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Phnom PENh workshop in Cambodia – taking stock of progress



The Research Committee of the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs supports a four year (2007-10) PEN based research project with approx. USD 1 mill. This project is commonly called the Danida-PEN project. It uses PEN methods for extensive fieldwork and data collection in Cambodia, Ghana and Burkina Faso. In addition, the project includes support for PEN's central operation at CIFOR. The project started with

an inaugural workshop in Ghana in autumn 2007 (see PENEWS 2007-3), followed by an intensive year of data collection in more than 1800 households. On 13-17th October 2008, project participants got together in the capital of Cambodia to review progress and discuss work plans for the coming year at the Phnom PENh workshop. Participants included the country coordinators Beatrice O. Darko of the Forest Research Institute of Ghana, Boureima Ouédraogo of the University of Ouagadougou, Dararath Yem of the Cambodia Development Research Institute (CDRI), project co-ordinator Carsten Smith Olsen of the University of Copenhagen, CIFOR representative Sven Wunder, and PEN research fellow and global database manager Ronnie Babigumira. The first two days of the workshop focused on introducing participants to software useful for data handling and analysis, then followed two days of field work review, and a final day

of fleshing out details of work to be done in the coming year.

Days 1-2

After welcome remarks by the Dr. Hossein Jalilian, CDRI Research Director, project co-ordinator Carsten Smith Olsen gave an overview of the workshop. Quoting Churchill he emphasised that “However beautiful the strategy, you should occasionally look at the results” – with data collection almost finished, the workshop represented an opportunity to jointly review data quality and explicitly plan for high quality data handling and subsequent analysis.

This was followed by an intensive two-day introduction to Stata, planned and facilitated by Ronne Babigumira. The lecture notes are available [here](#). Participants got hands-on experience of using Stata and could pack their suitcases with good advice and tips on data entry procedures, data handling organisation, and data analysis. Beatrice Obiri noted that this “... was a marathon as we were taken through so many aspects of Stata analysis and presentation of outputs including using syntax for queries, tabulating, linear and quadratic plots, etc. However, at the end of the day, we were convinced Stata would be very useful in managing and analysing Danida-PEN data”.

Days 3-4

The second part of the workshop, the review of field work progress, kicked off with three general presentations. Carsten Smith Olsen gave an overview of Danida-PEN project objectives and suggestions for what to focus on during discussions of the subsequent country-level field work reports. This was followed by CIFOR economist Sven Wunder who presented an overview of the status and future of PEN. This included a list of factors, generated by previous PEN experiences, important for determining the success/failure of individual PEN studies (such as using good enumerators that are adequately supervised). Lastly, Ronnie Babigumira spoke on data quality step by step – this included lots of good and practical advice on, for instance, coding procedures and data cleaning. He shared brief notes on Data entry tips, PEN data cleaning procedures, and PEN data cleaning: the bug report. Finally, the following day, Amy Duchelle shared her reflections on data collection and handling, based on her PEN research in Bolivia and Brazil; these included how to use the last quarterly survey for price meetings and checking missing data, observations on the pitfalls of data entry, and the importance of data pre-cleaning.

The general introduction was followed by country-level overviews of field work. The emphasis was on providing a status for data collection and a preliminary assessment of data quality. Dararath Yem started by presenting status for the Cambodia field work. Field work has progressed according to plan, covering 600 households in 15 villages in three sites, and is expected to finish ultimo October. Beatrice Obiri presented status for the Ghana field work. Again, field work has progressed

according to plan, covering 660 households in 30 villages in two sites, and is expected to finish in November. Boureima Ouédraogo presented status for the Burkina Faso field work. Here field work, covering 626 households in 26 villages in two sites, was completed in mid-October. Following each country presentation was a tour-de-grill where participants assessed country-level data quality. Key issues covered in these discussions were household sampling procedures (including replacement of missing households); selection, training and supervision of enumerators; recording of income from illegal activities; and choice of pricing techniques. In general, field work and data was found to be of high quality.

Day 5

The last day of the workshop focused on developing and agreeing on detailed work plans for the coming year. First, Carsten Smith Olsen presented an overview of planned country-level outputs for 2008 and 2009, including submission of data sets and narratives, working papers, and the first peer-reviewed papers. This was followed by an example of PEN data analysis, prepared by Amy Duchelle and Ronnie Babigumira using Amy's Bolivia and Brazil data. Then participants split into country-level working groups to (i) each produce a time schedule for remaining 2008 and 2009, (ii) discuss and finalise the common table of contents for the working papers to report all field level activities and preliminary findings, and (iii) outline the contents of the first peer-reviewed paper.

Finally, Carsten Smith Olsen presented a brief summary of the workshop outcomes. He emphasised that the workshop had been important and useful in creating a shared overview of project progress and establishing a common foundation on which to approach data handling and analysis. He ended with giving a large thank you to CDRI for their professional organisation of the workshop.

After the workshop, participants were invited to visit the CDRI offices in Phnom Penh. There were also opportunities for social and cultural events during and after the workshop, such as a visit to the old Royal Palace and the Silver Pagoda.

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