting activities. Activities here include all group efforts conducted by some of all members of the sample population in the project area. For example, farming communities may engage in cleaning the irrigation canal, repairing the turnout, measuring the farmlot area and so on. You should not miss any relevant detail of each observed activity.

Prior knowledge of the day and time of the activity is a must. Always come early, ahead of almost everybody and be the last to leave after the activity. In observing the activity and taking down notes of your observations, always keep the six *W*'s answered in your mind. Below is a sample. Do not memorize them but observe how the "six-*W* approach" is used in data gathering. These questions are not meant to be asked of the participants if the answers to them could be obtained by merely looking and listening. The questions should not appear in your fieldnotes. They are simply your guide in obtaining complete and detailed data. Always aim

for a detailed data (Geertz 1973, Jocano 1983); leave the selection or weeding out of information to your PD.

Note that the questions could be categorized into: 1) nature/kind of activity (*What*); 2) place of activity (*Where*); 3) performers/participants in the activity (*Who*); 4) date, time and duration of the activity (*When*); 5) purpose of the activity (*Why*); and 6) conduct/action in the activity (*How*). All of them are important, but focus on the last two since they could lead you to the identification and development process of leadership and participant's reactions to that leadership.

The very first thing to remember about activities is its nature. What kind of activity is it? For example, cleaning the canal is a vague statement. Was the grass on the sides and top of the canal cut, was the silt at the canal bed removed, or both?

Where was the activity conducted? Was it held in sitio A by the turnout of lateral A or at the far end of the outlet canal in sitio B?

Who initiated the activity? Did the initiator or leader ask the general membership or only a few farmers whose farms would be benefited by the activity? Who were the actual participants in the activity? Were they the household heads, association members or proxies of members? Did someone record the attendance of the participants?

When and what time was the activity conducted? Who decided the venue and date? How long did the activity last?

Why was the activity conducted? Was the purpose attained at the end of the activity?

How did the participants perform in the activity? Did the participants come on time, all at about the same time, or one after the other? Did problems arise in the course of the activity? Was it resolved? How was it resolved? Was there a leader whose opinions or suggestions were followed by everyone or was a group decision attained? Did a non-participant come and tell the participants that they did the wrong thing at the wrong time? Was it a *bayanihan* activity

or were the participants paid in cash or in kind? Did they have a noon break and ate their lunch at home, or did they bring pack lunch and ate them in the field? If it was a *bayanihan*, did someone shoulder the cost of purchasing supplies? Did one or several persons take care of cooking the meals? And so on, depending on what data you want to document.

Observing and documenting meetings. The process of observing and documenting meetings is similar to that of observing and documenting activities. In both cases you have to pay particular attention to the smallest relevant detail. In activities, the participants' performance may be distributed in a wider area; in meetings, the participant's reactions are usually limited to a small space.

As in observing activities, the phrase to remember is: come early and stay behind. Why do you have to do that? You will find out later that Filipinos are very vocal in their opinions before and after formal meetings. Sometimes the group discussions before and after meetings are more relevant and substantial than what transpires in the actual meetings. Moreover, you will be able to trace the development of an issue better if you listen to the discussion before, during and after meetings.

Your fieldnotes should contain every relevant information regarding meetings. Be able to know how the meeting is planned, organized and conducted. Meetings are either set by provisions in the by-laws or requested by some members. It could be a regular meeting, a special meeting or a general assembly. Some meetings are either held several times or once during the year. Meetings could be postponed, rescheduled, and the like.

Meetings could last for a short while or for a whole day. It could start on schedule or not. Get the exact beginnings and endings of meetings to the last minute.

Get the total attendance from the first to the last arrival. Include guests and resource persons. Observe the performance of the presiding officer and all the other partici-

pants. Trace the emergence, development and resolution of issues. Record the disinterest shown by those who leave early, who converse on something else, or who fall asleep during the meeting. Get the reasons behind their behavior.

Deliberations in meetings depend on the items listed in the agenda. Know who prepared the agenda and observe whether all items were discussed.

Get a full documentation of the meetings. Do not rely on the minutes prepared by the secretary. Your notes should read like the script of a play with verbatim transcription of all the discussions. Write the work as it is spoken; do not translate on the spot. Do not edit or be selective in the taking down of notes for the points you missed might surface later as the most important item in the analysis of an issue.

For clarification of equivocal or vague statements, interview their proponents or sources after the meeting. But do not insist on what ought or should be. Record their clarification as is and mention the interview in your report.

If you study the preceding paragraphs you will realize that the declarative sentences express the what, where, who, when, why and how of meetings.

The role of interviews in PO work. Most of your interviewing would be unstructured, i.e., without the aid of any interview schedule. Your interviews would serve only to clarify or confirm data you have already gathered from observations in meetings and other activities of your sample population. You will realize after reading your fieldnotes or diary that there are some gaps or missing information in your collected data, that some issues are unclear or undefined, or that resolution of problems are not specific. To clarify matters you will have to interview some members of your sample population. Perhaps you only have the opinion of one group regarding an issue so you will have to interview other groups to present a complete picture of that particular issue.

Your interviews should be short and informal. For example, during a meeting someone mentions about a water management committee but it is never discussed further during that meeting. Naturally since it is the first time you heard about that committee you will have questions in your mind; among them: what is this committee? who are the members? when was it formed?

Here's an example: let us say that while you are on your way to the community store the following day, the president of the association is broadcasting fertilizer on his rice crop by the roadside. You greet him and add a word or two about his weed-free crop. The farmer rests for a minute or two just to return your greeting and acknowledge your concern for his crop. In a casual manner, ask him what is the water management committee, who are its members, and when was it organized? You thank him for that piece of information and go on your way after writing the data in your field notebook.

Fortunately, when you reach the *sari-sari* store, the chairman of the water management committee is fondling his gamecock. Again, in a genial manner, converse with him. Start perhaps your conversation about cockfighting and deftly manipulate the conversation till you talk of the committee. You ask the committee chairman now about the committee's functions, activities, and accomplishments. You, of course, will record that conversation in your notebook.

The next day when you go to the creek to take a bath, one of the committee members, a woman, is washing clothes. While she is doing the laundry and you are taking a bath in the open, confirm from her the data you obtained from the committee chairman. With a few more statements of confirmation from other committee members, you now have a substantial data about the water management committee. However, do not confine your conversations with the other members, only to confirm previous data. Try to get other related information from them, too.

Even if you have to interview others for a more important, delicate or urgent matter, do it

in a more relaxed manner and under comfortable conditions. Conduct the interview in a conducive place and in private. If you are not expected (no previous appointment) and the respondent is busy, do not interrupt his activity. Wait until he is through or come back later unless, of course, he willingly rests from his work and entertains you. But since you reside in the community, you will know your respondent's daily routine and can easily catch him during the most appropriate time. Do not conduct a lengthy and formal interview unless your respondent is so busy that he is rarely available, and has very little time to meet and talk with you. In this case you will have to make an appointment with him and during the interview ask him everything you want to know from him. However, a long interview is not necessary since you are personally keeping tab of the activities, issues and problems of your sample population regularly.

Some finer points of interviewing. We have assumed so far that you have done some basic interviewing in the past and know basic interviewing techniques. However, if this is the first time that you will be doing interviews, especially unstructured ones, it is well to note some additional tips on interviewing.

Since we have discussed earlier how to approach your respondent and set the stage for an interview session, we will focus on the interview itself. Prepare or condition your respondent for the subject matter of your question. Do not shoot the question directly and abruptly to him. Give him one or several introductory statements before asking the question. The introductory statement will enable him to understand what you really wanted to know and therefore give you a better reply.

Your question should not be vague or too broad. Break them down into simpler units and ask each individual unit to your respondent. Do not ask: What do you think about issues A, B, and C and why? Say: Issue A is like this (explain): what is your opinion regarding this issue? After he has stated his personal opinion, you can now ask him why he has that opinion. Repeat this process for the other issues.

Be attentive to your respondent's reply. Nod your head once in a while or show other visual and oral indications that you understood him (Lynch and others 1974). After he has finished explaining, summarize his main points and let him confirm your summary to ascertain whether you understood fully what he wanted to convey to you. Be as conversational and informal as possible, not too overbearing or authoritative like a court examiner in a legal proceeding. And lastly, your interviews should always be terminated with a genuine expression of appreciation and gratitude to your respondent for having given you the chance to talk with him and to share his opinions with you (Lynch and others 1974).

Data from secondary sources. When you fail to be present in some meetings or activities of your sample population, you will have to resort to secondary sources for your data. Secondary sources like minutes of meetings, committee reports, witnesses' accounts and other official documents should not be taken at their face value. Verify the authenticity and reliability of the documents. Interview persons who participated in the preparation of the documents or persons who were participants in the reported activity. In verifying contents of minutes, you will have to talk with the presiding officer, the secretary, the proponents of resolutions and some participants of the meeting. Personal testimonies should be corroborated by other witnesses of the activity. This means that you should not rely on one witness' account but on several testimonies. Dissenting opinion(s) or different version(s) should be included in your documentation. Their proponents or sources, and their reasons for dissenting or stating otherwise, should also be documented.

Writing the Report

Writing the report is an integral part of your PO work. The data you gathered from observation is useless unless it is orderly and clearly written. And only you have the capacity and the time to prepare an extensive account of the activities, issues and problems which surfaced

during the period covered by the report. If you have not written a single word before for public consumption you might have a hard time writing your report. But practice, perseverance and the desire to present a good coherent report will eventually make a better writer out of you.

The format. The format of the written report is usually determined by your PD in consonance with the manner stipulated in the project proposal. However, the format is not usually permanent. Succeeding reports might evolve into something better and easily manageable to suit the purpose for which the report is written.

The report can be written in many different ways. The most basic and simple way is to edit your diary and present the data chronologically, leaving the selection and integration of relevant data to the user/editor. This is similar to the facts and figures submitted by a beat reporter to the deskman. The latter writes the whole story from the reported data. If your PD has the time to do the more technical writing of the report, he may only require you to submit the data you gathered chronologically like an edited logbook. One possible variation of this kind of reporting is picking only the relevant issues, activities and problems that transpired during the period covered by the report, and presenting them in a chronological manner or in a narrative and descriptive account of all activities, issues and problems.

Another way of presenting your report is writing the documentation of all activities, meetings and interviews as they were conducted. In this manner your report would appear like a transcription of a court proceedings or a script with a detailed description of behavioral activities. If your study is interested in the actual interaction of all the sample population or how each member of the population react to certain activities, issues and problems, then a detailed documentation of all activities, meetings and interviews will be desirable.

Ideally, a good report should have a summary, a detailed discussion of the development of each activity, problem and issue and a docu-

mentation of each activity, meeting and interview conducted during the period of the report.

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Your interviews should be short and informal. For example, during a meeting someone mentions about a water management committee but it is never discussed further during that meeting. Naturally since it is the first time you heard about that committee you will have questions in your mind; among them: what is this committee? who are the members? when was it formed?

Here's an example: let us say that while you are on your way to the community store the following day, the president of the association is broadcasting fertilizer on his rice crop by the roadside. You greet him and add a word or two about his weed-free crop. The farmer rests for a minute or two just to return your greeting and acknowledge your concern for his crop. In a casual manner, ask him what is the water management committee, who are its members, and when was it organized? You thank him for that piece of information and go on your way after writing the data in your field notebook.

Fortunately, when you reach the *sari-sari* store, the chairman of the water management committee is fondling his gamecock. Again, in a genial manner, converse with him. Start perhaps your conversation about cockfighting and deftly manipulate the conversation till you talk of the committee. You ask the committee chairman now about the committee's functions, activities, and accomplishments. You, of course, will record that conversation in your notebook.

The next day when you go to the creek to take a bath, one of the committee members, a woman, is washing clothes. While she is doing the laundry and you are taking a bath in the open, confirm from her the data you obtained from the committee chairman. With a few more statements of confirmation from other committee members, you now have a substantial data about the water management committee. However, do not confine your conversations with the other members, only to confirm previous data. Try to get other related information from them, too.

Even if you have to interview others for a more important, delicate or urgent matter, do it

in a more relaxed manner and under comfortable conditions. Conduct the interview in a conducive place and in private. If you are not expected (no previous appointment) and the respondent is busy, do not interrupt his activity. Wait until he is through or come back later unless, of course, he willingly rests from his work and entertains you. But since you reside in the community, you will know your respondent's daily routine and can easily catch him during the most appropriate time. Do not conduct a lengthy and formal interview unless your respondent is so busy that he is rarely available, and has very little time to meet and talk with you. In this case you will have to make an appointment with him and during the interview ask him everything you want to know from him. However, a long interview is not necessary since you are personally keeping tab of the activities, issues and problems of your sample population regularly.

Some finer points of interviewing. We have assumed so far that you have done some basic interviewing in the past and know basic interviewing techniques. However, if this is the first time that you will be doing interviews, especially unstructured ones, it is well to note some additional tips on interviewing.

Since we have discussed earlier how to approach your respondent and set the stage for an interview session, we will focus on the interview itself. Prepare or condition your respondent for the subject matter of your question. Do not shoot the question directly and abruptly to him. Give him one or several introductory statements before asking the question. The introductory statement will enable him to understand what you really wanted to know and therefore give you a better reply.

Your question should not be vague or too broad. Break them down into simpler units and ask each individual unit to your respondent. Do not ask: What do you think about issues A, B, and C and why? Say: Issue A is like this (explain): what is your opinion regarding this issue? After he has stated his personal opinion, you can now ask him why he has that opinion. Repeat this process for the other issues.

Be attentive to your respondent's reply. Nod your head once in a while or show other visual and oral indications that you understood him (Lynch and others 1974). After he has finished explaining, summarize his main points and let him confirm your summary to ascertain whether you understood fully what he wanted to convey to you. Be as conversational and informal as possible, not too overbearing or authoritative like a court examiner in a legal proceeding. And lastly, your interviews should always be terminated with a genuine expression of appreciation and gratitude to your respondent for having given you the chance to talk with him and to share his opinions with you (Lynch and others 1974).

Data from secondary sources. When you fail to be present in some meetings or activities of your sample population, you will have to resort to secondary sources for your data. Secondary sources like minutes of meetings, committee reports, witnesses' accounts and other official documents should not be taken at their face value. Verify the authenticity and reliability of the documents. Interview persons who participated in the preparation of the documents or persons who were participants in the reported activity. In verifying contents of minutes, you will have to talk with the presiding officer, the secretary, the proponents of resolutions and some participants of the meeting. Personal testimonies should be corroborated by other witnesses of the activity. This means that you should not rely on one witness' account but on several testimonies. Dissenting opinion(s) or different version(s) should be included in your documentation. Their proponents or sources, and their reasons for dissenting or stating otherwise, should also be documented.

Writing the Report

Writing the report is an integral part of your PO work. The data you gathered from observation is useless unless it is orderly and clearly written. And only you have the capacity and the time to prepare an extensive account of the activities, issues and problems which surfaced

during the period covered by the report. If you have not written a single word before for public consumption you might have a hard time writing your report. But practice, perseverance and the desire to present a good coherent report will eventually make a better writer out of you.

The format. The format of the written report is usually determined by your PD in consonance with the manner stipulated in the project proposal. However, the format is not usually permanent. Succeeding reports might evolve into something better and easily manageable to suit the purpose for which the report is written.

The report can be written in many different ways. The most basic and simple way is to edit your diary and present the data chronologically, leaving the selection and integration of relevant data to the user/editor. This is similar to the facts and figures submitted by a beat reporter to the deskman. The latter writes the whole story from the reported data. If your PD has the time to do the more technical writing of the report, he may only require you to submit the data you gathered chronologically like an edited logbook. One possible variation of this kind of reporting is picking only the relevant issues, activities and problems that transpired during the period covered by the report, and presenting them in a chronological manner or in a narrative and descriptive account of all activities, issues and problems.

Another way of presenting your report is writing the documentation of all activities, meetings and interviews as they were conducted. In this manner your report would appear like a transcription of a court proceedings or a script with a detailed description of behavioral activities. If your study is interested in the actual interaction of all the sample population or how each member of the population react to certain activities, issues and problems, then a detailed documentation of all activities, meetings and interviews will be desirable.

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