

HISTORY

history

The Social Development Research Center (SDRC) emerged from an enduring effort to help create a university environment conducive and rewarding to research. Preliminary efforts began in 1973 under the initiative of Bro. Andrew Gonzalez, FSC, then Academic Vice President, with the twin goals of providing funding and support services for research and publication of teaching materials, and serving as liaison between the university faculty and professionals in government, business and industry who require the faculty's consultative and research services.



From these efforts, the Office of Research was created in 1977, incorporating several research units in the University.

The office was renamed the Integrated Research Center (IRC) in 1979, and was tasked to provide better coordination of research activities in the University. It incorporated six research-related offices: the Center for Urban Studies of the Behavioral Sciences Department, the Economic Research Bureau, the Project Management Center of the Graduate School of Business, the Research Unit of the Educational Management Center,

the Textbook Development Office, the Case Research Development Office, and the Industrial Research and Development Center. Among the earliest accomplishments of the Center at that time were industry projects that produced 10 financial case studies, surveyed the training needs of financial managers, and developed the oral and written communication skills of the corporate staff.



Two years later, the Center further refined its goals into two research thrusts: internally-funded research on the University's instructional service and support for the University's teaching functions, and externally-funded research on problems of development, mainly poverty and social equity. To accomplish these thrusts, the IRC

was organized into two units: the University Research Office (URO), which managed internally-funded researches under the Faculty Research Program; and the External Research Office (ERO), which coordinated and monitored all externally-funded faculty research projects approved by the University.

Early studies. The first major externally-funded project was a study entitled “Basic Services for the Urban Poor,” conducted through a grant from the Asia Foundation. This project featured two components: an action-research to provide basic urban services to residents in the adjoining Leveriza Community through a cooperative system, and the preparation of a management model for the entire Metro Manila area that featured a community cooperative rather than a public service-delivery system for basic urban service provision.



In October 1981, the Ford Foundation awarded a research grant for the “Participatory Upland Management Program” (PUMP), for training, research and experimentation in participatory approaches to upland management in the Philippines. The program helped disadvantaged upland communities to develop and sustain their capability to manage forest resources like trees and water. Moreover, it worked with upland communities, government and non-government institutions to promote a greater awareness of upland issues or concerns and the need for community-based participatory strategies to address these concerns.

Significantly, it was under PUMP that “The Pundasyon Hanunuo Mangyan School Project for

Hanunuo Mangyan Children in Three Sitios of Bulalacao Town, Mindoro Oriental” was to become SDRC's longest-running project. Originally funded by the Ford Foundation and currently sponsored by a benefactor, this project has harnessed the community's potentials and active involvement in the design, implementation and management of a culture-based basic education program appropriate to the needs, experiences and aspirations of the Hanunuo Mangyan community.



Community leaders have presently taken full charge of various school operations involving both pupils and teachers.



It was also in 1981 that a pioneering study on international labor migration in the Philippines was undertaken through external funding.

Conducted in tandem with the Institute of Labor Studies (then known as the Institute of Labor and Manpower Studies) of the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE), the study investigated the effects of international migration on the families and communities that were left behind. Economic, psycho-social, and demographic consequences of international labor migration from the

Philippines at the household and community levels were looked into. Using both quantitative (household survey) and qualitative (key informant interview) research methods, the study analyzed the use and allocation of remittances by migrant households, their economic behavior, and the effects of labor migration on family relationships. The study laid the foundation for future research in this area of inquiry.

A move toward social development.

In August 1983, the ERO further refined its mission by describing the kind of research it had

been doing and intended to do relevant, appropriate, policy-oriented, responsible, and multi-disciplinary. It also upheld the values of excellence in carrying out research and the sharing of the fruits of its research with others. These



paved the way for a shift in the Office's orientation from basic diagnostic to more action-oriented researches. The studies conducted were in the prioritized areas of poverty and social equity; they were thus geared towards improving the economic and social conditions of the population and were undertaken in coordination with action-oriented national and international institutions.

Concerns for social development guided the Office in its activities during the tumultuous historic national events that installed a new government after the

peaceful people's revolution in 1986. Significant projects during this period included “Case Studies of Selected Basic Christian Communities in the Philippines,” which aimed to look into the nature and quality of community participation in selected BCCs; and “Re-Integration of Returning Overseas Contract Workers: The Case of a Metro Manila Community,” which examined the psychosocial and economic dimension of the return of Filipino overseas contract workers to their homes in Barangay Vergara, Mandaluyong.

Evolving into the present office. In the late 1980s, efforts at institutionalizing research in the University were becoming more productive, and it was at this time that the Center's University Research Office became the University Research Coordination Office (URCO), and thereafter placed under the Office of the Vice-President for Academic Resources. Simultaneously, the External Research Office, with its predominantly social science research orientation, became the Social Development Research Center, and was placed under the College of Liberal Arts. Among the significant projects undertaken at this time were “Social Benefits and Costs: People's Perceptions of the US Bases in the Philippines,” a study that determined the perceptions of selected key informants about specific bases issues, and elicited some major policy implications for consideration in determining the future of Clark Air Base and Subic Naval Base in the Philippines; and “Health and Nutrition Status of and Health-Seeking Behavior Among Families in Depressed Urban Poor Communities,” which identified the major

diseases that pose significant health risks to urban poor communities, determined the high-risk population groups in these areas, and explained health maintenance, management of illness and use of health services in these communities.

During the period 1993 to 1998, health issues particularly about gender, sexuality and reproductive health became a major research focus of the Center as a result of sizeable grants for

two programs. The first grant was for “Task Force and Post-Graduate Program on Social Science and Reproductive Health.” The Task Force advocated

improved reproductive health for women and men in the Philippines through greater access to better quality services, increased popular awareness of reproductive health issues from a holistic

perspective, and explored alternative education and information modes on sexuality and reproductive health based on women's experiences. The Post-Graduate Training Program on Health Social Science, on the other hand, was pioneered in tandem with the DLSU Behavioral Sciences Department and was at the time the only one of its kind in the Philippines.



Full scholars were recruited annually from various regions of the country to be trained at DLSU on the transdisciplinary field of health social science. The project endeavor was so successful that the Ford Foundation awarded a \$1 Million endowment fund in 2004 to enable the Behavioral Sciences Department to continue offering scholarships under the program.

The second Ford-funded SDRC grant was for “Asia-Pacific Regional Network on Gender, Sexuality and Reproductive Health, and Forum on the Teaching of Health Social Science Conference.” Through the regional network that was established, situation analyses on gender, sexuality and reproductive health in the Philippines and other Asian countries were prepared and disseminated. Moreover, case studies on the teaching of health social sciences in Bangladesh, China, India, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Pakistan, the Philippines, Sri Lanka, Thailand, and Vietnam were also done to formulate an action plan for collaborative work among participating social and health scientists and representatives of women's groups.

Widening the scope. From 1998 to 2001, the Center began to undertake a greater number of projects in the areas of institutional reforms and local governance. Such a shift was significant in the light of the country's centennial celebration and the prevailing spirit of nationhood. Among the studies that were completed at this time were “Civil Society and Governance,” the Philippine component of a simultaneous global research program that assessed the effectiveness of civil society

organizations in the delivery of social services; and “Promoting Corporate Environmental and Social Responsibility in Developing Countries,” which examined how globalization, economic liberalization and democratization, and corporate social and environmental responsibility relate to the implementation of voluntary initiatives, among others.

For the period 2001 to 2003, while the Center continued to foster progressive working relations with supporting agencies, it also began to forge closer links with organizations at the grassroots level. This was seen in the work accomplished in the projects “Support for Documentation and Assessment of the Impact of Training for Participatory Local



Governance,” which evaluated the Barangay Training and Management Project coordinated by the Barangay-Bayan Governance Consortium in terms of the quality of participatory governance and community development activities; and “Enabling Women for an Active Role in Community Development: Women, Work and Development,” in which three barangays in the

5th District of Manila set out to work as partner-communities in enabling disadvantaged women to become more economically productive. The Center at this time thus moved beyond the concerns of producing and disseminating research reports to actually providing technical inputs in a direct manner to those who are most concerned and in need.



By 2005, the number of studies focusing on disadvantaged and marginalized sectors had increased in conjunction with fulfilling the university's mandate of doing research along poverty reduction thrusts. In line with this mandate, the “Beneficial Assessment of the Poverty Reduction Program of the DLSU System” was done to identify responsive and appropriate

ways of undertaking poverty reduction efforts as well as of empowering communities in general and women in particular. This was followed by “Mapping and Tracking Poverty Through the Use of Non-Income Poverty and Welfare Measures,” which identified income and non-income indicators for measuring poverty and tracked improvements in poverty and welfare status in the Philippines.

Venturing into global partnerships. A trend toward multi-country training and/or research partnership became noticeable since 2003. The World Health Organization-Western Pacific Regional Office, the ACTMalaria Foundation, and the Department of Health funded the “Operations Research (OR) Training for Malaria Control Program” where the SDRC provided OR training and close research mentoring from data gathering to report writing to 15 participant trainees. The trainees were comprised of middle-level malaria control managers/malariologists and control personnel from four countries in the Greater Mekong Region (Cambodia, Lao, Vietnam and China) and four countries in Southeast Asia (Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines and Thailand).



It was around this time that the Center also conducted, together with the UNICEF/UNDP/World Bank/World Health Organization Special Programme for Research and Training in Tropical Diseases (TDR), an international symposium/workshop entitled “Infectious Diseases Among Children in Conflict Situations: Risk,

Resilience and Response.” Organized in partnership with the School of Public Health and Community Medicine of the University of New South Wales (UNSW), Australia, and the Refugee Studies Center (RSC) of the Department of International Development, University of Oxford, this activity documented the “state of the art” in child engagement and child participation in conflict, the key challenges encountered, and the corresponding strategies to address such challenges. Its participants hailed from Uganda, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Indonesia and the Philippines.



In relation to other aspects of well-being, SDRC pursued a study in 2005 entitled “Mapping of Mental Health Research in Low- and Middle-Income Countries,” funded by the Global Forum for Health Research and the World Bank. The study, conducted in collaboration with other schools and universities in Africa and Latin America, generally aimed to develop a regional map of actors and their respective roles in the domains of mental, neurological and behavioral health research, and to describe the current research agenda and the process of priority setting in a Domain Profile. It

intended to produce a network of institutions and individuals and their priority setting strategies.

Multi-country research partnership was the mark of a study supported by the International Centre of Agroforestry (now World Agroforestry Centre) on “Negotiating Land Rights and Natural Resources Regulations for Local People: The Role and Effectiveness of Secondary Farmer and Community Organizations in Upland Watersheds of Southeast Asia” that had involved the Philippines and Indonesia. SDRC's task was to investigate the emergence, formation, development and resource management functions of secondary organizations or federations in Philippine upland watersheds and their relationship with primary organizations.



The ongoing 4-year project “Agroforestry and Sustainable Vegetable Production in Southeast Asian Watersheds” launched in 2005 is undertaken in collaboration with North Carolina A&T University and other research institutions in Indonesia, Philippines and Vietnam, with

funding support from the United States Agency for International Development through the SANREM-CRSP Program of Virginia Tech. This project seeks to demonstrate that steeply sloping, degraded watersheds could be converted to vibrant sustainable agroforestry systems with integrated vegetable production to alleviate poverty and food scarcity among small-scale women and men farmers. SDRC is in charge of the market and



gender components of the Philippine study. Other ongoing researches involving displaced populations in the Philippines, Thailand, Lebanon, and India; eco-bio-social factors of dengue control in the Philippines, Indonesia, India, Myanmar, Thailand, and Sri Lanka; and trans-boundary water governance in

the Mekong Region participated in by research fellows from this region and from Southeast Asia, have brought SDRC more prominently into the international research arena.

SDRC has been an active link in various multi-sectoral groups formed by national agencies such as the DENR, DOH and DSWD. It has continued to cultivate

more linkages with nongovernment organizations (NGOs) and peoples' organizations. For instance, the center has co-founded the Upland NGO Assistance Committee (UNAC) which includes several NGOs, academic institutions and the National Federation of Indigenous Peoples Organizations (locally called KASAPI). It has been most active in developing the UNAC's research agenda and in providing research orientation and assistance to KASAPI.

The first thirty years. Within these past three decades, SDRC has come quite a long way to help in addressing data gaps that are needed to inform the tasks of social development planners and program implementers, particularly concerning the use of participatory frameworks. As the oldest

research center in the university, it has worked on many vital issues and imperatives for local, regional, and national development, covering the areas of poverty, health, rural and urban development, environment and natural resources management, institutional reforms, quality assurance, gender, and human and cultural capital



formation. It has deliberately moved to increase its boundary-spanning activities through research partnership/collaboration and networking with local and foreign institutions. Within the University, the Center continuously upholds a multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary track record as it brings together collaborating researchers from different disciplines and departments or colleges. As a whole then, SDRC has responded remarkably well to the University's call for not only becoming a world class university with excellence in research, but also becoming a valuable resource to people and nation through data production and utilization for improving human conditions.



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