

B. Preparation for the Task

Time is a critical element in an evaluation, time for preparation as well as time for execution. Under time pressure, pre-departure preparation is often sacrificed, even though a few days work before leaving for the assignment helps save time in the field and improve effectiveness of field time.

1. By evaluation time a sizeable paper trail has been established. Evaluation team should expect donor and implementer to help establish that trail. It consists of project documents, project reports, consultant reports, and perhaps other donor documents relevant to the project. Try to get the time to study these documents.

2. A two-day pre-departure briefing will help the team get to know each other, to share common goals and concepts, and to gain an expectation of the task and the division of responsibilities. This creates a useful mental set and enables the team to make better use of travel time than would be possible without it. Try to avoid having to arrive in field a group of strangers with little concept of the task. Here are some things to accomplish in the pre-departure briefing.

a. Get the donor's views of the project, the country strategy, how the project fits country strategy, and other information on country, economic situation, political situation, and the like.

b. Review technical criteria, conceptual models and other material that will help the team members to operate from a common technical base. There are many and divergent views regarding research and extension, and especially so when FSR/E is involved. With the use of models and discussion, the team can develop common concepts, at least for communication purposes.

c. Accumulate project information, especially from persons who know the project and the country. This could be from the implementing agent, persons experienced in the project, or others. Accumulate some paper, but be highly selective in the paper you lug around.

d. Begin to organize the team. Find out the interests and capabilities of members and help them develop expectations of their responsibilities.

3. Insist on and expect an in-country briefing as soon as it appears feasible upon arrival. Donor personnel will have varying views depending on their position in the organization. Normally the donor's country office is more your client than is the headquarter office.