

Exercises on understanding the Community

Purpose: To conduct an informal assessment of a community in order to understand the context in which an agency's services are delivered.

Agency

1. History
2. Mission and objectives
3. Organizational structure
4. Sources of income
5. Programmes and services
6. Service theme for the year
7. Service priority
8. Manpower and resources
9. Innovative services
10. Service Unit
 - supervisory structure
 - standard provision of manpower
 - special arrangement of agency
 - image in the community
 - co-ordination with other related units

Community

1. Social, legal, physical boundary
2. Physical characteristics
 - history and changes of the area
 - housing types
 - facilities
 - development plans
 - public safety
3. Demographics
 - total population and target population
 - age distribution
 - size and types of families
 - socio-economic status of families

4. Culture, beliefs and attitudes
 - residents' sense of belonging to the community
 - services valued and rejected
 - religious affiliations and traditions
5. Local politics
 - key leaders / spokesmen
 - resource persons
 - relationship with government
 - influence of political parties
 - pressure groups / interest groups
 - current debates, issues and controversies
6. Major social problems and concerns
 - residents' experience of the problem
 - expert opinion, public opinion and survey
 - existing efforts to cope with the problem
 - major gaps among existing social, health, education and welfare

Service

1. History and development of the service
2. Rationale and objective
3. Establishment ratio
4. Target group characteristics
5. Problems and future development of the service
6. Working approaches

Sources of Information

1. Agency Annual Reports
2. Service Unit Annual Reports
3. Service policy papers
4. Surveys and research reports
5. Census statistics
6. Statistics in local departments
7. Unobtrusive / participant observation
8. Interviews with key informants