

Case-Studies

Case Study 3

BACKGROUND

The third case dealt with the establishment of the International Research Centre in Population Studies and Reproductive Health (Africa Centre) in the rural area of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. The research conducted in the area promised to offer new insights into reproductive health and population studies that could benefit millions of people worldwide. At the same time, the Centre was to build research capacity for the area and serve as sort of magnet for other researchers who would otherwise have been attracted to collaborative ventures outside the region.

By 2000, the Centre sponsored nearly a dozen research projects. In the first two years of existence, a series of philosophical disputes arose involving concerns that ranged from the logistical to the ethical.

QUESTIONS

1. Did the Centre have an obligation to provide direct service to the community? Where did the boundary between research and service lie?
2. Did the Centre have any long-term responsibility for the diagnosis and care of the STD patient?
3. Did the Centre have an obligation to other pregnant women in the district? W'Did the patients have to receive a level of care that they might not otherwise have had?
4. Did the researchers have an obligation to expend a portion of their resources on community development?

DISCUSSION

The groups that discussed the third case observed that all stakeholders involved in the process, should take part in conceptualizing the important issues, though perhaps not in the design of the project. They were mostly of the view that the responsibility for providing care was closely linked to issues of development and that some limits of care had to be agreed upon, both within and outside the protocol. In endeavors similar to those undertaken by the Africa Centre, these matters ought to be discussed at the outset in order to clearly delineate boundaries of responsibility.

Some discussants pointed out that care had to be exercised in the design in order to distinguish the research function from the function of providing care. Although the researchers were not directly responsible for development, partnership processes could have brought these two together. There were those who expressed the view that a thorough discussion of the concept of research for development ought to be undertaken in order to take up, among others, major policy barriers relating to financing of research projects.