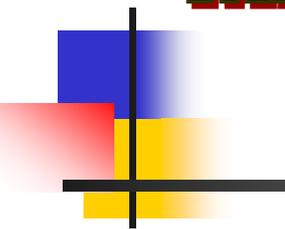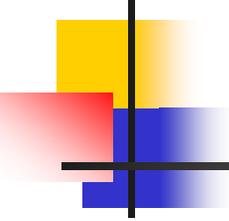# MANAGING A RESEARCH CENTER
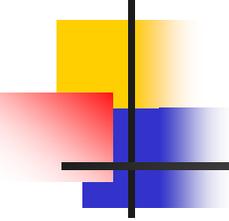
Trinidad S. Osteria

Yuchengco Center

De La Salle University

Taft Avenue, Manila

March, 2005

OUTLINE OF PRESENTATION

1. Constituent activities of a Research Center
2. Research Definition
3. Mission of Research Center – SDRC and YC
4. Tasks of a Research Center
5. Duties and Responsibilities of a Research Center Manager
6. Identification of Thematic Concerns

COMPONENTS OF A RESEARCH CENTER

A. **Administrative Structure**

B. **Research**

C. **Publications and Conferences**

D. **Training**

Attributes of A Research Manager

* Adoption of new approaches
* Preoccupation with substantive concerns
* Capacity to generate research funding
* Ensuring quality proposals and reports
* Focus, integration and collaboration
* Established track record
* Linkages
  - in implementation
  - in dissemination
* Quality publications
* Relevant conferences

■ **Summary**
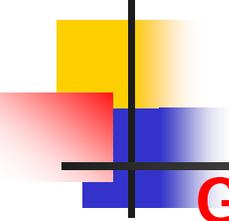
RESEARCH DEFINED

Generation and application of new knowledge to meet the challenges facing the country. It:

- Identifies and addresses problems crucial to the country and the region;
- Applies technical skills in responding to the objectives set in the research;
- Builds capacity to undertake research and adopt innovations;
- Fosters alliances and knowledge sharing between academics, development communities and end users.

The Research Center is the venue where the above functions are fulfilled.
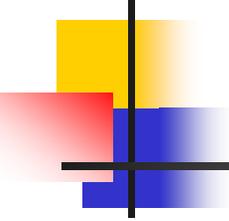
RESEARCH HAS EVOLVED:

- **From the basic narrative and descriptive format that characterized basic research in the 60s**
- **From the baseline studies that identify problems**
- **Preoccupation with literature review presenting the depth and breadth of previous studies**

Into:

- **More analytical approaches with the endview of utilizing the results**
- **More innovative approaches that veer from the diagnostic into the more intervention-oriented**
- **More comprehensive approaches that bring together various studies to arrive at a meaningful whole.**

MISSION:

Examples: SDRC - A COMMITMENT TO DEVELOPMENT

The Social Development Research Center of De La Salle University was established in 1979 as the Integrated Research Center. Firmly committed to the development of the Philippines and its people, the SDRC believes that research should be:
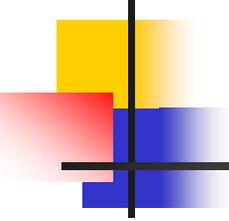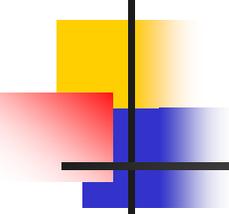
cont….SDRC A Commitment to Development

RELEVANT – responding to the needs of the country and the region not only as articulated by government but as perceived by scholars and development-oriented individuals;

APPROPRIATE – undertaking studies creatively designed, conducted and interpreted in the context of Philippine and Asian society;

POLICY-ORIENTED – involving policy makers in the public and private sectors and influencing their decisions in the planning and implementation of programs;

RESPONSIBLE – gathering and reporting data by objectively safeguarding the interests of respondents so that information given in confidence will not be used against them;

MULTIDISCIPLINARY – contributing to the development and enrichment of disciplines being taken together in a holistic framework

SDRC engages in collaborative research efforts and other relevant activities with other research institutions in the country and the Asian region. It also networks with government and non-government agencies in various areas. It conducts training and programs in health-related research and serves as clearing house and information center in areas related to upland resource, STD/HIV/AIDS and reproductive health.
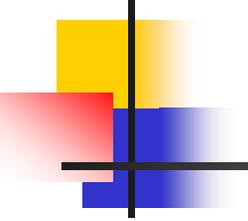
YUCHENGCO CENTER MISSION

- **Enhancement of public knowledge and awareness on political, economic and social policy concerns in the Philippines and Southeast Asia.**

- **Strengthening of the Center's role as a 'think tank' where policy results are regularly fed to and end users for evidence-based legislation, policy-making and programming.**
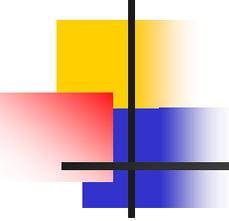
WHAT A RESEARCH CENTER IS SUPPOSED TO UNDERTAKE

- Conduct and dissemination of researches on relevant concerns;

- Organization of seminars and conferences on important issues; documentation of experiences and publication of papers, books and materials for evidence-based legislation, policy-making and programming;

- Examination of the policy environment in the Philippines and constituent countries of Asia and the extent to which it influences governments and civil society in addressing current and emerging needs; and

- Education and training of academics in the Philippines and in neighboring countries on the principles and mechanics of research, fiscal management and results-based management, as well as project design, monitoring and evaluation.
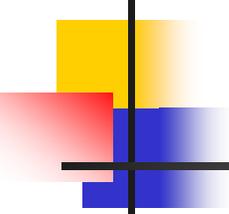
WHAT A PROACTIVE RESEARCH CENTER (IN THE 21ST CENTURY) IMPLIES:

- ❑ Forging research and information exchange linkages with research and academic institutions in the country and in the region;

- ❑ Sharpening its focus through research, conferences, publications, training, and other aligned activities that will deal with important issues;

- ❑ Establishing interactive connections with agencies that can strengthen the center's role as a "think tank" and where policy results can be regularly fed to the end users for evidence-based legislation, policy-making, and programming (local governments, sectoral departments, and non-government organizations)
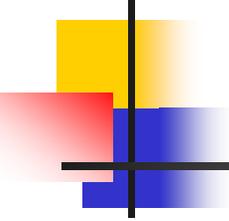
cont….What A Proactive Research Center (in the 21st Century) Implies:

- ❑ Expanding the thematic areas covered by taking an active stance in identifying emerging concerns;

- ❑ Compiling, consolidating, distilling and publicizing the policy implications of the Center's researches and publications to delineate its contribution to knowledge, policy and national development; and

- ❑ Streamlining the Center's management and operational procedures through the preparation of an operations manual and the rationalization of its administrative structure.
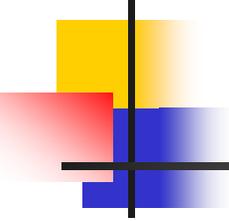
SDRC

As SDRC reaches its eighteenth year of operation, there is a gradual shift toward more development-oriented researches that run the gamut of policy preoccupations to the conduct of micro-level programs using participatory mechanisms. The aims of the present research activities are as follows:
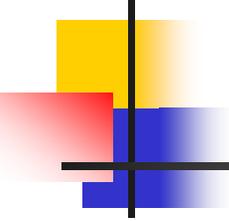
1. To undertake an analysis and review of national and social development policies and programs as they pertain to health, education, welfare services, environment, housing, forestry and other relevant concerns;

2. To gain more insights into the antecedents, processes and consequences of existing social phenomena as they relate to poverty, social equity, empowerment, and women's welfare such as reproductive health and gender equality;

3. To address the concerns of the urban poor and the marginalized communities through the assessment of their needs, their involvement in development programs such as health education and housing, and the evaluation of impact of such initiatives on welfare.
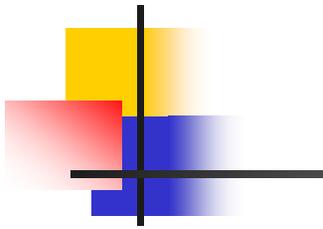
4. To link with relevant organizations and institutions in the country in producing a data bank and clearing house for information on uplands development; AIDS, HIV, and STD; local governance; and reproductive health as well as establish networks for seminars and communal researches;

5. To develop programs for the elderly that are locally initiated;

6. To serve as the coordinating center for the Asian region for researches relevant to social policy development such as decentralization, and people's participation; and

7. To provide extension services through training and community programs to others units within the university, non-government organizations, and relevant government agencies in addressing pertinent social concerns through research.
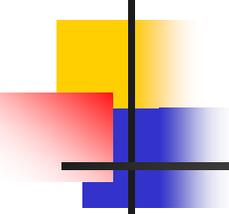
DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF A RESEARCH CENTER MANAGER

1. Administers the general operations of the office, including, its daily operations, convening and presiding in meetings of researchers and board of trustees/advisory board, and the safeguarding of its resources;

2. Supervises the Center personnel, enhances human resources development, conducts periodic performance appraisals, determines and regulates salary and incentive schemes and prescribes work schedules and plans;

3. Develops the administrative structure and the tasks/responsibilities of the staff; supervises the staff; and institutes modifications, if necessary;
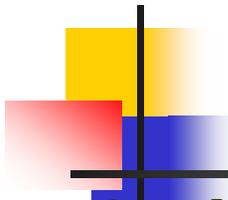
4. Networks with relevant organizations and funding agencies to generate external grants for the Center;

5. Drafts research proposals and responds to commissioned researches from funding agencies;

6. Prepares reports and documents, such as annual plan of activities and quarterly reports reports for submission to the Board of Trustees;

7. Represents the Center in official functions including conferences, and establishment of national and international linkages with research centers, foundations, and other institutions and individuals in the pursuit of the mission and vision of the Center; and

8. Executes other duties and responsibilities deemed necessary in the performance of the position of President of the Center, or as conferred through a resolution of the Board of Trustees.
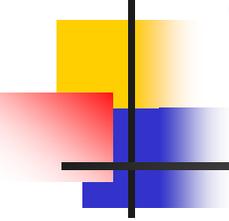
TYPES OF RESEARCH PROJECTS

a. **Internally funded** – emanating from the budget of the Center

b. **Commissioned researches** – those requested and duly funded by external agencies

c. **Externally funded projects** – those that are submitted for funding and accepted
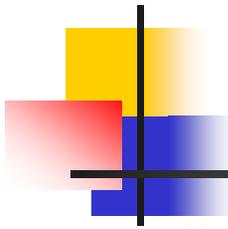
IDENTIFICATION OF THEMATIC CONCERNS (Yuchengco Center)

- ❖ Globalization and trade liberalization

- ❖ Regional security and foreign relations

- ❖ Governance and democratization

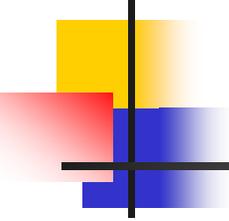- ❖ Human security including health and education
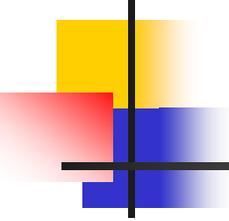
IDENTIFICATION OF THEMATIC CONCERNS (SDRC)

❖ **Participatory Uplands Management**
❖ **Health**

    - Community-based programs
    - Quality of Care

❖ **Reproductive Health**
❖ **Social Policy**
❖ **Cultural Duality**
❖ **Population**
❖ **Decentralization**
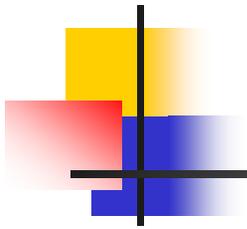
ATTRIBUTES

OF AN EFFICIENT RESEARCH CENTER

A. ENSURING THAT THE CENTER'S RESEARCHES ARE AT THE CUTTING EDGE OF DEVELOPMENT THROUGH:

- **Adoption of new approaches (multi-disciplinary, participatory, operational, action-oriented;**

- **More integrative and holistic e.g.**

  * triangulation which incorporates both quantitative and qualitative analyses to arrive at more meaningful conclusions

  * meta analysis – within a holistic and integrative framework, Incorporates the results of several studies considered to be combinable to arrive at more conclusive findings related to a particular issue. It is defined as the compilation of evidence based on different sources to arrive at a results based generalization.
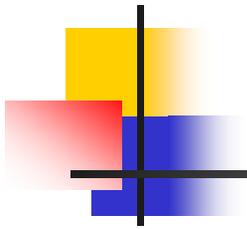
Strategy for identifying the relevant studies should be clearly delineated. In particular, it has to be decided whether the search will be extended to include unpublished studies, as their results may systematically differ from published results.
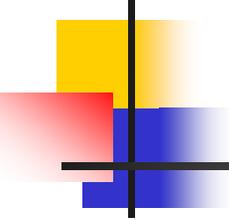
Summary Points in Meta-Analysis

Meta-analysis should be as carefully planned as any other research project, with a detailed written protocol being prepared in advance.

The priori definition of eligibility criteria for studies to be included and a comprehensive search for such studies are central to high quality meta-analysis

The graphical display of results from individual studies on a common scale is an important intermediate step, which allows a visual examination of the degree of heterogeneity between studies
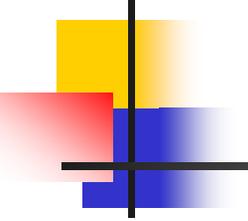
- Use of more sophisticated software for data analysis e.g., multiple classification analysis, path analysis, discriminant functions, orthogonal polynomials, log linear regression to identify predictors;

- More logical and rational approach in literature review for clear delineation of research agenda;

- Qualitative research reveals a target audience's range of beliefs, perceptions that drive it with reference to specific topics or issues. It uses wide studies of small groups of people to guide and support the construction of instruments. The results of qualitative research are descriptive rather than predictive.
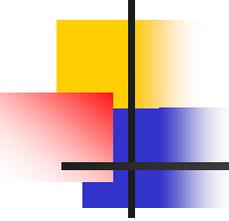
Qualitative research methods originated in the social and behavioral sciences anthropology and psychology. Today, qualitative methods in the fields of major research include in-depth interviews with individuals, group discussions, diary and journal exercises, and in-context observations may be conducted in person, by telephone, via video conferencing.

Why Qualitative Research Works
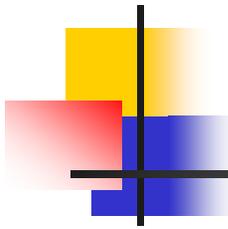
Several unique aspects of qualitative research contribute to rich, insightful events.

- Synergy among respondents, as they build on each other's comments.
- The dynamic nature of the interview or group discussion process by respondents more actively than is possible in more structured system.
- The opportunity to probe ("Help me understand why you feel that way) enables the researcher to reach beyond initial responses and rationales.
- The opportunity to observe, record and interpret non-verbal communication, body language, voice intonation as part of a respondent's feedback is valuable during interviews or discussion, and during analysis.
- The opportunity to engage respondents in "play" such as projections and exercises, overcoming the self-consciousness that can inhibit reactions and comments.
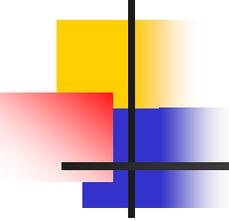
What Research Is Not

- **Mere information gathering.**
- **Mere transportation of facts from one location to another. Collecting data, assembling a bibliography, referencing statements do not add up to a true research. What is missed is the essence of the research: the interpretation of the data to draw conclusions.**
- **Merely rummaging for information.**
- **A catchword to get attention e.g. Years of Research Produced a New Care Wash! (How good is the research?)**
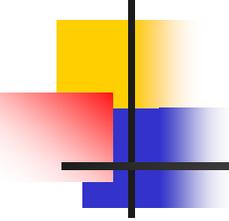
What Research Is

- ❖ **Originates with a question or problem**;
- ❖ **Requires a clear articulation of a goal**;
- ❖ **Follows a specific plan of procedure**;
- ❖ **Usually divides the principal problem into more manageable subproblems**;
- ❖ **Guided by the specific research problem, question, or hypothesis**;
- ❖ **Accepts certain critical assumptions**;
- ❖ **Requires the collection and interpretation of data in attempting to resolve the problem that initiated the research; and**
- ❖ **By its nature, cyclical; or more exactly, helical.**
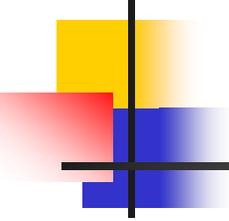
B.   PREOCCUPATION WITH SUBSTANTIVE CONCERNS

Research is undertaken for two reasons:

1. Validation of existing methodologies or development of new approaches

2. Contribution to knowledge and development
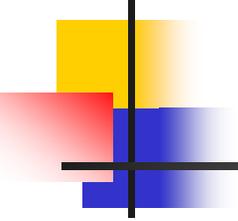
1. *Within the Philippine context, current development research preoccupations are directed toward:*

a) **Millennium development goals:**

In September, 2000 at the Millennium Summit, the Member States of the United Nations issued the Millennium Declaration, committing themselves to a series of targets, most of which are to be achieved by 2015. Known as the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), they represent a framework for achieving human development and broadening its benefits.
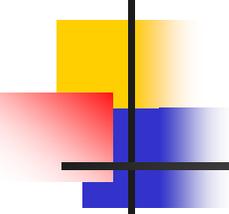
Goal 1 Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger

Goal 2 Achieve universal primary education

**Goal 3** Promote gender equality and empower women

Goal 4 Reduce child mortality

Goal 5 Improve maternal health

Goal 6 Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases

Goal 7 Ensure environmental sustainability

Goal 8 Develop a global partnership for development
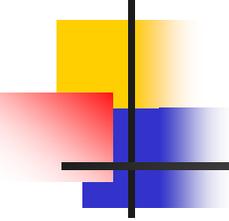
b) Rural Development Research

Seven out of ten poor people in the world live in rural areas. Reducing global poverty therefore requires thorough understanding of the factors and institutions that generate and perpetuate rural poverty, and an assessment of policies and interventions designed to support poor people in rural areas in improving their lives. The World Bank rural development research program seeks to address these needs. It is empirical in orientation, with a focus on policies and investments undertaken by governments and supported by development agencies.
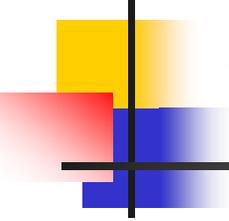
c) Action Research

Action research within the context of education is inquiry or research in the context of focused efforts to improve the quality of education and its impact. It typically is designed and conducted by practitioners who analyze the data to improve their own practice. Action research can be done by individuals or by teams of colleagues. The team approach is called *collaborative inquiry*.
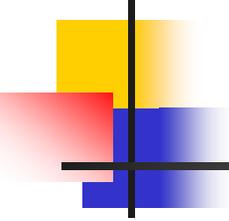
Action research has the potential to generate genuine and sustained improvements in schools. It gives educators new opportunities to reflect on and assess their teaching; to explore and test new ideas, methods, and materials; to assess how effective the new approaches were; to share feedback with fellow team members; and to make decisions about which new approaches to include in the team's curriculum, instruction and assessment plan.
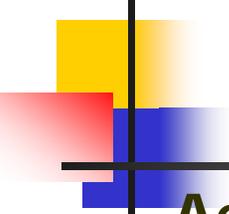
Action research can be described as a family of research methodologies which pursue action (or change) and research (or understanding) at the same time. In most of its forms, it does this by:

- using a cyclic or spiral process which alternates between action and critical reflection; and

- in the later cycles, continuously refining methods, data and interpretation in the light of the understanding developed in the earlier cycles.
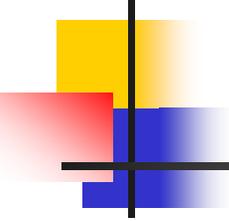
It is thus an *emergent* process which takes shape as understanding increases; it is an *iterative* process which converges towards a better understanding of what happens.

In most of its forms, it is also participative (among other reasons, change is usually easier to achieve when those affected by the change are involved) and qualitative.
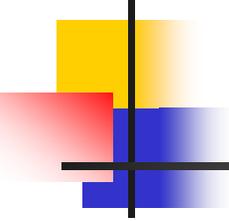
d)   Operations Research (Time and Motion Studies)

Though there is no "official definition" of Operational Research ("Operations Research) it can be described as a scientific approach to the solution of problems in the management of complex systems. In a rapidly changing environment, an understanding is sought which will facilitate the choice and the implementation of more effective solutions which, typically involve complex interactions among people, materials and money.
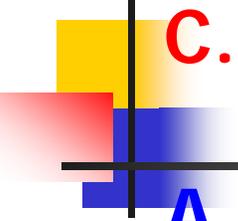
C. **CAPACITY TO GENERATE RESEARCH FUNDING**

## A. **Sources of Funding**

a. **International Agencies**
- Multilateral e.g. World Bank, UN
- Country based e.g. CIDA, AIDABUSAID, SIDA, Asia Foundation
- Private agencies e.g. Bill Gates, McArthur, Packard, Stifftungs

b. **National**
- Government (NIST, departments)
- Academic institutions (university research offices) in state institutions

c. **Academic Institutions**
- University research offices
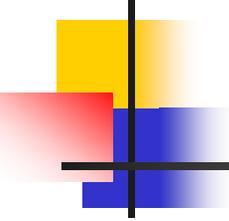
B. Truisms in Research Funding

Provision of funds is guided by the agency's thematic priorities. Such priorities enable the agency to respond to the most pressing issues in the country.

e.g. *Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation* supports programmes that focus on diseases and health conditions that have the greatest burden in the developing world – HIV, TB, malaria, reproductive health, maternal health, child health and nutrition.
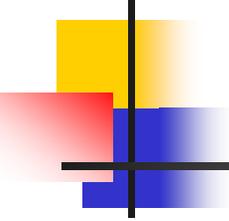
Friedrich Ebert Stiftung promotes democracy and social justice through empowering marginalized social sectors and groups to present their interest in socio-economic and political decision making.

Hans Seidel Foundation has been active in the Philippines since 1979, extending development assistance mainly in the field of human resource development ranging from training and education, research and publications, to project development.
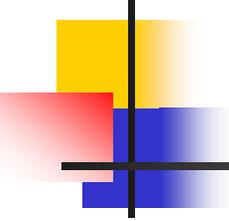
In the past 24 years, the Foundation's operations in the Philippines have largely contributed to the following national objectives:

- developing rural cooperatives
- training of professionals and skilled workers
- fostering 'values education' at all levels of the education and social system
- orienting the business sector towards the common good
- enhancing partnership between government and the private sector
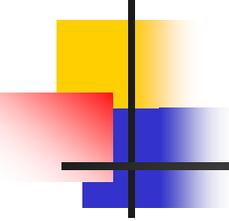
In line with the Philippine government's goal of poverty reduction, good governance, global competitiveness and food security through modernized agriculture, HSF undertakes developmental activities that promote self-reliance by helping people help themselves to ensure long-term economic impact.
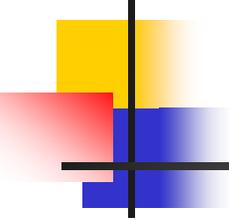
Provision of funds is guided by the amount of money available for research and how it is distributed according to priorities.

Different funding agencies have different mechanisms for project proposal submission e.g. in some cases, a concept paper is required before a full blown proposal is developed (IDRC).

In other examples, in the call for proposals, the format is already specified (Japan Foundation).
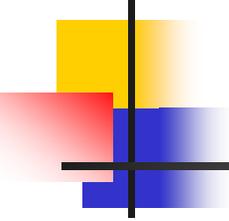
Other funding agencies are committed only to certain components of the project e.g. equipment (Japan Cultural Foundation).

Different funding agencies have different funding cycles (e.g. Japan Foundation provides funds for implementation in April).
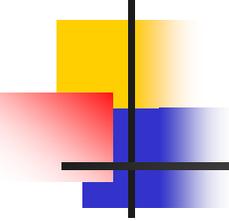
D. ENSURING QUALITY PROPOSALS AND REPORTS

1. Standard Content of Preliminary Proposals

The following guidelines may require some adaptation on a case-by-case basis depending on the funder, but the standard proposal should contain these elements:

- **Background and Literature Review**
- **Problem justification**: What is the problem your researcher seeks to address, and why is it important?
- **Objectives**: What are the objectives against which the project's success or failure could be assessed (general and specific)
- **Methodology**: How will each of these objectives be achieved?
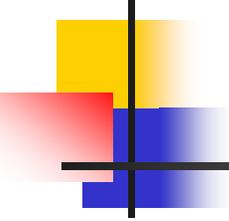
Results and Dissemination: What are the expected output of the research, and how will these be disseminated? What possible development impacts can reasonably be anticipated?

Institution and personnel: Who will carry out the work and administer grant funds, and what are their qualifications for doing so?

Timetable and budget: What resources and time are required to achieve the project's objectives?

Evaluation: How will the project's achievements be evaluated?
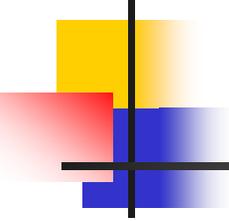
E. FOCUS, INTEGRATION AND COLLABORATION

Most funders nowadays supports fewer stand-alone projects from individual researchers than it once did. It increasingly strives to achieve a critical mass of knowledge on particular topics that concern the organization. This requires a degree of focus and integration that is often obtained by organizing larger research programs or <u>networks</u>. Increasingly, this is done in collaboration with other donors
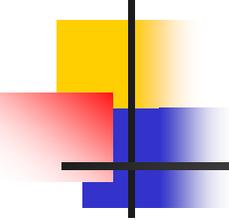
Where essential, some funding agencies (IDRC, WHO) may provide funds to help lay the groundwork for project initiatives. For example, they may provide travel funds for researchers in different locations to meet and finalize their joint submission, in collaboration with a funding agency representative. This category of funds is only available for out-of-pocket costs, not for salaries or fees.
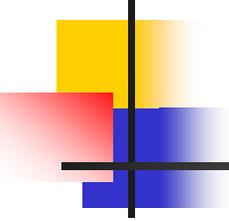
EVALUATION OF PROPOSALS OR IDEAS

A proposal is evaluated according to a wide range of criteria that assess a project's scientific and technical merit and its potential impact on development problems. These criteria reflect both the funding agency's overall objectives and the different priorities of its programs and regional offices.
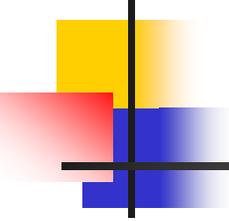
Development relevance: Is the proposal consistent with development goals that have been identified by policy makers or other development actors in the country? Are the research findings likely to be applicable in the country? Does the project have the potential to influence larger development agendas? Will the execution and success of the project promote sustainable and equitable development? Will the work help to empower vulnerable or disadvantaged groups?

Fit with Funding Agency's Priorities: How well does the project fit within funder's current programs? Are there important synergies with other funder's projects?
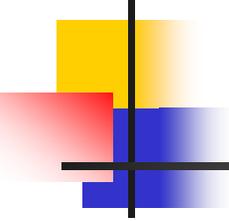
Scientific and technical merit: Is the importance of the research problem convincingly demonstrated? Are the project objectives clear and easy to conceptualize in operational terms? Do these flow convincingly from analysis of the problem? Is the methodology proposed appropriate and convincing for achieving project's objectives? Are the budget and the timetable realistic?

Capacity- building: Will the project contribute to the development of local research capacity? Will the recipient institution be strengthened as a result of the project? Does the project promote South-South cooperation?
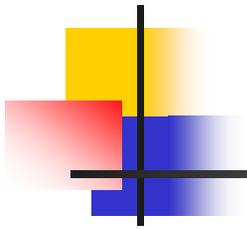
Gender considerations: Do the design and methodology of the project take into account different gender roles, perspectives, interests and priorities? Is the project's potential impact assessed from a perspective that recognizes gender inequalities and imbalances? Will data be broken down by gender? Do the project's capacity-building features reflect gender considerations?
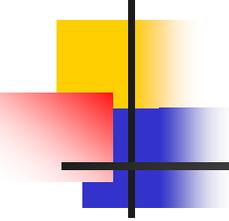
Ethical considerations: Does the project raise any ethical issues affecting those who will be involved in the project, where there could be a negative impact on their health, right to privacy, financial circumstances, or any other matter of significance to them? What measures are suggested to ensure the research will be conducted in such a manner as to minimize any such risks and that participants will give free, informed consent to their participation?

Human and institutional resources: Have the proponents of the project succeeded in mobilizing the necessary collaboration and interest to ensure the success of the project and the most effective use of financial resources?
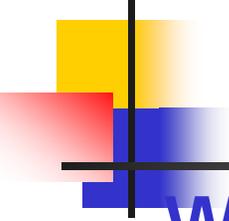
F. ESTABLISHED TRACK RECORD

Who are you?

One of the best indicators of future performance is past performance. Show the funding agency past studies or projects that you have completed or are currently working on. Focus on past performances, include evaluation, and let your potential funders talk with past clients. Sharing a portfolio of your work is very professional, and it allows potential support based on the good work you have done.

Once the funding agency is satisfied with your qualifications, they need to know what you are going to do and how you are going accomplish it. Your proposal needs to present methodologically the steps of the project, explain specific ideas and any options so that your institution can meet their needs better than anyone else's.
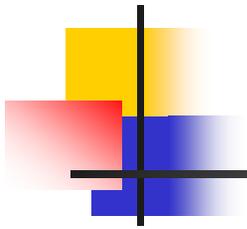
QUALIFICATIONS

Here is where you blow your own horn. You may recount similar and successful experiences with other studies or describe special skills or procedures. You may summarize your education or special certification. In fact, anything that supports or underscores your qualification to undertake the project and bring it to a successful conclusion will help. In preparing this section, relevance and brevity are the watchwords.
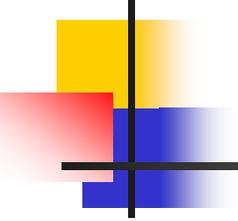
G. LINKAGES

Linkages are forged in several ways:

1. **Design and implementation of projects**
2. **Dissemination of results**

   a. **North-South linkage (developed-developing countries links) where technical cooperation and support are developed**

   b. **South-South linkage among developing groups (thru same researches in different geographic areas (UNFPA)**
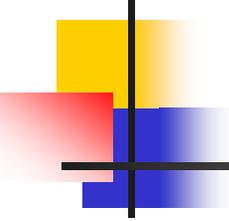
In the above modalities, a research framework is developed. Research instruments, data collection and analysis are standardized. Roles and responsibilities are delineated. Updates are given during monitoring meetings of entities involved.
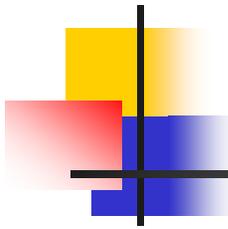
Linkage with end users for utilization of findings (Publications and Conferences)

Modalities for Research Dissemination

1. **What is meant by research dissemination?**

    Dissemination is the process of sharing information and knowledge. The challenge of dissemination is to improve the accessibility of research findings to the intended audience. This means, firstly, to ensure the physical availability of research materials to as large a proportion of the target audience as possible; and secondly, to make research findings comprehensive to those who receive them.
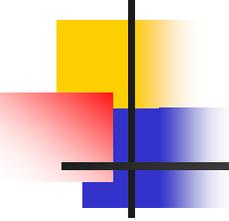
Why is dissemination important

- **Dissemination activities are now widely acknowledged and given priority by national and international development programmes as an essential means of maximizing the impact of research on development;**

- **Dissemination is an intrinsic element of all good research practice, whatever the discipline;**

- **Information and knowledge has a tendency to stay where it is generated. Dissemination prevents knowledge becoming "sticky" and effectively lost;**
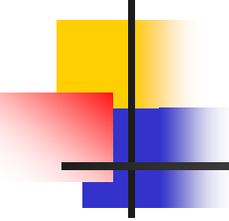
- **Dissemination provides added value to research projects, as the impact of research can be potentially wider than the original focus;**

- **Dissemination promotes the profile of the organization and strengthens its research capacity.**

Information and knowledge transfer
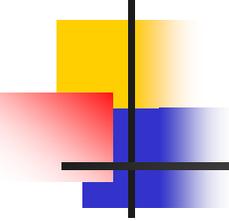
The conventional model of knowledge transfer is linear. Information is seen to flow from the information provider, via the chosen media, to the information user. This model assumes that dissemination is a one-way, top-down flow of information from the "experts" to a passive audience. In reality, information flow is a far more complex process; it is <u>an interactive, multi-directional exchange of knowledge and ideas that should be reflected in research dissemination strategies.</u>
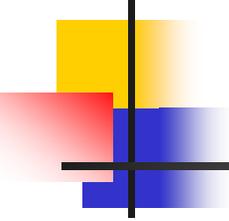
H. QUALITY PUBLICATIONS

A Center becomes known by the quality and content of its publications. Some requisites are:

- The publication provides new knowledge and significant contribution to development

- The publication deals with an important area of current concern e.g., globalization, terrorism, movement of natural persons.

- It gives clearcut directions on what the future holds and what subsequent actions to take.

- The authors(s) has/have impeccable credentials
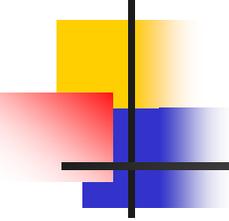
ORGANIZATION OF CONFERENCES/MEETINGS

- ❑ Select a topic of current interest/importance.

- ❑ Prepare an aide memoire to provide the background of the topic and the objectives of the meeting.

- ❑ Identify sessions ensuring that they address objectives set.

- ❑ Identify speakers and reactors. Provide guidelines.
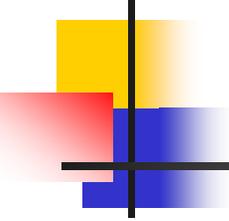
HOW TO MANAGE A RESEARCH CENTER

- Ensure that the following are in place:

➢ Administrative structure with clearcut roles and functions of the staff and adequate salary and compensations.

➢ Sufficient budget for operations and project management.

➢ Recruitment of capable researchers who can develop, implement and evaluate research projects.

ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

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│ LEAD RESEARCHER│    │ LEAD RESEARCHER│    │ LEAD RESEARCHER│
│ECONOMIC STUDIES│    │POLITICAL STUDIES│    │ SOCIAL STUDIES │
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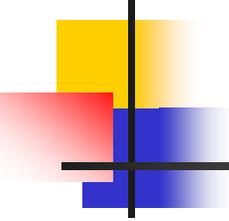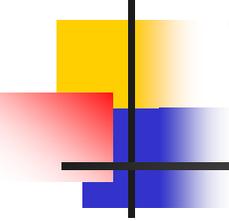
- **Establish a system of networking, maintaining interactive linkages with similar institutions for interdisciplinary and regional researches to generate more funds.**

- **Develop a research track record to ensure that funds can be generated (thru publications and conferences.**

- **Have an advisory board that will provide technical and substantive advice and support for program operations.**

- **Technologically advanced infrastructure.**

- **Staff commitment to advancing the Center's mission.**
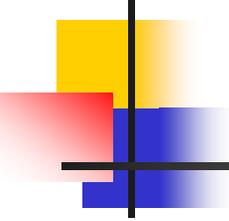
MANAGEMENT FUNCTIONS

- **Reiterate mission and vision of the Center and determine extent to which these are being addressed by the programs.**

- **Hold regular staff meeting to assess immediate tasks, timetable and deliverables.**

- **Hold regular meeting with researchers to assess the status of different projects and trouble shoot when problems arise.**
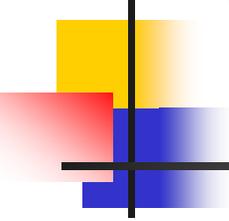
- **Ensure that the research reporting timetable to funding agency is adhered to.**

- **Undertake a thorough review of final substantive and financial reports before submission to the funding agency.**

- **Publicize accomplishments – reports, conferences, overseas attendance in conferences in newsletters and the annual report.**
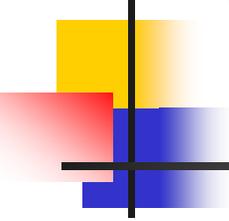
- **Maintain an extensive mailing list to bring to the attention of relevant institutions the existence of your Center.**

- **Strive to improve the quality of researches and publications such that they are at the cutting edge of development.**

- **Establish ascendancy in research through identification with specific issues/areas.**