

R-odi OP 2

Agricultural Administration Unit
Occasional Paper 2

THE LIBRARY
OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT INSTITUTE
PORTLAND HOUSE
STAG PLACE
LONDON SW1E 6DP

Extension, Planning, and the Poor

Overseas Development Institute

The Overseas Development Institute (ODI)* is an independent, non-government body aiming to promote wise action in the field of overseas development. It was set up in 1960 and is financed by donations from British business and by grants from British and American foundations and other sources. Its policies are determined by its Council.

The functions of the Institute are:

- 1 to provide a centre for research in development issues and problems and to conduct studies of its own;
- 2 to be a forum for the exchange of views and information among those, in Britain and abroad, who are directly concerned with overseas development in business, in government, and in other organisations;
- 3 to keep the urgency of development issues and problems before the public and the responsible authorities.

* The Institute is limited by guarantee.

Agricultural Administration Unit
Occasional Paper 2

00014468



Overseas Development Institute

Extension, Planning, and the Poor

Motivation and Performance of Extension Field Staff

by Janice Jiggins

Notes on Poverty-oriented Rural Development

by Paul Devitt

Planning and the Small Farmer

by Guy Hunter

Overseas Development Institute

10-11 Percy Street

London W1P 0JB

Telephone: 01-637 3622

© Copyright

Overseas Development Institute

1977

The Overseas Development Institute is responsible for determining that this work should be presented to the public, but individual members of the Council are not responsible for statements of fact and expressions of opinion contained herein.

Contents

	<i>Page</i>
Introductory Note	v
Chapter 1: Motivation and Performance of Extension Field Staff by Janice Jiggins (ODI/AAU)	1
Section I: Maladies	1
Section II: Remedies	11
Summary of Recommendations	16
References	17
Chapter 2: Notes on Poverty-oriented Rural Development by Paul Devitt (Consultant)	20
Section A: On the nature and causes of rural poverty	20
Section B: On the ineffectiveness of development projects in reaching the poor	24
Section C: Some suggestions for poverty- oriented development programmes	30
Conclusions	41
Chapter 3: Planning and the Small Farmer by Guy Hunter (ODI/AAU)	42
Section I: Two types of planning	42
Section II: Planning and local action	46
Section III: The official input	50
Section IV: Difficulties	51
Section V: A major, unanswered question	53
Annex: Excerpts from 'Planning and Implementation: Towards an "Open" Approach'	55
References	57

Introductory Note

Each of the three chapters here is concerned with small farmers and the poor – Paul Devitt's contribution with the very poor. They concern both participation and service.

Janice Jiggins has done a useful service, not only in collecting together different sources, but also in putting these worries into a more formal framework – structural difficulties, situational difficulties, management failings, and in suggesting the types of remedy which could be found. As so often, when there is widespread and miscellaneous unhappiness about the functioning of some part of the development process, the first real step towards remedy comes only when the material is gathered up as a whole and its components isolated in relation to each other.

My own piece is less satisfactory in form, and may draw criticism from central planners. It is an attempt to spell out what are the planning implications at the centre of that degree of flexibility in planning and programming at district level and below without which there will be no room for initiatives and 'participation' from the farming community itself. As Paul Devitt says, each level can and must do some part of planning and these roles are not substitutable. This, therefore, is not an attack on central planners (a popular exercise) save in so far as they may try to pre-empt a role which must be played lower down. On the contrary, it is an attempt to defuse a rather futile argument between centralists and devolutionists by trying to indicate – rather sketchily for the centre – the necessary division of functions and roles.

Finally, we have included a very striking and beautifully expressed article by Paul Devitt on the culture of the poor (in so far as it is relevant to development) and on the non-directive and yet helpful role which outsiders must play if the poor are to gain confidence that some part at least of their predicament can be eased by their own efforts.

While the analysis in parts A and B of his paper will be very widely accepted and is put with attractive clarity, there will no doubt be some argument about part C, which is in the form of recommendations for action. Without part C, we should have analysis only, of which there is plenty, though little which is so well expressed; and it is a courageous and necessary act to follow analysis by positive suggestion. Some of part C is devoted mainly to those countries which may lack the personnel to attack the problem without some outside reinforcement; but in other cases, personnel are available if only they could

be rightly used. It is not the purpose of the AAU to underwrite every document or every thought which we circulate, but, at least occasionally, to send out really worthwhile thoughts from any source as a challenge. There is so much food for thought in this paper that we greatly welcome the author's permission to circulate it.

Guy Hunter

ODI/AAU

July 1977

Chapter 1 :

Motivation and Performance of Extension Field Staff

Janice Jiggins

Section I: Maladies

For most of this paper I will be discussing extension services in relation to the mass of small farmers rather than those provided under government-run or privately-owned commodity schemes, where a relatively efficient superior structure and organisation exists; nor shall I give more than a passing glance to servicing the primarily technical and logistic needs of larger farmers who are fairly efficient customers of extension services. The paper takes as a starting point the accusation that current extension effort is inadequate to the enormity of the problem, that services are ill-structured to the nature of the task, and that junior staff, even if they *start* with enthusiasm and energy, are pushed by the very situation and system within which they work, and the lack of rewards and incentives, towards an attitude of resignation, apathy, or 'looking after Number 1'.

The paper looks first at the structural reasons for the existing performance and procedural characteristics of extension services, considers what criteria should determine extension organisation, and then discusses the type of extension service these criteria would entail. It then turns to the situational problems arising from the bureaucratic setting and the nature of extension work in the field, the managerial problems these generate, and the management effort needed to meet them. Thirdly, the paper focuses on the individual aspects of extension motivation, junior staff's relationships with farmers, and recruitment and training. Finally, in part II the paper considers the implications of the preceding sections for extension organisation and the motivation of junior staff.

A: Structural considerations

The morale and type of performance of extension staff are largely structurally determined:

- (1) By the type of employer: Government. Nearly all extension services are government-run, thus bound by the standard procedures, rules and precedents of public administration which tend to lead to slow response to field needs and to inflexibility.¹ *

Departments are bureaucratically structured² because of the need to allocate, financially control, and account for a wide range of items to a large number of individuals. Bureaucratic organisation reflects a need to protect the disbursement of public funds, and lessen the temptations to fraud by those handling them; hence the time-consuming recording of transactions, the restriction of discretionary authority over spending, and the intricate machinery for allocation, at the expense of timely

* References are at the end of the chapter, p17.

Motivation of Extension Staff

decision-making, budgetary flexibility, and the efficient use of funds.

Extension services,³ like welfare administrations in developed countries, are apt to appear to be 'blind to those most in need'; there are many reasons why 'field agents visit only "progressive" farmers'.⁴ Their reach stops short of the most needy or those least able to help themselves, partly through concentration on objectives to which such people cannot respond without help, partly because of the increasing marginal costs of reaching the very poor, partly because they are set quantitative tasks which can be most easily met by visiting larger farmers. Where government seeks to provide special poverty-oriented services, the programmes tend to treat categories of disadvantaged, not individuals, offering standard packages of remedial help.⁵

These and similar influences relating to the nature of bureaucratic administration tend to present the service, in the eyes of the customer, as remote, insensitive and inflexible. 'The trouble in a delegated administrative system lies in the length of the chain of command, the multiplicity of those chains where departmental rather than all-purpose administration has got a grip, and in the quality of poorly educated and badly paid staff at the lowest level of all. It is these small men who come into direct contact with the village and the farmer. They cannot (in the view of their superiors) be given discretions, are usually badly supervised, often operate with written instructions which are out of relation with what it is possible or sensible to do in their local circumstance. They are therefore often seen as emissaries of "government" enforcing mysterious and even senseless regulations, who must be bribed or evaded in order that the ordinary needs of village life can be met'.⁶

- (2) By the type of working environment. The extension agent in the field typically works independently of any regular field contact with his nominal supervisor. Although he may have been given set tasks (often far too many), he works alone with responsibility for his own daily work plan, his own priorities, and he makes his own contacts. Lacking support, he is subject to local political and social pressures. He is expected to deal with a range of clients, in a variety of ways (permanent/temporary; face-to-face/group meetings). He is expected to cope with a range of farm level problems though most often he has been taught only, knows best, and offers only, a narrow package of technical advice and inputs. The kinds of farmer he is supposed to visit, the area he is to cover, the amount and mix of inputs, and so on, are subject to changes in national/local policy, availabilities of supply, etc, over which he has no control and about which he is not consulted and sometimes not even informed. He lacks transport to get about in all inclement weathers. In sum, he is isolated, subject to local pressure, and

often ill supplied with the resources to fulfil even those tasks which he could realistically undertake.

- (3) By the type of prospects and rewards. Both prospects and rewards are typically bad. Prospects for junior staff are usually governed by paper qualifications rather than field competence and experience, and avenues of advancement between the field organisation and the higher levels of the service are in any case few. Promotion criteria tend to relate to seniority, length of service, office-based skills, visibility to the superior management. It becomes more important to please immediate superiors than to carry out immediate field tasks, to fulfil 'paper' objectives than to achieve results on the ground.

The assumption that is made here is that, typically, the field staff receive orders from a head office, rather than, as in some former colonial patterns, for decision-making to be made at the local level, with the head office acting in a supporting role. When decisions are taken centrally, the only way for a field man to advance is for him to move into the central office, where he often finds his skills and experience to be inappropriate — the field loses, but the administration does not necessarily gain.

Generally, there is no satisfactory career structure *within* the field organisation or *within* the locality or district with which the field staff are most familiar. On the other hand, competent administrators are often reluctant to spend time in the field, remote from opportunities to solicit advancement, and living in what they consider to be uncomfortable conditions.

Salary structures are governed by nationally-, or regionally-,determined norms and grading; individual effort and competence is not directly, or even often, related to reward. Salaries of junior staff are usually not only the lowest in a tall hierarchy of scales, but often lower than those of their 'peers' in the surrounding job market, or less than those of agriculturalists and other extension staff working on commercial schemes. This is not to argue that financial rewards should be *greater* than comparable scales, for direct monetary compensation is not the only, nor even necessarily the prime component in job satisfaction and motivation. Yet where financial resources are scarce, very little effort is usually made to seek alternative material benefits for junior extension workers that might at least ease resentment and dissatisfaction at seeing effort and application go unrewarded.

Terms of service are often as unsatisfactory as remuneration and promotion. Though junior staff usually have a considerable degree of security of employment, staff transfers can be very frequent. Even at somewhat higher levels, length of postings can be ridiculously short.

Motivation of Extension Staff

For a district agricultural officer's (DAO's) staff, such discontinuity is unsettling, and for the officer himself virtually dictates a lack of understanding or involvement in local problems. The constant movement of staff, even by itself, would be damaging to the morale of the staff and to the achievement of objectives.

- (4) By the type of management. There tends to be confusion between the regulatory (helping to enforce veterinary regulations), educational (plot demonstrations, etc), and service (seed distribution) functions of the extension services; and there is a corresponding weakness and confusion of management styles and structures. On the whole, management within extension services tends to be disciplinary, applying sanctions for breaches of rules. It tends to be inward-looking rather than directed toward servicing staff in the field, or providing necessary support, encouragement, or supervision.

Structural criteria for extension organisations

It is clear that there are necessary though not always precise links between the morale and type of performance of an organisation, its structural characteristics, and its purpose or objectives. It is useful to look briefly at the criteria for different types of organisation in order to select those applicable to extension effort:

<i>Army/soldier:</i>	disciplined, authoritarian management; individuals organised in units; lateral and vertical communication and co-ordination; group morale at multiple levels; limited interaction with the public; able to respond to sudden crisis.
<i>Industry/foreman:</i>	technical skills and man-management; stratified, antagonistic interests; leadership both directive and reconciliatory; strong sub-group morale (often conflicting).
<i>Ship/sailor:</i>	functional demarcations; stable routine; group morale at single level; individual skills; personalised authoritarian leadership (no higher echelons in merchant shipping); able to respond to sudden crisis.
<i>School/teacher:</i>	social skills with groups; individual responsibilities and discretion; very short chains of command; limited tasks; no direct incentives.
<i>Commercial organisation/salesman:</i>	usually simple, limited tasks; individual rather than group psychological skills; intense relations with the public; dealings contractual and flexible; operational management and field supervision.

Extension tasks

The extension officer is part salesman, part teacher. Like a salesman, his work involves intense public contact and his point of contact is usually an individual in the first instance. His role is to create awareness, to generate interest, to assist the client to evaluate his current income/output/performance compared to his potential; to bring about a trial of new equipment or procedures — sometimes through demonstration or 'third-party reference'; to secure adoption; and in many instances, to continue to advise, maintain, and service with inputs. His work is organised round 'house to house' calls, and is (should be) based on minimum but adequate technical knowledge; sales and educative skills; knowledge of the range of services provided by the organisation, including how and where to obtain them. (But note that salesmen work on direct individual incentives — commissions; extension staff do not.)

Like the salesman, the extension officer works with relatively few people from within his own organisation. A DAO has a staff, say of 200–300 individuals, often grouped in sub-units of 10–15. Nothing much above the DAO matters to the individual extension officer.

Unlike a salesman, he has a very varied task, both in terms of the advice he offers, and in terms of the situations and problems he deals with. Ideally he needs therefore not only to be aware of the range of possible alternative remedies but to be able to assess which particular recommendation is appropriate in each case. His powers of discrimination and judgement need to be well-developed and reliable.

Though his work is most often with individuals, he also needs considerable social skills for dealing with groups and initiating group action.

Extension structure

Such a range of tasks suggests (a) that the span of control (ratio of supervisors to field staff) should be fairly limited; (b) that the superior organisational structure should be 'flat' rather than 'tall'; (c) that the DAO should have managerial command over the resources necessary to carry out his functions.⁷ This last point merits further expansion.

Extension services are typically not involved in the planning of resource allocation or policy priorities, or in policy discussions at district level. They tend to be regarded solely as the executive arm of decision-makers located elsewhere or at a higher level.⁸ (Rarely, for example, are even the heads of the service involved in policy discussions when the physical design of large irrigation systems are planned. The Muda Scheme in Malaysia is a rare example of what can be achieved if agronomic and social aspects are considered *pari passu* with the technical construction details from the earliest planning stages.)⁹ Priorities and financial allocations are thus handed down to the district for implementation, however well or ill they suit the particular needs of farmers in the area. Such centralisation parallels the attempt to extend packages of

Motivation of Extension Staff

inputs across the board, disregarding both geo-climatic and socio-economic variation within the locality; such development packages are held to be administratively convenient, to reach the largest numbers of potential innovators with relatively little waste of human or other resources, and to allow political decisions as to which target groups should be benefited to be implemented.

Yet this approach is not necessarily developmentally efficient, and there is ample evidence from a variety of countries to suggest that the rigidity it imposes at the local level is wasteful and neglectful of the potential of the millions of small farmers who must be reached if development is to have any meaning. Discretion over policy adjustments, choice of local organisational forms, allocation of financial resources at the district level would allow the extension organisation to respond to the multiplicity of farmer needs.¹⁰

Such a proposal is encouraged by the line of thought that stresses the *service* aspect of extension organisations, ready to respond to farmers' needs and demands, rather than the mere *delivery* role of many existing organisations.

Flexibility/responsiveness is also needed at the field office. Ideally, one envisages sympathetic and technically alert field staff able to listen to each farmer, or at least to small groups of farmers, diagnose his particular problems and requirements, and put him in touch, if necessary, with specialised services such as agronomists, vets, etc. Few, if any, less developed countries (ldcs) have the human/financial resources to provide such field teams over wide areas; the gap can be filled partly by stimulating local farmers to form groups around a common function or activity, thus lessening the number of individual clients each extension agent has to visit, partly by training field staff as agricultural generalists able to act as a point of contact between the farmer and the specialist, the equivalent, maybe, of a 'barefoot doctor', able to diagnose and treat the simpler problems and needs of farmers.

The arguments for greater discretionary response at the field and district levels, and for a recasting of the role of extension agents imply that extension organisations should be more like commercial than public administration/civil service organisations. Extension organisations serve a public whose needs have to be ascertained and met (a research, survey, diagnosis function involving both field staff and higher officer).¹¹ Field staff need to inform and educate that public on available technologies, potential gains, ways of using the inputs, etc (education and persuasion); field tasks require staff whose experience and competence are practical rather than academic (non-bureaucratic promotion criteria, rewards and sanctions).¹² The higher officers' tasks (at block level and above) should be managerial and executive rather than bureaucratic (emphasis on man-management, distribution and supply logistics, action and decision oriented). Their functions are open rather than closely defined, responsive as well as directive (flexible, non-routine, and not rule-bound). And at the district level, like the market research department

of a company, a planning unit needs records and data for analysis and operational decision-making, and for monitoring (whereas in bureaucratic administration, they act for the recording of precedent, for registration and allocation, for assessment and categorisation, for control and regulation).¹³

None the less, formal government authority is required for certain aspects of extension work. Government may well wish to control certain aspects of the farm environment on behalf of small farmers; eg by controlling prices, by subsidising credit, by manipulating markets. Only the government is strong enough and in control of sufficient resources to act in such a fashion; where such regulatory and supervisory activity is required of an extension organisation, more appropriately routine and regimented procedures and organisational forms must follow. Chambers has emphasised this point with respect to 'enforcers' – those such as water guards, revenue collectors, who are assigned to protect, control, supervise, ration.¹⁴ Though often, and perhaps mistakenly, located within extension organisations, their relationship to that organisation is, or ought to be, quite different to that of the technical and service staff.¹⁵ In order to carry out their enforcing roles, they need to be independent of local political and social situations, looking for their rewards to the organisation rather than those which derive from the local community; they should be closely supervised and disciplined by the organisation; and they should work within a tradition of support and encouragement from their seniors for their difficult and unenviable tasks.

B: Situational problems

The bureaucratic setting of extension service has led to a lack of clear-cut operative responsibility which Kuldeep Mathur et al have stressed lead to 'dysfunctionality' at three points:¹⁶

- (a) interdependent tasks overlap so that 'responsibility for results . . . cannot be placed upon any one functionary. The total task being split between several departments where no one has control over the whole, a clear-cut accountability system is difficult to develop'.
- (b) 'the villager has to contact many points to get his permits or supplies for his primary activity-agriculture. In this kind of situation the administration's concern would not be to *service* the villager for total requirements: each sub-section would be concerned with its own portion of the work. It would look inward rather than outward to the client system . . . the resulting organisation lacking market orientation.'
- (c) 'a co-ordinated report of the total activities of the district is not available . . . The reporting system is designed more for record and less for managerial control processes.'

The suggested organisation of Indian agriculture services into clear lines of responsibility and authority from national through district to block level,

Motivation of Extension Staff

distinct from state department, *panchayat*, and block development authorities and administration, is designed to overcome precisely these sorts of problem.

Another serious consequence of the bureaucratic setting is that, though extension workers are characterised in extension philosophy as altruistic servants of the farmers, they are more often seen by farmers as servants of the extension organisation, and by association, identified as part of the whole gamut of government bureaucracy. Farmers have little belief that what the extension agent advocates is in fact in the farmers' best interest, rather believing that he says what he does because that is his duty as a government servant.¹⁷

The view from the field

There are many stories about junior field staff's ignorance, apathy, poor motivation, and laziness, and no doubt many of them are fully justified, but it must be remembered that it is easy for superiors to put the blame for failure for a scheme on junior staff. Nor would it be surprising if some field staff did fit this caricature, for they have legitimate grievances and resentments, and their attitudes are shaped by their work conditions — poor salaries; unreasonable work loads imposed by management; lack of job status in the eyes of their own communities; socially and locationally remote supervisors who apparently do not much care who they are, or what they do, or how well they do it — the catalogue of their woes is well known and need not be further repeated here.

What does need to be said is that their response to such conditions may be sub-optimal for the service, but is rational in terms of their own survival. Mook has charted the kinds of decision a field officer in India has to make between the demands made upon him.¹⁸ Consider, for example, how he chooses to allocate his time in a way that is most advantageous to himself. Mook suggests that the officer asks himself: (a) what tangible goods do I have to dispose of? (eg seeds); (b) what activities will put me in the good books of the Collector, the Assistant Collector, and the DAO (eg helping in tax collections; planting specially-favoured seedlings)?; sometimes even (c) what programmes can I make a little money on? (eg loans). Mook comments: 'He tries to avoid all jobs which do not fall into one of these three categories. Whether or not farmers actually plant the seeds or use the implements which he dispenses is not his concern, since almost all his targets are expressed in terms of distribution rather than production. Whether or not even these targets are really achieved is an irrelevant issue. Most people in the block 'cook up' figures to meet the expectations of supervisors anyway'. Although this is both a harsh judgement, and probably argues more *consciously* self-interested decisions than most extension staff make, it can serve as a warning of the *kinds* of temptation which could quite naturally beset field staff, temptations to which some of them do yield.

The structural and situational environment in which most extension officers find themselves lead the more committed into frustration and the less enthusiastic into cynicism, in the face of new drives and passing fashions handed down from their supervisors.

It should be emphasised that field staff's expectations and motivations are rarely sufficiently considered; all the effort and resources tend to go behind the provision of physical inputs and the mobilisation of technological resources, rather than in reviewing field staff management. Yet if the organisation fails at this level, all the prior effort is wasted. It seems clear that there are significant gaps in most extension structures between field agents and district headquarters – in communication and formal channels of dialogue; in personal shirt-sleeves leadership of field teams; in the training of field supervisors to listen to their agents' complaints and devise suitable action; and in the overall conditions of service. As Chambers has vividly written: 'Because the field workers in their rural outer darkness are almost invisible to those at the top, their potential is, in our experience, grossly underestimated.'¹⁹

The management of field staff

Though field staff ideally are called upon to be mature, capable people, possessed of social skills and detailed and wide-ranging knowledge and experience, they are in fact treated as the last link in a hierarchy of beings in which the educated, town-living car owners and office workers are the most favoured, rather than as the essential spearhead of a campaign. A major improvement in morale could be achieved by raising the status of extension work and field staff – as much a matter of how the service is conceived, and hence how it is organised, as of improving working conditions and salaries. Visible recognition is of value in symbolising to the surrounding community that the government is sincere in its appreciation of the importance of the field officer's work. Even a bicycle not only makes it more possible for him physically to reach his farmers; it marks him as a figure with some authority and position.²⁰

The respect which they are given, and the influence they can exert are related to changes in their structural relationship to the superior organisation, to the training they receive, and to the work they actually do, and these elements will be taken up below. For the moment the discussion will pursue the control and supervisory aspects of field management.

Traditionally, field staff are controlled and their performance evaluated by measuring the measurable (ie number of visits made, fertiliser bags distributed). Operationally, this is not a very useful measure of either *effort* or *impact*, the indices that should be of real concern to supervisors.²¹ Mook points out that one consequence of the emphasis on distribution targets, for instance, is that the agricultural extension officer (AEO) spends more time than ever with the larger farmers who take regular, predictable, and large quantities of commodities, rather than concerning himself with ascertaining the varied

Motivation of Extension Staff

needs of a multitude of small farmers. The 'best' AEO in the influential public's eye is then the competent administrator rather than the field technician. The AEO who can supply agricultural inputs when they are needed is more valued than a skilled extension officer.

Secondary control techniques such as tours of inspection and office meetings are equally poor measures of performance; they require a field worker to be busy and visible at the least essential aspects of his work. It is noteworthy that none of these techniques is designed to find out the individual's problems or to offer constructive advice or effective supervision. Such management procedures impose on the field worker an insupportable dual role: while in theory he is expected to spend most of his time in the field, in practice he has to spend the greater proportion of his time in administrative duties at the head office, in meetings, in form-filling and data collection.

'Shirt-sleeve' management in the field requires that supervisors (a) spend most of their time out of doors with their junior staff and their clients; (b) know their staff well enough to play a supportive and training role, with attention to each individual's personal work problems; (c) are resident sufficiently long in the area to know the technical farming difficulties, the types of problem facing individual small farmers, and to establish a relationship with the junior field staff.

It also entails more careful training of field supervisors, for 'bad bosses create bad workers', and the more personal the relationship becomes, the more open it might be to personality clashes, arbitrary acts, favouritism, etc. Yet 'bad bosses' do not exist in a vacuum, independent of the structure and goals of their work environment. Consider, for example, the army, or a leading technical sales organisation run by such as ICI or IBM, where 'bad bosses' (in the sense of being dysfunctional to the goals of the organisation) are relatively rare and are swiftly moved or retrained if the desired working relationship begins to break down.

Chambers has emphasised that management methods which are substituted for existing techniques should concentrate on 'making it rational for staff to do what is required of them':

'If adaptive research is desired, then more discretion has to be devolved and local initiative rewarded, including the reporting of information that is true but discordant. If more strictly enforced rotations of grazing or issues of irrigation water are required, then the system of supervision, rewards and sanctions within the organisation and between the organisation and its environment must be so arranged and operated that it is rational for staff to do what is bound to be unpopular with their public group.'²²

Section II: Remedies

Section I of this document may seem a quite unduly gloomy, destructive and academic view of the extension service. After all, if it is as bad as this, how were even the limited achievements of the Green Revolution secured? How is it that many millions of farmers know about HYVs, and sprays, and loans, and crossbred cows, and contour-bunding? Once again, this is not an accusation that all field staff are lazy and ineffective, or that none have any dedication to their task or satisfactions from it. Far from it. But it is a description drawn from very wide and varied sources, and with a remarkable degree of unanimity, over many years, of the management, situational and structural factors which tend to push extension towards poor performance. Naturally, some *are* pushed, and all suffer in some degree.

We must therefore see whether there are management, situational and structural changes which could improve the chances of success.

Management, training and recruitment

'Management by results' is a well-worn and useful maxim; and if junior staff are to be managed in this way, then it is essential that the resources needed to achieve results are available to them. There has long been, and continues to be, constant failure or untimeliness in the delivery of inputs and equipment which staff promise to farmers but are quite unable to control. This is a commercial and logistical function, outside extension proper, and we make a functional suggestion about it below.²³

Supervisors will have to work much more closely with individual staff, to know what is possible for each man to do within his local conditions, to help him draw up a realistic work plan, to encourage him when he feels inadequate and reprimand him when he fails to keep to the work plan. It means that supervision will have to be an active process of leadership, not a paper procedure, and that evaluation be made against mutually discussed and established standards of required performance. The superior organisation will have to restrain its demands upon the field staff, no longer at the beck and call of all the community development services but directed to a specific agricultural function under clear supervisory authority and with clear responsibilities.

Supervisors will need to learn the methods and philosophy of field control while junior field staff become involved in, and more responsible for the planning of their work, encouraged by closer supervision and in-service technical training to feel that their work is recognised as being of value. Experimental efforts were made under the Kenyan Special Rural Development Programme (SRDP) in both these directions with training for supervisory staff in a Staff Management System (Mbere), and for junior field staff in In-service Training for Project Preparation (Kisii and S. Nyanza).²⁴ Neither experiment has been followed up, apparently because it was felt neither resulted in impressive production gains. Yet both schemes reportedly led to

Motivation of Extension Staff

improvements in staff performance, morale, and motivation, and it is unfortunate that such initiatives have not been applied over longer periods.

To return for a moment to the analogy of the salesman, to carry out his work the junior extension worker needs: (a) 'product' knowledge, ie to know what the technology can do for his farmer, what problems it can tackle, how much it costs, how it can be used in association with the farmer's other practices, how it should be applied, etc (and note, for this he does not need to know the *why*, the technicality or science of it); (b) communication and sales techniques and skills, eg listening, discussing, persuading, 'closing' — actually getting the farmer to innovate and adopt; (c) 'company' knowledge, ie to be able to convince the farmer that the extension service is a reliable, resourceful and continuing presence; (d) certain personality traits.

Requirements (a) and (b) can be taught, and the extension worker can be tested in his acquisition of these skills, both in the training centre and in the field. Experience suggests that this process of learning/teaching is a continuing rather than a one-off process. The third can of course be taught to the field worker, and he can pass on the reassurance to the farmer, but it is useless unless the worker is himself convinced that the organisation is able to back him up and he can demonstrate this capacity to the farmer. Many extension services are weakened by failures at this point, and the failure is critical for it can destroy a farmer's confidence in the whole business as well as destroying the morale of the field staff.

The fourth requirement relates more to recruitment than training. Rigorous specifications for training within and recruitment to field organisation can be too rigidly applied; a wide range of personalities can be trained who will carry out their job conscientiously; there are a few who, with little recall of what they have been taught, are none the less confident personalities. At some point, no doubt, a farmer convinced by such a character will need more able technical help, but the important first task, of 'softening-up' or 'arousing interest', will have been achieved. The personality criteria used at selection also have implications for the measurement of performance and assessment in the field. Whatever personality traits are considered desirable, however, the individual worker needs to derive from his *organisation* the required confidence and authority rather than relying on qualities which the surrounding society perceives as attributable to his ascriptive status (caste, tribe, religion etc).

Beyond these, it has become increasingly important for field staff to receive guidance on how to 'mobilise farmers', how to make best use of farmers' initiatives, how to go about stimulating and organising farmers' groups, how to communicate effectively with groups. Directives to extension workers to 'form groups' have been a recent enthusiasm of planners and aid givers, but little consideration appears to have been given to teaching field staff how to carry out this complex, and often at first discouraging activity.

The final link

It is clear that quite a lot must be demanded of the most junior field staff. Although, with really good management, we believe that their performance could meet this challenge, it certainly will not be possible to ensure personal and effective service to every farmer, without an unrealistic and perhaps unmanageable increase in staff and finance. For this reason, it is now widely recognised that extension staff will have to deal with groupings of farmers, either directly or through some intermediary at village level. There have been a number of experiments with intermediaries or auxiliaries. These fall into two main classes – an intermediary drawn from within the village itself; or some form of ‘outsider’.

The ‘outsider’ idea has taken the form of encouraging university students or graduates to do some period of ‘service’ in villages – for example, the Indonesian Study Service scheme (six months’ village service for graduates); national service in Tanzania; Youth Service/Youth Brigades (Ghana, Malawi, Indonesia); the Peoples Rural Reconstruction movement (Philippines), in which a pair of graduates serves one year in a village, concentrating on agriculture, health/hygiene and local government. Paul Devitt has suggested that an ‘outsider’, ie a person not involved in the internal factions, etc of the village itself, could be of help in listening to and gaining the confidence of the poorest group in villages (seldom reached by extension directly) and helping them to articulate their needs and to take at least some steps themselves to meet them.

Voluntary organisations can also be regarded as ‘outsiders’ – missions, charitable trusts, enterprising individual leaders, Gandhian or other ‘movements’. Many of these have succeeded in mobilising village effort, partly because they tend to live in or near the village long enough to win trust, partly because they are *not* government, partly because they are often more flexible. They are, however, limited in funding and geographical range, and therefore often create relatively tiny islands of development with popular participation.

The alternative is to seek allies and auxiliaries from within the village community itself. This has been done on a large scale in francophone Africa through ‘animateurs’ – young men taken from the village, given simple training, and sent back to the village to act as contacts and stimulators of village effort in support of government programmes. The ‘model farmer’ idea is quite widespread in Africa and Asia, and is embodied in the widely publicised ‘Benor System’ of extension training.²⁵ India has also experimented (in U.P. for example) with ‘*gramsayaks*’ – part-time village extension agents paid a small salary (also adopted in the Ethiopian – French organised – SORADEP project). *Seva Mandir*²⁶ trains young men, one from each village, and sends them back to gather round them a group of others (‘peers’ in sociological jargon, ie a ‘peer-group’) who will adopt new ideas or

Motivation of Extension Staff

work on new investments; these are supported by three *Seva Mandir* technicians (crops, animal husbandry, engineering).

Government itself can send out a similar small technical team to consult with villages, identify potential, and build a co-operating group round the resulting investment; and this is being done on quite a large scale in Pakistan.²⁷

All these schemes have certain virtues and drawbacks. Students tend to be temporary; those with a technical qualification can often be very useful. The '*animateurs*' were perhaps misused – primarily to 'sell' predecided programmes rather than to elicit the needs, wishes and energies of farmers in their village. 'Model farmers' can be suspected of being favourite children of governments, so that 'naturally their fields look well' – if anyone gets fertiliser and credit on time, they will. Voluntary organisations can do an extremely good job, provided that they eschew paternalism and the passive attitude in 'recipients' which it engenders; they can 'soften up' a village so that it becomes more receptive to government services. But such organisations are few, and financially weak. On the whole, for a country as a whole, students, voluntary organisations and other 'outsiders' can cover only a fraction of the ground, although they may successfully demonstrate a *method* and an *opportunity*. Insiders, with whom field staff can build a working collaboration, eg the Pakistan, *Seva Mandir* or 'farmer groups' (avoiding both the name and the favouritism of 'model farmers') systems seem likely to offer the most widespread and durable opportunity for extending extension.

Re-organising extension structures

Whether or not extension field staff are to be the final link between the farmer and government service, the arguments of this paper suggest that the problem of 'motivating junior staff' would be considerably assisted by re-organising extension structures. The discussion seems to have led towards an extension service that demands of its officers four qualities:

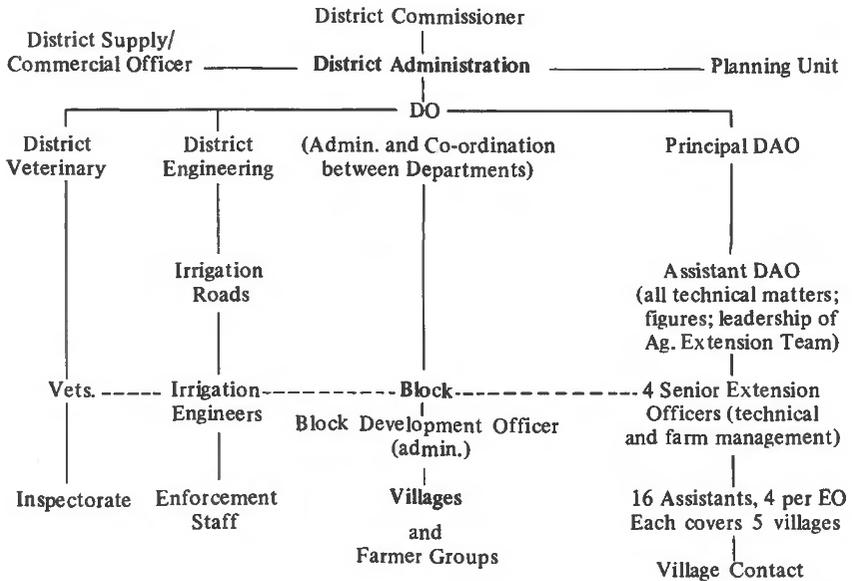
- (a) sensitivity to village conditions, people, customs, capacities. Tact and common sense in facilitating group formation, identifying possible new leadership without offending powerful old leadership, ie a catalytic, non-directive role;
- (b) administrative ability in dealing with papers, other departments, money, schemes, figures, reports, etc;
- (c) firmness in enforcement, control, seeing that regulations are observed;
- (d) wide technical knowledge, both of crops and animal husbandry (though not veterinary), and some basic farm economics and farm management training.

Motivation of Extension Staff

It would seem impossible to combine these four qualities in one junior officer. Who, then, does what? Attributes (a) – (d) can be assigned to personnel as follows:

- (a) sensitivity etc: village contact;
- (b) administration: block or district administration;
- (c) enforcement: inspectorate (veterinary; irrigation; soil erosion?);
- (d) technical advice: at least diploma-level, if possible graduate extension officer (EO), with prestige, and solely agricultural/animal duties.

The organisational pattern for the service would then look something like this:



----- = Liaison

The sort of numbers involved would be as follows:

		<i>Total population</i>	<i>Families</i> (÷ by 6)	<i>Farm families</i> (70% of families)
District		1.5 million	250,000	175,000
15 blocks	each	100,000	16,666	11,620
80 villages	each	1,250	208	145

Motivation of Extension Staff

Thus each senior extension officer (EO) has 20 villages (2,900 farmers), and each assistant has 5 villages (725 farmers) to look after. With luck, the assistant should have a village contact in each of his five villages. These figures represent a high-density area (350–500 population per sq mile) of small holdings, and rather large blocks. At lower densities and the same block area, the number of farmers per officer would be correspondingly less.

Note that provision has been made for a *District Supply or Commercial Officer*. We tend to think that the supply, distribution and credit functions are not an extension job at all. The sources of supply might be private merchants, co-operatives, state corporations, or a mix of the three; the District Commercial Officer would be charged with supervision of the supply systems, reporting direct to the district administration for action at higher levels where necessary. He would monitor seed supply; fertiliser supply; pesticides and sprayers; and other equipment. Credit would be run wholly by the credit-giving organisations (contracts, recoveries, etc) probably a bank or a corporation, possibly a co-operative if an efficient one is available.

The extension officer and his assistants

The four Senior Extension Officers would be freed of most administrative and enforcement duties. The Block Development Officer would act as administrator for the service, and the Veterinary and Engineering (Irrigation and Roads) departments would each have an inspectorate or enforcement branch, with a liaison man at block level to run the subordinate junior field staff. The Senior EOs would provide technical and farm management advice, working under the leadership of the Assistant DAO, and in turn assisted by four assistants each. The role of these assistants would be making contacts, giving on the spot advice, assessing where and when an EO was needed or technical help from eg the veterinary service. They would no longer be simply a tool of persuasion for objectives handed down to them from above, but actively involved in the motivating process (where ‘motivating’ is read as ‘energising’), in the examination of problems and discussion of solutions, a source of quick help and information in dealing with difficulties, shortages etc, and an essential intermediary in dealing with the development bureaucracy. They would be directed to the perception of potential and opportunity, rather than to the delivery of fixed remedies for narrow ranges of problems. They should have a career prospect of becoming full extension officers, judged by field performance standards, and given the opportunity of regular in-service technical training.

Summary of recommendations

In sum, what is being advocated in this paper is:

- (a) to reduce the disadvantages of a necessarily official organisation by redefining roles and tasks and by some restructuring of extension

- administration so as to make it rational and advantageous for junior staff – the make-or-break point of extension effort – to work hard and conscientiously at extension goals;
- (b) a recasting of the role of extension agents to give them a wider, more responsible brief that is none the less closely and supportively directed and supervised, to move their work closer to the reality of serving the farmer; and
 - (c) far more personal, in-the-field management and support of staff and a review of recruitment, training and promotion procedures.

References

- 1 The 1955 second annual evaluation report on the Block development programme in India noted: 'an emphasis on organisational compliance and official responsibility (among block personnel) is threatening to turn a state-induced popular movement of rural regeneration into an official programme of tasks in which the people [are] asked to participate.' Quoted in B. Mook: *Value and Action in Indian Bureaucracy*, IDS (Sussex) Discussion Paper No 65, December 1974, p117.
- 2 'Bureaucratic' is not in this paper to be taken as a pejorative term, but rather to indicate an administration that is restricted by precedent, regulated by legislation or fiat, bound by rules, functionally demarcated to a high degree, within which authority is highly graded, and promotion is related to seniority and paper qualifications rather than merit and practical experience. These characteristics are necessary and efficient attributes of organisations whose objectives are routine, predictable and unhurried.
- 3 I have in mind in these paragraphs an analogy with the Department of Health and Social Security in the UK. The DHSS is a bureaucracy *par excellence* down to the level of counter clerk in the disbursement offices, complemented by a field staff of experts such as social workers, child care officers, etc who are supposedly trained to 'stop, look and listen', to diagnose problems, to assist the needy to approach the appropriate agency, to serve as flexible liaison staff between the multiplicity of individual needs and the government administration. The problems of organisation and management of staff training, and co-ordination between departments are not dissimilar to those facing extension organisations. Regulations often prevent even the experts, let alone the counter clerks, from following the style which their training is designed to impose on them.
- 4 Ascroft, Roling, Kariuki, Chege: *Extension and the Forgotten Farmer*, Bulletin No 37, Institute for Development Studies, Nairobi. Published Wageningen 1973.
- 5 Farmers' Associations (Malaysia) and Farmer Service Societies (India) are examples of rigid delivery systems. See: German Foundation for International Development: *Extension and other Services supporting the small farmer in Asia*, Berlin, 1972.
- 6 Guy Hunter, *Modernising Peasant Societies*, Oxford University Press, London, 1969, p202.
- 7 For further discussion of (a) to (c), see Ishwar Dayal, Kuldeep Mathur, M. Battacharaya: *District Administration*, Macmillan Co Ltd of India, New Delhi, 1976.
- 8 This is not to deny that central planning, and central determination of certain cate-

Motivation of Extension Staff

- gories, or levels, of decision-making are both necessary and efficient. See Guy Hunter's chapter 'Planning and the Small Farmer' (p42), for an analysis of centre v local relationships.
- 9 S.H. Thavaraj: 'Development of an optimum irrigation system planning strategy for the Muda irrigation project', Paper C7 to ODI Workshop on Choices in Irrigation Management, Canterbury, 1976. Paper available in mimeo from the AAU.
 - 10 The extreme constraint imposed on local discretion is well illustrated in *Studies in Block Development and Co-operative Organisation*, ed M. Halse, Indian Institute of Management, Ahmedabad, 1966. The power of a BDO to sanction a grant or expenditure not conforming to the state pattern was limited to Rs 50. Enormous delays in getting technical sanction for projects were recorded, especially if the schemes were slightly different from the model suggested by the State Government (pp9-10).
 - 11 ODI has heavily emphasised this function. See *Stimulating Local Development*, ODI, 1976.
 - 12 See, for example, D.K. Leonard: 'Organisation theory for Agricultural Development Agencies: an Analysis of the Management of Kenya's Extension Agents', mimeo, 1974, which suggests that 'over-education' of junior extension staff at secondary school level weakens their motivation to be good extension workers in the field.
 - 13 R. Chambers: *Managing Rural Development: Ideas and Experience from East Africa*, Uppsala, 1974. He has nice examples of the consequences of 'reporting pathology', p64.
 - 14 R. Chambers: 'The concept of Co-ordination', Paper 5g to the Second International Seminar on Change in Agriculture, Reading, 1974.
 - 15 'A quasi-military or highly authoritarian and hierarchical organisation is inappropriate for agricultural extension where this is meant to be adaptive, innovative, and advisory. A relaxed and permissive type and style of organisation is inappropriate for policing functions or for rationing the supply of resources such as water as between individuals and groups. The current priorities in many places are for the agricultural extension organisations to develop freer communication between levels, to become more research oriented and at the same time to become more manipulable, for example in reaching new target groups of the poorer farmers; and for organisations which manage and allocate access to communal resources to tighten up, to become more military and disciplined in style and more predictable and reliable in performance'. R. Chambers, *ibid*.
 - 16 *District Administration*, pp10-11.
 - 17 See S.J. Heginbotham, *Cultures in Conflict*, Columbia University Press, 1975, for an extended discussion and illustration of this point.
 - 18 *Value and Action in Indian Bureaucracy*, pp143, 146.
 - 19 *Managing Rural Development*, p56.
 - 20 'Status symbols' for junior staff may thus be functional both normatively and practically; they can also be carried to absurd lengths in situations where the mere provision of quasi-military uniforms is supposed to improve junior staff's morale 'at a stroke'.
 - 21 The measurement of disbursement is an indication of the *efficiency of the delivery service*; it is only a surrogate for measuring an *individual's performance*.
 - 22 'The Concept of Co-ordination'.
 - 23 See also Kuldeep Mathur *et al*, *District Administration*, pp44-5.
 - 24 'Agricultural Extension and Farmers "Training"', Chapter 8, E.S. Mbugua, S. Schönherr, P. Wyeth, in *Second Overall Evaluation Report*, Occasional Paper No 12, IDS, Nairobi, 1975.

- 25 D. Benor, a consultant to the World Bank, has put forward a detailed and much publicised scheme of extension management (primarily for HYV development) which includes a requirement that each extension officer should find a 'model farmer' in the village as his contact; and the model farmer should find 'followers'. The scheme is in operation in the Chambal irrigation area of Rajasthan.
- 26 A voluntary organisation in Udaipur, Rajasthan.
- 27 Daudzai Project and elsewhere, particularly in the North West Frontier Province.

Chapter 2:

Notes on Poverty-oriented Rural Development

Paul Devitt

The Ministry of Overseas Development (ODM), in common with several other aid agencies, is rethinking its development strategy. Recent official publications¹ and the establishment of a Department of Rural Development within ODM indicate a resolve to direct overseas aid towards the rural poor. The analyses and diagnoses of aid policy in relation to rural poverty so far published by the Government provide some insight into what happens to aid in the upper and middle echelons of agency and local government bureaucracy and point to some causes at these levels of aid failing to reach the poor. To do justice to the problem the discussion needs to be carried further, to the level of the village, and within the village to the poorer members of the community. These notes consist of some preliminary thoughts on the nature and causes of rural poverty (Section A), some reasons for the difficulties most development programmes have encountered in reaching the poor (Section B), and some suggestions for poverty-oriented aid programmes (Section C).

Section A: On the nature and causes of rural poverty

A1 Rural poverty is not just a shortage of material goods. It is usually part of a syndrome which includes low status in the community, lack of influence, economic and political dependence, insecure or irregular sources of income, a limited range of economic and social opportunities (perceived or actual), little communication with or understanding of the world beyond the local community and a mistrust of its representatives, a tendency to associate innovation with high risk and to avoid both, and a preoccupation with immediate issues like hunger, shelter, tax arrears, and various carnal pleasures.

Poverty normally has the effect of narrowing the horizons of possibility. It saps energy, not only for physical work, but also for opening the mind to opportunities. The poor tend to inhabit a parochial, and culturally, as well as economically, impoverished and diminished world within their rural society.

To a greater extent than is generally believed, there are rural cultures of poverty whose bounds are not readily visible to the stranger, but which are intensely real both to those whose lives are enclosed by them and to other members of the rural community. Depictions of the distribution of wealth in a village community will often follow a familiar parabolic curve, suggesting a continuity of economic and political opportunity. But in practice this may conceal well-nigh impenetrable barriers between the economic, social and political world of the poor and that of the not-so-poor. There is often a fine

1 ODM, *An Account of the British Aid Programme*, Cmnd 6223, September 1975; ODM, *The Changing Emphasis in British Aid Policies: More Help for the Poorest*, White Paper, Cmnd 6270, October, 1975; Select Committee on Overseas Development, *First Report*, February, 1976.

but crucial distinction between families who live in the realm of dependency and those upon whom they depend. One facet of this boundary is that it constitutes an opportunity barrier. Opportunities made available to the community as a whole will permeate only as far as this barrier in such a situation, and this will seem to the majority of local people a natural and just circumstance.

A great deal has been written by anthropologists about patron/client relationships in traditional rural communities, but so far not enough attention has been paid by development workers to the implications of this concept. The idea that certain members of the rural community may acquire or have bestowed on them by hereditary right the duties and privileges of givers, while others likewise have the role of receivers, is very general, and is far from extinct in our own society. It is most obvious in societies where caste or aristocracy or a vigorous form of capitalism are prominent features of the social organisation, but it is also prevalent in less conspicuous forms in societies whose structural divisions are much less apparent, and where mobility between the categories is possible, as in many parts of Africa. This phenomenon has received far less attention either by anthropologists or development workers than it deserves.

To maintain the distinction between givers and receivers and to support its functions the givers must have a near monopoly of economic opportunity and political influence, which are complementary to one another. This monopoly applies not only to the social and economic resources within the local compass but also to those made available from external sources. The receivers qualify for a share in the available resources and opportunities by virtue of their allegiance to specific givers, and what they get is generally more in the nature of largesse than of a contractual right. It is therefore profoundly disruptive to an established social order of this kind for receivers to claim direct access to important or new resources as of right and unmediated by their patrons, the givers.

This system of distributing the resources available to a community has been applied with many variations in most parts of the world from ancient times. It is founded on the mutual advantage of givers and receivers. The former are expected to provide a minimum of material support, protection and leadership to the latter. The receivers give their labour and cede any but minor claims to property and social influence to the givers. But the satisfactory functioning of the system depends on a fairly high degree of local autonomy and self-sufficiency. The givers must normally invest a high proportion of their resources in the local community and enjoy the loyal support of their dependents. For example, they must invest in land which the receivers work and from which the latter draw a significant amount of benefit, or in cattle which the receivers tend and of whose milk, meat, draught power, etc they enjoy a share.

Poverty-oriented Rural Development

The system weakens and lends itself to exploitation of the poor when the givers find it possible and profitable to invest their resources outside the community, for instance by selling grain or cattle and investing the money in the bank; or when the givers begin to look beyond their own community for a forum in which to exercise their social and political influence and from which to draw support and confirmation; and when they become increasingly independent of the co-operation of the receivers, as when labour-intensive agriculture becomes mechanised, or traditional stock-keeping becomes commercialised.

Many rural communities have now entered this phase of disintegration of the old system of giving and receiving. Those better placed, as givers, to make use of the new economic opportunities offered by commercial markets for agricultural produce, or by development programmes and projects, have tended to flourish. But the receivers have generally remained poor, or, increasingly cut off from the resources of their patrons, have become more and more impoverished. Change in the structure of rural society, which determines the allocation of opportunity, has been relatively slow. The attitude of dependency proper to receivers has remained, even if the object of dependence has been transferred from a local patron to the Government.

These observations on the nature of rural poverty, in so far as they can be applied to any specific rural community, offer a partial explanation of the discouraging results most rural development projects have so far had on poverty. They suggest a need for greater sensitivity to the predicament of the rural poor in each situation where a rural development programme is contemplated (cf Section A7 below).

A2 One of the aspects of poverty is a characteristic psychology of defeat. When poverty is treated by a development agency as nothing but a material problem, relief normally lasts only as long as the aid continues, and an attitude of dependency is cultivated, or even engendered where it did not exist before. Dependency is the psychological antithesis of development, and poverty-oriented programmes are especially prone to create a milieu in which the poor are assigned and readily adopt a passive role, to which in many cases they have always been accustomed. Equally naturally, the development workers assume the responsibility for thinking, deciding, organising and providing most of the effort to initiate change, in fulfilment of the expectations of their sponsors. Structurally the relationship between givers and receivers remains much as it was in days of yore, but the traditional givers have been replaced by an alien breed of hyperactive experts who see their relationship with the receivers from a quite untraditional perspective.

The way is then prepared for a perpetuation of the attitudes of dependency and defeat on the part of the poor, and, in spite of the disavowals of project staff, for their assuming the role of patrons and dispensers of largesse.

A3 Persistent poverty is as much a social as an economic phenomenon. In rural society the poor normally lack influence as well as possessions. They may therefore be incapable of modifying the social arrangements which prevent them from improving their own status or increasing their share of the available economic opportunities. They are often, as suggested in A2 above, both psychologically and materially dependent on patrons, land owners, moneylenders, etc. Such relationships, where they are still intact, are often seen by the poor as a life-line, in which case they will not do anything which might weaken it. They may regard the possibility of a move towards economic independence by themselves as a threat to their status as clients. They may even avoid co-operating with an outside agency for fear of their existing patrons severing the sustaining bond on grounds of their unfaithfulness.

A4 Poverty is often hereditary. It may be so in a formal sense, as when castes or rigid classes are allocated economic opportunities strictly in accordance with their position in the social hierarchy. Or it may be a natural result of a poor father being unable to help his children to get themselves established with land, cattle or other productive assets. Under such circumstances, where wealth and poverty are traditionally regarded as the proper conditions of certain sections of society, attempts to alleviate poverty may be seen by many people, and not only the rich, as a threatening disturbance of the social arrangements upon which many livelihoods depend. The better-off are likely to resist it, not unreasonably, as it often seems to entail (even if it does not do so in fact) the division of a cake of fixed size into more equal portions, resulting in an inevitable shrinkage of the larger segments. The same people may also resist change of this type because they fear it will deprive them of the labour of the poor, or at least drive labour costs up.

A5 Poverty is sometimes due to sheer ineptitude, idleness or personal bad luck. Although there are many rural situations in which the allocation of economic opportunity is hierarchical and hereditary, there are perhaps as many in which able and determined people, beginning with nothing, can build up sizeable estates and elevate their social status and income by their own hard work and application.

The failure to recognise that some people are poor, not because they are discriminated against by an unjust society, or because they had a bad start in life, but because they are bone idle or stupid has resulted in much unnecessary frustration for development workers.

A6 Rural poverty is an elusive problem. The poor are often inconspicuous, inarticulate and unorganised. Their voices may not be heard at public meetings in communities where it is customary for only the big men to put their views. It is rare to find a body or institution that adequately represents the poor in a certain community or area. Outsiders and government officials invariably find it more profitable and congenial to converse with local influentials than with the uncommunicative poor.

Unless paupers and poverty are deliberately and persistently sought, they tend to remain effectively screened from outside inquirers.

A7 The nature of rural poverty is doubtless a fitting topic on which to build a sizeable research industry. The results of academic research into this subject have, however, been neither copious nor very useful so far. This very fact could lend weight to an argument in support of spending large sums of money earmarked for development on gathering the data which are thought to be necessary to enable practical work to begin.

Understanding is certainly needed, but it is best acquired in the course of a day-to-day dialogue between practical action and results. The psychological, and invariably the chronological, gaps between research, report-writing, report-reading, policy-making, planning, recruitment and implementation are usually so great that only the most tenuous relation between the original research and action at the village level can exist.

The people who need a working understanding of poverty at the village level in a specific situation are those who are on the spot, working towards its alleviation. Their understanding, their capacity to become identified with the human situation and to become effective in alleviating some of its sufferings will grow out of their daily experience, out of their own failures and accomplishments, and not out of reports written by long-departed researchers.

If reports have a function in promoting understanding of what to do about rural poverty, it is as a means of sharing the considered experience of one who has already done a job in one place with those who are toiling elsewhere.

In poverty-oriented programmes (though not necessarily in all development projects), reports are not an essential prerequisite for the release of funds and the initiation of practical action. The success of such programmes depends on choosing the right people to send into the field, sensitive people with a facility for learning on the job. These rural development 'general practitioners' will need open minds and hearts and eyes and ears much more than reports or qualifications to carry out their work.

Section B: On the ineffectiveness of development projects in reaching the poor

B1 One of the lessons of experience is that there is no single approach to the alleviation of rural poverty which is always and everywhere preferable. In some circumstances highly specialised, technically complex and intensively administered schemes have apparently attained their objectives and benefited many small farmers. In others, sectoral programmes, such as public health, nutrition, rural roads and village water supply projects have greatly contributed to the quality of rural life. And innumerable small grass-roots community development type schemes have provided local amenities and elevated local self-esteem.

External aid has been an essential component in many of these ventures, but at present aid agencies in many countries are concerned that their efforts to tackle the growing problems of rural poverty have been less effective than the situation demands. There is a remarkable degree of unanimity among agencies that a new approach to overseas aid is needed, and that what is called rural development may be highly effective in meeting this need.

Rural development (RD) is variously defined, but the intentions are generally the same. The World Bank defines it as:

‘... a strategy designed to improve the economic and social conditions of life of a specific group of people – the rural poor. It involves extending the benefits of development to the poorest among those who seek a livelihood in the rural areas.’¹

ODM’s definition is broadly similar:

‘... the improvement of living conditions in rural areas, through the increased productivity of agricultural and related enterprises and, if it is to benefit the lower income groups, the equitable and fair distribution of the wealth so created, taking into account the need to maintain a balance between individual consumption, investment and improvements in communal social services.’²

Despite the qualifying ‘if’ in this passage, it is clear from the text that the improvements to be brought about are in fact intended for the benefit of the rural poor.

B2 The recognition of rural poverty on a vast scale is not new. It was prominent among the concerns of local administrators in colonial times, and ‘community development’ was a term used for one kind of approach to the problem. Many other approaches have been used, including settlement schemes, credit schemes, co-operatives, thrift and loan societies, mass literacy campaigns, etc. They have all enjoyed mixed success, but the prevailing attitude towards them is, if not disparagement, at least a desire to concentrate this rather motley experience into a single, coherent attack on rural poverty.

One result of this determination has been the ‘integrated RD project’ approach which is now being applied with great vigour and at vast expense in a number of countries (eg Lesotho, Malawi and Nigeria). This type of scheme rarely has the effect of ‘breeding’ development, which is a fundamental objective of the approach advocated in these notes. Although it is too early to pass any final judgement, it appears unlikely that such integrated projects will be capable of replication by local initiative, since their cost and complexity are too great to be borne except by aid agencies. Even if the integrated projects were to

1 World Bank, *Rural Development: Sector Policy Paper*, February, 1975.

2 ODM, Cmnd 6270, p16.

provide a practical answer to rural poverty in certain circumstances, there would remain a great need for the low-key approach advocated here.

B3 To effect positive change in a situation of rural poverty invariably needs large amounts of effort. The first question is, where is that effort, or energy, going to come from; the second is, where will the energy come from to continue the work after the project has terminated? There are certain circumstances in which a 'big push' from an externally aided programme will overcome the inertia of rural stagnation and enable the local economy to propel itself thereafter. This approach is normally inappropriate to area-level RD programmes, because the high-powered methods for effecting rapid change under project conditions are often difficult for the local community to sustain, in which case the impetus provided by the project dwindles, or the local government is obliged to devote a disproportionate amount of its scarcest resources to keeping the movement alive.

The assumption made here is that the major proportion of the energy, in terms of material resources, labour, decision-making and organisation, and even the application of technical skills, should come from the local community. The function of external aid is to *stimulate* and *supplement* local effort, but in no case to supplant it. This makes it imperative for local effort and initiative to set the pace and direction of development, and for external planning and assistance to be kept to the necessary minimum.

B4 The amount and kinds of input to a rural area should be sensitively adjusted to the capacity of the local economy and administration to absorb them. Too much innovation too soon, or innovations which, however technically necessary, are perceived by local people to be inappropriate to their needs, are not conducive to development. On the contrary they are likely to swamp local initiative (especially among the poor where initiative is nascent anyway) and to create a situation in which the local contribution to the development effort is patently insignificant in relation to that being poured in from the outside. Many projects begin with massive inputs in order to get the ball rolling, and thus alienate themselves from most of the people, especially the poor. It is suggested here that inputs be very carefully matched, in amount and type, to the capacity of local people to integrate them into their way of life. As development proceeds this capacity will increase, but the rate at which the development of local capability is proceeding should determine the volume and complexity of inputs. Perverse effects will result from trying to build up local capacity too fast, as indeed from trying to force local capacity to grow by pumping in innovations. Development has its own natural pace: it can be encouraged and stimulated, but not force-marched.

B5 In some circumstances, however, local development may be impeded by the lack of certain facilities or infrastructure which cannot be provided from

local resources. Commenting on the need for local, small-scale investment by government or outside agencies, Guy Hunter says: 'farmers are being asked to modernise their methods in a local environment in which, without investment, modernisation is too risky or impossible'.¹ An example would be the case of a village to which access was difficult and dangerous by vehicles other than quadrupeds. Most agricultural inputs would then be prohibitively expensive or impossible to obtain, and any agricultural surpluses would be unmarketable.

Under such conditions prior investment or an agency could have an enabling effect on local development. But this is to regard the investment as something inert, whereas it could be used in a more positive way as part of a bargain between the development agency and the local people, thus acting as a stimulant to indigenous initiative.

B6 An important objective of rural development is to foster or generate local progressive movements which are self-regulating and self-propagating. There appears to be an inverse relationship between the scale and complexity of development programmes on the one hand and their capacity to regulate and propagate themselves on the other.

One of the most serious failures of our present approach to RD is the low rate of natural reproduction of projects. Much of what passes for spontaneous reproduction is mere replication, which involves doing virtually the whole project all over again in a different place. There is nothing wrong with replication *per se*, especially when it involves technically complex, high-input, concentrated projects. But it is quite inappropriate for poverty-oriented programmes whose impetus is derived from the growth and maturation of energies already present in the community, but latent. Replication is also impractical here because of the diversity, immensity and the general distribution of poverty.

Many projects have very little capacity for self-regulation, generate hardly any energy of their own, and depend on continuous stimulation and regulation from outside. One of the perennial problems of RD projects is therefore the complex and usually inefficient bureaucracies they require. This is, however, an artificial problem induced by the prevailing megalomania of development planners. Healthy RD movements, like healthy organisms, have their own devices for maintaining internal equilibrium. But this depends on their internal capacity for self-correction never being overreached by their size. Hubris in development planning, as in all mythology, leads inexorably to the Fall.

Small undertakings which are well within the capacity of ordinary people to understand and participate in have a good chance of appealing to neighbouring communities and thereby of propagating themselves. They breed the

1 Hunter, G., 'Visit to India: Notes and Observations', ODI, mimeo.

confidence and the competence to keep things running in spite of setbacks. A helping hand from outside encourages and strengthens local resolve; but an effort by outsiders to turn it into an ambitious project smothers the incipient indigenous enterprise and, if pursued, renders external control, funding and motivation essential.

B7 Development almost everywhere is retarded by deficiencies in intermediate-level staff. Able and ambitious local officials, including those trained as counterparts to expatriate project staff, tend to get promoted away from the rural areas to urban jobs. One of the reasons for this is that the training usually given to these officials is inappropriate to the job, which is often much more demanding of resourcefulness, patience and endurance than of technical or administrative skills. This is especially true of situations of rural poverty; it applies to a lesser extent where the local economy is more complex and advanced.

A high proportion of the local officials known to the writer have aspirations towards a life-style, income and type of work which are incompatible with development work among the rural poor. Most of their rewards for success and penalties for failure in their work come from their official seniors, and not from the local community, and hardly at all from the poor within that community.¹ Success and failure are defined according to criteria set up by their seniors, which are not necessarily the same as those of the local community. This suggests the need for a different method of selection of local staff, from local people, who could be expected to remain in their own villages, working perhaps on a part-time basis, being trained in specific skills which are in immediate demand in the community, and answerable in the first instance to the people they are supposed to be serving.

How else do we try to stem the flow of brain and brawn from rural to urban areas? Rural life is becoming less and less appealing to many people. One of the most noticeable effects of school education is to foster discontent with rural life. Objectively as well as subjectively, it is likely that rural villages are becoming less culturally interesting and less economically rewarding places to live in than they used to be. Therefore the people with more initiative and energy tend to move away, which further erodes the cultural and economic life of the villages. It is a vicious circle, which is not broken by trying to make up for the loss with officials transferred from elsewhere. A contribution towards reviving village life could be made by employing and training more local people to fulfil specific local needs.

B8 Professional people may experience a dilemma when working on rural RD programmes. The expert works among and ostensibly for the welfare of the rural peasantry, who typically did not invite him in the first place, have

1 This, and much else in the present paragraph, is considered more fully in Janice Jiggins' paper, especially her Section I, A.

very little idea of what he is there for, or how his work relates to their needs. But the expert works for a large organisation which has employed him for his professional skills, and expects him to demonstrate his competence in this specific field. His problem is therefore an exaggerated version of the indigenous local official's, in that both are required to satisfy largely incompatible sets of demands from different quarters.

B9 Much RD research is carried out for the benefit of planners who are remote from the scene of action and who are in fact unable to use most of the research data for the practical purposes of assisting the poor to develop. Most RD planning is carried out at a great distance from the poor farmer, so that the efficacy, and in many cases the appropriateness, of the plans are considerably diminished by the time they are implemented. The closer to the level of the poor farmer the decisions are made, the less the need for research and central planning – two activities which absorb large amounts of time, money and skill.

If the nerve centre of a RD programme is remote from the scene of action, an elaborate, and usually inefficient, system of communications and feedback is required. Maintaining this system and correcting its deficiencies can absorb a major proportion of the resources devoted to a programme, while at the same time it tends to pre-empt local initiative and fails to activate local effort. The assumption that the planners and aid donors need increasingly detailed information to enable them to identify, plan, implement, cost and evaluate programmes is due to a reluctance to accept that our own scientific and systematic approach may not be conducive to fostering self-sustaining development among the rural poor.

B10 In many rural areas external resources such as technical and administrative skills, machines, fuels, chemicals, etc are difficult and expensive to obtain. A reliable supply of these can sometimes be guaranteed by an efficient project administration, but once that has departed the supply very often fails, causing the work of the programme to disintegrate. Repeated experiences of this kind suggest that an essential component of a RD programme is the fostering of independence and self-reliance in the provision of basic inputs and services. Taken to its logical extreme, such a policy would place an insuperable constraint on development, but interpreted intelligently it provides a useful guide to the direction as well as to the pace of development.

For example, agricultural minimum packages containing seed, fertiliser, insecticide, etc may produce good results even for small farmers as long as the supply and distribution of the materials is organised by a project or programme. But can the local extension service, or local traders, or any private or public institution maintain a reliable supply after the programme has terminated? It is often assumed that this is easy to arrange, but in practice the results are discouraging. Many RD and agricultural projects depend heavily on increased yields from chemical fertilisers, but few countries have

the resources to produce their own. They are therefore dependent on external supplies which could become increasingly unreliable in the future. Already chemical fertilisers are subject to dramatic and unforeseen shortages and price rises, and the poorer farmers in the remoter rural areas (ie those who can afford or obtain any fertilisers) bear the brunt of these fluctuations. Is it reasonable to encourage such farmers to adopt a style of agriculture which depends on such an unreliable resource? An agricultural system which is geared to the use of chemical fertilisers is usually inferior to the traditional system when the fertilisers are not available, or cannot be afforded, or are delivered too late. Many of the HYVs currently being recommended for use by small farmers are unsuitable for use without fertiliser.

If fertiliser and modern seed are subtracted from the package of recommended inputs, not much is left. But other avenues, which have been remarkably neglected, could be opened for investigation, as is suggested in Section C.

B11 There are some rural areas in which agriculture contributes a relatively small proportion to the average family's income. In Lesotho, for instance, in the Thaba Bosiu RD project area (IBRD), a recent survey showed that the average farm household received 6% of its total income from arable agriculture, 13% from livestock, and 80% from off-farm sources. This is an extreme case, but it emphasises the need to find out whether the rural poor of a potential project area do in fact see agriculture as their economic mainstay before mounting an agricultural project. It may be that projects in other areas of the local economy are regarded as more important and will therefore attract greater interest and popular participation.

It is often the case that the poor people in a rural community have a significantly different economy from the rest. People with no land or no livestock are obvious examples, but in many parts of Africa there are no clearly defined classes of landless or stockless people. Here the economy may appear to be mainly arable or pastoral, but a large proportion of the poorer families may derive most of their income from other sources which are much harder to discover. In these cases the answer to poverty may not be to help the landless to acquire land, and the stockless to get stock, since there may be good reasons why such people could not manage these assets, initially at least. The most appropriate and effective solutions will emerge from the consciousness of the people concerned, especially in the early stages of externally assisted rural development. The time for a more rational and perhaps more radical approach to the problems of material deprivation is reached only at a maturer stage of development.

Section C: Some suggestions for poverty-oriented development programmes

C1 These notes are concerned mainly with rural development at the village level because: (a) it is the level most often neglected, although often alluded

to, in discussions of rural poverty, and (b) it is the level on which rural development begins.

This bias towards the lowest level is not meant to imply that activity on higher levels is irrelevant to rural development. Each organisational level has its appropriate concerns and activities. The village, the district, the province, and the state have their own responsibilities, which overlap, but which are basically non-substitutable. It is no more possible for the planner in the capital city to design a programme of rural development in a specific area than it is for small farmers in that area to devise a national agricultural policy. Neither is near enough to the ineluctable facts of the situation to deal effectively with them.

It is therefore necessary for the area planners and the state planners, and whatever other planners there are above the village level, to try to provide an environment which is conducive to development at the village level. But this should not be mistaken for development itself. One of the reasons for the present rethink of RD strategy is the realisation that however necessary these supra-village activities are, they are not helping the poor very much. Nor can they reach the poor simply by lowering the aim of the developmental battery and sighting on a new target.

The rural poor are generally playing a passive role in development at present. The priority is therefore to develop their capacity to assume responsibility for their particular level of activity. Area level and state level planning are in this sense subordinate to village level planning, because mutual consultation and co-operation cannot begin until the poor are ready to think and act on their own behalf.

C2 The rural poor generally face insuperable obstacles to their development as human beings and as communities. Even in their limited capacity as producers of economic goods, they are often oppressed by a network of interlocking vicious circles. In this restricted space opportunities for the normal gratifications of life and for exerting some degree of control over one's economic destiny are almost absent.

In these circumstances it may seem that a carefully planned, liberally funded and efficiently run 'integrated development programme' is what is needed. When the litany of the woes of the poor has been recited in justification of such action, and the catastrophic consequences of neglecting the situation have been calculated, and the incremental misery consequent on rising population and declining yields has been determined, we are disposed to act with purposeful resolution. We define our objectives and lay our plans in logical sequence, allowing for a certain amount of flexibility and local consultation. Whatever the merits of such a positive approach to the problem, it is not development and it is not normally conducive to development, for its primary intention is not to evoke from the local people a spontaneous response to

hitherto unperceived means of meeting their needs. Rather its intention is to convert people to the acceptance of a preconceived plan of action and to enlist their energies in a concerted effort. This kind of approach, through rational decisions directed towards a defined objective, is suitable for situations of great urgency, such as wars or floods, where immediate danger supplies the emotional fuel for strenuous action and where the prospect of an imminent and disastrous end is a powerful incentive for the general acceptance of plans laid down by a central authority. As long as the plans are clearly directed towards a satisfactory conclusion to the emergency, and are effective, most people will accept them. But emergencies cannot be protracted indefinitely without some weakening of the general will to co-operate with the authorities. The poverty of the rural poor is not for them an emergency: for most it is a way of life. The information that there will be a *real* emergency in a decade or two if nothing is done now has very little emotional impact on people whose attention is focused on personal survival for this day or this week.

The attention of very poor people is seldom engaged in the clarification of social or personal objectives unless these are felt to be imminent and attainable. Poor people tend to have narrow horizons; distant aims and alternative modes of existence appear remote and unreal. The real problems, to which nearly all available physical, mental and emotional energy are given, are those which are here and now. This appears very clearly in the books on the 'culture of poverty' by Oscar Lewis. It can be verified in any African village.

The first stage in development could be regarded as a growing realisation by individual people that although the total context of the poverty which envelops them is unalterable, there are ways in which each person can begin to tackle his own immediate problems more effectively, help his neighbours to deal with theirs, and receive help from them. One man cannot pass through a hostile country alone; nor can many if each travels alone; but together they can reach their destination unharmed. So if people are disposed firstly to identify their own most pressing and immediate personal needs, secondly to see how far their individual priorities coincide with the priorities of others, and thirdly to muster their individual and joint resources and energies, new opportunities begin to open out.

In fostering this awareness of new possibilities, and in facilitating the co-operation of individuals and groups who previously had avoided common undertakings, there is a special role for someone who is not of the local community, but who can identify with the aims of its least privileged members. The position of the outsider, the marginal man, in traditional communities has been the subject of an impressive body of anthropological research over the past decade or two,¹ and it is highly relevant to rural development.

1 The writings of Frederik Barth and Clifford Geertz are among the best known in this field.

The outsider who has a sufficient understanding of the local community to participate in its affairs is not subject in the same degree as locals to the parochial jealousies, factional antagonisms and conservative influences as are the indigenes. He is outside the long-standing feuds among local groups and can, if he is skilful enough, foster co-operation among them without compromising himself or causing either party to lose face. As an outsider he is likely to be less subject to the local prejudices about what is or what is not possible and feasible, and he may perceive opportunities which had lain obscured from local awareness by long habituation. And because of his nebulous status in the local social structure, he has more room to manoeuvre and to communicate not only with members of the local community but with external agencies and officials.

To release the energies of the poor, and to deploy them in the service of development, RD programmes must address themselves directly and immediately at those grave and constant concerns which evoke the strongest emotions. Only these vital and burning issues command enough energy to produce effective action in the lethargic atmosphere of perennial poverty. Their specific form differs from one community to another, and may change over time. Therefore no master-plan based on a theoretical understanding of the major emotive concerns of the poor will command real popular support. For rural development to become a living and self-propagating movement it must be rooted in the deep convictions and practical commitment of ordinary people. It cannot be planted there as a prefabricated structure and still live.

As the capacity of the local people to see beyond the immediate imperatives of their own poverty increases, enabling them to set slightly more ambitious targets for their endeavours, RD planning on a larger scale (eg of integrated projects) may become feasible. Whether and when this point is reached depends mainly on the changing attitudes and capabilities of the local people. Change is likely to be slow and unpredictable, and at times capricious, and attempts at directing the pace and orientation of attitude change from the outside are likely to produce perverse results.

A diagnosis of poverty based on these observations suggests a need for fairly radical treatment, and the following notes are an attempt to outline a suitable programme.

C3 The programme rests on men and women whom we call rural development general practitioners – GPs. Most will be young, having recently left university or college. It does not matter what degrees or qualifications they have as long as they have learnt to think independently, and are willing to spend at least two years in a rural community among the poor.

Although the programme will involve young people predominantly, older people who have retired or are willing to devote two years or so of their lives

Poverty-oriented Rural Development

to the service of the poor should be welcomed.¹

The GP is to find quarters in one of the villages where he is working and is to reside there. He is allocated an area small enough in size and population for him to become personally acquainted with members of at least a third of the local households within his first three months. Five hundred households would probably be a maximum.

Several GPs, say from three to six, would be appointed to adjacent localities, which together would form a recognisable local economic or political community. The area served by this team of GPs should therefore constitute a convenient unit for 'area planning', which might be undertaken at a later stage, if the initial phase of development had generated sufficient local capability and participation.

Administrative responsibility for the team of GPs could be assumed by the district or provincial arm of the ministry concerned with rural development. But professional supervision would be provided by a senior person, possibly one of the older recruits mentioned above. He would be responsible for two or three teams of GPs and their areas.

The following paragraphs outline the practical means of setting up and operating such a programme.

C3.1 In many low-income countries rural poverty is found nearly everywhere. It is therefore not particularly important where one starts a poverty-oriented RD programme. One might wish to avoid places where a peasant rebellion is brewing, or where household incomes are known to be uniformly high in relation to the rest of the country, but apart from such fairly obvious deterrents one could as well begin work in one part of the country as in another.

Apart from a preliminary reconnaissance by a supervisor, no feasibility studies are needed, no prior research and no reports. The main determinant of where to start will be the preferences of the local government.

C3.2 The supervisor should establish a base in a provincial town where the offices of the local arm of the relevant ministry are located. Within that province, or district, he should choose, in consultation with local officials and authorities, one or more well-defined areas containing up to 3,000 households, or less where the population is sparse. Each area should be served by three to six GPs. The supervisor should consult with local chiefs and headmen, since their acquiescence at least is necessary for the programme to go ahead. If one chief is reluctant to co-operate, another might be found nearby, so that the area finally established is a continuous block, even if its shape may be irregular.

1 Men and women are equally suited to this kind of work in most places. The masculine pronoun used henceforth is intended to include women.

C3.3 It would be preferable, but not essential, to find some accommodation or a firm promise of it for each GP in the villages of the area. If this cannot be arranged in advance by the supervisor, it will usually be found easily by the GP once he has arrived at the supervisor's base. At most he would have to have built for himself a local-style compound in the village where he is going to live.

The supervisor should have some spare accommodation at his base for newly arrived GPs and for those coming from the field to visit him.

C3.4 The GPs are mainly young people with a good education, but little experience of rural development. Some kind of training or orientation is therefore needed before they can start work in the field. A training programme for GPs would be expensive and too demanding of senior staff. And because there is very little experience of poverty-oriented development, the content of the training course would be of doubtful practical value.

The most direct method of preparing GPs for their work is by apprenticeship. New recruits would be drafted to an existing team which was well established and had shown its competence over at least one year's work. The problem is then how to start, when no one has any experience and there are no teams in the field.

Here aid agencies might play an essential part in some countries in supplying volunteers with field experience. The less experienced would become GPs, and the older and more experienced would be team supervisors. Some recipient countries would need more assistance of this kind than others; and many could use wholly indigenous resources. If the programme is mounted as a mix of local and expatriate team members, it should not be on the basis of counterparts and experts, as there are no experts in poverty-oriented rural development. If possible, each team of GPs should have a majority of local staff.

Expatriates might probably be necessary in some countries for at least five years of such a programme. If it has not by then captured the interest and support of a sufficient number of local people, students, older volunteers, and also of the rural poor themselves, to continue on its own impetus, it is questionable whether it is worth prolonging with expatriate personnel.

C3.5 There are valuable side benefits to this programme, which involves young people many of whom are destined for high office. The experience of working among the poor will have a profound influence on the attitudes of many who have done it. It would develop their insight into the implications for the rural poor of government policies and actions. It would help to bridge the gap between urban influentials and the rural masses, which in many poor countries is widening. It would help those who dwell in rural obscurity to develop a capacity for dialogue with officials and technicians,

Poverty-oriented Rural Development

which could lead to a much wider participation in development planning and implementation than obtains at present.

C3.6 Any such programme must have full and clearly expressed support from government, not by interference, but by recommendation of the value and need for active and dedicated support for rural people by those of the young who have had the privilege of better education and better opportunities. To have played a part in this effort should come to be regarded as an honour and a qualification.

C3.7 When the new GP arrives at his supervisor's base, he could usefully spend his first week meeting local officials and notables, looking around the area in which his team is to work, and getting his bearings in his own small constituency. If his compound has not been arranged he should find some temporary accommodation in one of the villages. He should assemble his equipment, stove, lamp, chair, table, etc.

Perhaps most important of all, he should get to know his supervisor and his ideas on the local situation and how to adapt to it.

C3.8 The supervisor needs a considerable understanding of rural development. He should also be gently disillusioned about grandiose schemes, since they play no part whatever in his present work. An ambitious man who is concerned to achieve tangible results in the shortest possible time would find the supervisor's job intolerable. He needs the patience to move at the pace of the poor, which is very slow indeed. He needs tolerance to endure the frustration of having to contain his professional standards in order to participate himself in the disorderly lives and feelings of the poor. He will often be cast in the role of personal friend and helper to his GPs, whose difficulties are likely to be more personal and interpersonal than strictly professional or technical.

The supervisor's work is primarily to support and guide his GPs, but he should not try to direct a programme of his own through them. The nature of the work is formless, planless and without preconceived direction, and this in itself will induce anxiety in some GPs and some supervisors. But the supervisor should always stress, and show by his own example, that the work is to nurture and to husband growing forces, and not to become a motive force in one's own right. The distinction between this attitude and one of idle resignation is almost impossible to explain to one who does not intuitively understand it. The patience to wait attentively until the *right* moment for action does not come readily to most of us, but it is an essential attribute of those who work on poverty-oriented RD programmes.

C3.9 In addition to working with his GPs, the supervisor should be in close contact with local government officials and traditional heads to ensure that GPs are working in harmony with the various branches of central and local government in that area.

This is not expected to be a particularly easy task since a programme with such a low profile, undefined ends, and oriented towards the least influential class of people is unlikely to appeal to many of the more hard-nosed officials.

C3.10 It will take the average GP a good three months to settle down, in some cases to begin learning the sometimes very local vernacular, meet a reasonably wide range of people, make some friends, acquire a local interpreter-cum-assistant, and begin to feel at home. During this time he will create impressions among the people as to what he is there for. His role being unprecedented, people will not understand it at once, but the easiest conclusion may be that he is a soft touch for personal gifts, government aid or overseas assistance. Such a reputation should be resisted at all costs, as it is bound to put him in an impossible position. It is also very appealing to be able to pose, with some justification, as a friend of the poor. But such explanations are likely to produce unfortunate results, such as the enmity or indifference of the not-so-poor and the dependence of the genuinely poor.

It is remarkable how readily village people accept a stranger without asking searching questions about his reasons for being there. Most people are satisfied with the explanation that one has come simply to learn about the way of life in this place. Since that is perfectly true, no more need be said about poverty-oriented development or about possible aid from external sources.

If the whole programme can operate without a title, without noticeboards, and without any publicity whatever, so much the better.

C3.11 After six months there should be some discernible movement in a previously static situation, or more positive signs of action in a previously slow-moving one. There should be some manifestation of a new spirit of self-reliance among the poor; some hint of purposive joint action towards the solution of even very minor problems.

If there is no sign that the GP's presence has had any beneficial effects, he and his supervisor should ask whether it is useful to continue a little longer, or preferable to withdraw and start again elsewhere in the hope of finding a more positive response. There is no point in trying to galvanise the situation into movement if nothing is stirring of its own accord. It is better for the GP to move to a nearby locality, still adjacent to the rest of the team area if possible, even if that means leaving an untidy gap. His time will not have been wasted as the experience gained in the first area will give him a head start in the second.

C3.12 One reason for grouping GPs as a team in one area is to open the possibility for planning its development as a unit at some later stage. Another is to afford GPs the opportunity to support one another in their work. Isolation would impose too great a strain on young people doing such an

Poverty-oriented Rural Development

arduous job.¹ Although each GP would have a primary responsibility for his own locality, he should be encouraged to participate with his fellow team members in their areas. Developments in the various parts of the team area should preferably harmonise with one another and provide mutual support. Frequent meetings and practical co-operation between the GPs will be conducive to this result.

A weekly formal meeting of team GPs and a fortnightly meeting with the supervisor is probably a minimum.

C3.13 The GPs will need bicycles, or in sparsely populated areas small trail motor-cycles, and the supervisor a Land Rover.

C3.14 In the initial phases, rural development for the poor requires no professional expertise. It is only when local groups have emerged and consolidated and have exhausted their own physical, financial and technical resources that expert advice may be needed before further progress can be made. If this is beyond the capability of the GPs, the supervisor or local government staff, a request can be made to the aid agency to provide an expert.

The expert's work would be to initiate a new phase of development and not merely to write a report. He should act as a consultant directly to the local people, and not primarily to the GP, the supervisor, or the agency who employs him. His job is to provide sound practical advice, to demonstrate personally how his advice is to be carried into practice in the village, and to ensure as far as possible that the necessary supply lines, maintenance facilities, storage, or whatever is needed for the innovation, function well and continue to operate after he has left.

Actually securing the adoption among a group of poor farmers of one useful innovation is far more difficult than writing even the most complex and professionally competent report for other experts. But in poverty-oriented development the established method of the expert reporting to HQ, and HQ, after much deliberation, issuing orders to someone else to do something in the field, is far too tortuous. A direct relationship between expert and farmer is needed. Only face to face will they learn anything worth knowing from each other.

The extension of technical improvements among farmers depends ultimately on people learning from their neighbours. Extension agents and experts can only initiate the adoption process. The expert himself can work with only a few people during the time he is present in the village, but he should

1 Isolation from colleagues, supervisors, sources of professional stimulus and technical knowledge, and from the many things that young people want and cannot get in remote rural areas, reduces the efficiency and contentment of many rural officials. Janice Jiggins also refers to this factor in her paper and Chambers alludes to 'the field workers in their rural outer darkness'.

try to leave those few with a thorough practical understanding of what to do, so that the innovation will be successful in their hands and interested neighbours can learn from their example and instruction.

The rural poor have found very little of value in our plans and projects; they cannot communicate with our professionals or benefit from the kind of technical and organisational expertise we offer. The deficiency lies in ourselves, as we have not learnt the art of listening to the inarticulate or of seeing what is unfamiliarly formed. To be of any use to the poor our experts must therefore learn from the poor about the realities of poverty. We cannot persuade ourselves any longer that our own specialisms exonerate us from the responsibility to speak and work with ordinary people. If our expertise has alienated us from the mass of humanity, it cannot be of much practical use to them, or even to us. By giving the expert the responsibility of addressing himself directly to the people in the village, an opportunity is created for mutual understanding and reciprocal benefit. Such a possibility is precluded by the present system of employing experts.

C4 Initially, the main expenses would be the maintenance of the GPs, their supervisors, their assistants and their transport. Very little if anything in the way of capital investments would be required.¹ Keeping expenses and inputs low until the programme is well established and rooted in the area has many advantages, one of which is that if the work makes no headway and the local people are unresponsive, it is relatively cheap and painless to withdraw and try elsewhere. In a fair proportion of the areas initially selected, the work will probably be fruitless. It is better to acknowledge this after a few months and quietly go somewhere else than to proceed obdurately in the face of mounting resistance or indifference. This is difficult to do when intricate plans have been made, a five-year budget prepared, surveys done, international agreements signed, and expatriate experts installed to work in a specific area, as in most projects. When obstacles arise here, the tendency is to bulldoze, because the project must run on schedule. Most projects have an impetus of their own and cannot be deflected by the inarticulate murmurings of the poor. Too much money and too many professional reputations are at stake.

C5 One of the gravest and most widespread problems contributing to the perpetuation and aggravation of rural poverty is the progressive decline in village amenities. The notion, which many old people will affirm, that village life in the 'old days' a generation or two ago was far fuller and more satisfying to the average human being than today, cannot be lightly discarded. There is no doubt that local customs and institutions which flourished some decades ago have almost everywhere degenerated, according to the subject-

1 This appears to coincide with the Select Committee's recommendation that ODM 'should show more willingness to meet requests for the payment of local and recurrent costs'. First Report, page VII.

Poverty-oriented Rural Development

tively evaluated experience of local people, and have not been replaced by new ones of comparable richness and vigour. With the advance of education, young people in most of rural Africa have come to regard agriculture, village life, and rural interests as manifestations of a backward and bucolic existence. Their hearts, and often they themselves, are elsewhere. The drain of brawn and brain and enterprise from the rural areas yet further reduces their attractiveness, and objectively detracts from the possibilities of finding a decent living there.

The scale and extent of this impoverishment of rural life is so vast that a significant improvement cannot be accomplished by furnishing the villages with externally-provided amenities. The only alternative is for new opportunities for development, and especially for employment, to be generated in the rural areas. Two modest proposals follow.

C6 This proposal follows from the question, in B9 above: 'Is it reasonable to encourage farmers to adopt a style of agriculture which depends on such an unreliable resource (as fertiliser)?'. The answer is an unhesitating 'No'. One of the assumptions underlying these notes is that the essence of development is a movement towards self-reliance. Its antithesis is a drift towards increasing dependency on other people or on resources over which one has no control.

Most small farmers, everywhere, have traditionally sustained their yields by organic means, from local resources. With the recent increases in population some sources of organic material have diminished, while others have increased. Local sources of vegetation and arable land for various types of fallowing have generally decreased; but human wastes, and in some places animal wastes, have often increased but are not properly used in agriculture. This suggests a need to develop more efficient methods of using organic resources from within and around the rural village, and of using urban wastes in agriculture. Some countries, particularly in Asia, have made a start on this, both in processing urban wastes and in regular collection and use of village compost heaps, etc. But seldom is it carried out to the full possible extent, especially in Africa.

C7 Fuel is generally scarce in poor rural areas. The quest for it denudes the countryside of trees and bushes, and manure that might have fertilised the soil is often burnt. Methane generated by the composting process referred to in C6 could make a useful contribution to rural and urban fuel supplies, and already does so in parts of India.

Efforts to harness solar energy by means of simple devices are being made by numerous small organisations. Some of the results are promising, but their testing under field conditions and their application to daily village needs have been retarded by the lack of money and sustained effort.

Both these energy sources could make valuable contributions to rural life as they reduce dependence on external resources and exploit local possibilities more fully. They would also provide some local employment and could stimulate other local industries which at present are unfeasible because of the lack of fuel.

Conclusions

I fully expect some instinctive reaction to the suggestions in this chapter which notably lack that energetic and directive tone of a 'Project', with a 15% 'rate of return'. It simply is not written in such terms.

I nevertheless believe that it moves in the right direction, and with help could form the basis for a useful project. Something along the lines is in any case long overdue, and if those agencies and governments who say they are serious about helping the poor are actually going to do something about it, I think they will eventually have to adopt a low-key, essentially explorative approach, which aims to develop the will and the confidence of the people to help themselves. How can this be done with brief barrages of experts and gadgetry?

I believe that young people must form the core of this development movement. They are not yet too deeply involved in their careers, or too busy making their reputations, or earning large salaries, or too deeply committed to ideas about people and their development, to be obstructed in giving the movement its necessary flexibility, buoyancy and vigour. These are the movement's essential characteristics, whereas the technical and organisational expertise which is normally the preserve of older and more experienced people can always be called in as and when required.

Much has been written about poverty, nearly all of it concerned with the external forces and factors which result in the economic backwardness of nations and peoples. But these notes are searching for the meaning of poverty in men's and women's daily lives, in the hope that by understanding this some latent power of transformation may be liberated.

Chapter 3:

Planning and the Small Farmer

Guy Hunter

Section I: Two types of planning

This contribution stands in line with the earlier AAU 'network' papers on diagnosis, consultation, and farmer and community groups.¹ * It is particularly concerned with development at the field level, and with a special emphasis on small farmers. It is also closely related to the papers by Paul Devitt and Janice Jiggins.

It therefore deals primarily with quite a small part of the total activities called 'Planning'. But since planning is in a sense a whole — plans must eventually result in some kind of field activity — the first part of this piece is in wider, general terms; the second part deals, though still qualitatively, with planning at the district level and below. I emphasise 'qualitatively' because there is a host of very real questions which affect the actual practitioners of planning in their day-to-day work which will not be discussed here. This is partly because many of them are highly specific to particular countries, with particular administrative structures, manpower resources, products, etc, which defy generalisation; but mainly because these are questions best discussed by practitioners among themselves; and no doubt there should be more opportunities for organised meetings and discussions of that kind.

There is one major distinction on types of planning which can be made at once. Some types of government plan involve only actions which government, through its own agencies, and/or contractors, can implement by itself — the decision to build a power-station or a large dam, or to establish a trunk road. Many forms of investment fall into this category, which I will call executive planning. Secondly, other plans cannot be directly implemented because they depend upon consent and co-operation of others — in the case of agriculture, on the co-operation and hard work of independent farmers. This will be called enabling planning. There is of course an intermediate type of plan (a very common one in agriculture) in which part of the plan is executive and part is enabling. For example, the main construction of a dam will be executive; but the organisation of farmers in the area newly irrigated will be enabling.² Unfortunately, this distinction is not very widely observed. Perhaps I can quote once more some very vigorous remarks by Professor Dandekar:³

'We witness the District and Block agricultural officers and the Extension workers under them running around with targets of agricultural production, crop by crop, targets of areas to be sown with improved seed, targets of areas to be brought under new minor irrigation, targets of green manuring and targets of compost pits to be dug. In all these cases the officers and Extension workers know full well that what they can do in the matter of achieving these targets is extremely limited,

* References are at the end of the chapter, p57.

and final decisions lie with the farmers . . . In consequence, a make-believe world is created in which targets are determined and progress reported in terms of items over which the parties concerned have no authority or control whatsoever. No one believes in these figures, and nevertheless everyone must engage himself in so much paper-work which is worse than wasteful — it is intellectually corrupting. This must stop.’

Central planning, leading eventually to executive investment, is familiar. It is a highly skilled combination of economic analysis and political/administrative negotiation. In it, political aims and the optimum use of resources have to be harmonised, involving many balances between social services and production, between sectors, between regions, etc. It is not discussed or in any way criticised here.

When it comes to *executive* sectoral plans through departments a different activity follows, which could be called first, appraisal, and then implementation planning (not plan implementation). This involves, as to any given item (project), a listing of the factors which have to be brought together, some form of timing, perhaps by critical path analysis, to establish the order in which action is needed, and a large element of costing.

This again is a highly professional economist’s and administrator’s job, and one of very considerable complexity, particularly when several departments are involved, and the rural sector is seen as a whole, not as agriculture alone. No one questions that it must be done, in outline for the sector, in far more detail for an individual investment. Budgets and contracts are worked out, well or not so well, and eventually the ginnery (or whatever) is built and working. It may be that no one other than official staff and contractors have had a major hand in decisions of implementation planning and final executive implementation. Certainly, there is a huge field here for practitioner discussion.

But quite a different quality of trouble arises when this type of activity, through much the same staff, is applied to the *enabling* type of programme or project, in which the last link in the chain of action is in fact the action of independent private citizens — in our case, mainly farmers. Somehow, somewhere between the level of district and village and farmers, what the government wants to be done, what is seen by planners in logical, quantitative terms, has to be turned into actual behaviour, into accepted and energetic voluntary activity by a very large number of people. Perhaps because of the colonial tradition, perhaps from a failure to distinguish one kind of planning from another, perhaps because the same staff may do both kinds of planning, this transformation often does not take place.⁴

A.S. Barnett, in a recent article,⁵ has emphasised the authoritative and ‘post-colonial’ appearance of planners as seen by their ‘clients’. A number

of quotations are annexed to this chapter which are well worth reading. In brief, planners are perceived by villagers ('clients') to be intellectuals, economists, administrators, mandarins, alien. Plans are seen by local people not as tentative or flexible but as directives. The planners' perceptions are exterior, general, quantitative (even algebraic) as against local perceptions which are qualitative and local. Quantitative planning has dominated 'largely because no other useful way existed for incorporating other elements into decisions about goals or the allocation of resources'.

The implications of these remarks are that the transformation of these (necessarily) analysed plans into concrete local action absolutely requires the mediation of 'local' people to turn them into viable ways of behaviour — 'an operational phase which turns study groups into action teams'.

This type of planning becomes more heavily emphasised when the level of local action is 'projectised'.

First, where a major *external* donor is concerned, a pile of work is needed, after the general area and general objective of the project have been settled, not in the form of useful implementation-planning but in order to satisfy the donor that a whole number of analytical studies are showing green, and that an adequate pile of statistical information has been accumulated — even though much of it will not in fact be relevant to the final decision or plan. Once the donor's questions and objections (which he will feel bound to raise, to satisfy his home constituency) have been expensively answered, the process of actually planning action can proceed.

But the mere fact that this attempt to effect change is classified as a 'project', which will be judged later to 'succeed' or 'fail' (whether donor-assisted or not) will cause the central project planners to make all parts of it as precise as possible, in costing and timing, and return on investment, and in the details of how it is to be done. Thus will arise the tendency either for central staff to go out into the field to satisfy themselves, or to besiege local staff with questions not about what should be done, but about how to do what it has been decided to do. Thus is generated not only the post-colonial attitude to which Barnett referred, but also subsequent rigidity in operation, so that the demands of the donor, or at least the undertakings given by the planning staff to their Minister, can be seen to have been fulfilled.⁶ It is hardly necessary to add that this excludes active local participation in decision either of what should be done or in how it should be done, though there may be, as an afterthought, some establishment of local committees. 'Can people get involved in what is already cut-and-dried?'⁷

The temptation to projectise arises from apparently strong arguments. First, it may well be thought that local programmes need better and more detailed planning. Second, there is a need for co-ordination of departmental action in the field, neatly solved by appointing a project officer (or even

authority). Third, a project is usually a combination of direct investment with a requirement for local response by farmers; since the executive part needs to be planned, surely the farmer's part must be planned also? In reply to these arguments it could be said that better planning is indeed needed; but it should be done *with* the farmers – hence all that we have written on diagnosis and consultation. Next, co-ordination can take place *without projects*; the 'Area-Co-ordinator' used in Kenya's Special Rural Development Programme could work in *any* area, projectised or not. Again, it is true that executive investment may be needed as well as local response. The need for it should emerge from local diagnosis, and the scale and timing of it should be related to the programme as it emerges from local discussion. Execution comes through the normal government executive, sometimes assisted by 'self-help': but response to the enabling part of the project plan can come only through farmers.

While these replies are valid for improvement programmes, it is true that for large schemes of 'transformation' a separate authority is needed (Gezira, Federal Land Development Authority, Malaysia, etc). These schemes of massive settlement in fact tear up the whole pattern of village life and customary ways, and are faced with rebuilding a total social and economic working system from scratch. Hence the enormous difficulties of planning and subsequent management which beset them.

Finally, the idea that centrally directed planning must go right down to the field level and arrange everything for the farmers is probably encouraged by the sheer complexity which is apparently involved, as seen by planners and, even more, by research workers who have applied their sophisticated tools of analysis to it. Even a cursory look at the large literature suggests a task of superhuman complexity, which certainly could not be handled by farmers, even if it could be handled at all.

Certainly, at departmental level, implementation planning *is* complex. It is a professional job, and, on the whole, it is increasingly better understood and better done. But at field level, where it is perhaps less complex, it is also increasingly uncertain, because so many factors depend upon controlled farmer reactions. It is the belief that it *ought* to be done by officials, and a lack of any belief that local participatory organisation could possibly do it which leaves officials trying to do it by the gross oversimplifications which Dandekar has satirised.

We will endeavour to deal with this in Section II. It remains to mention some increasing doubts about the usefulness of some kinds of research in this field, research which uses increasingly sophisticated methods to reveal all the theoretical pitfalls into which local programming can fall. Deryke Belshaw⁸ has recently had some interesting things to say on this; and the burden of his thought is perhaps best summarised in a single remark: 'Society should reward

researchers who actually contribute to the solution of problems' – and he is referring to field problems. Moreover, it is well to remember that problems are not only solved on paper by research; they are also solved by interaction between people in action who have the need and the will to solve them.

This is not to criticise fundamental research in its right place. Fundamental medical research may go down to the cell or indeed to the molecule. But the working doctor uses drugs which give a helpful tilt to the organism, relying upon the organism's complex recuperative systems to do most of the work. Applied development research perhaps should think of itself as the GP of development planning.

Section II: Planning and local action

Up to this point, this chapter has been somewhat negatively critical. We now ask the question in a positive form: 'How should enabling planning be done, for the district level and, if necessary, below it?' At this point it might be refreshing to plunge for a moment into metaphor – 'analogy' is too dangerous a word and too strong in this context.

When a man, standing still, decides to walk, an immensely complex process is started by a single conscious order – 'Walk' ('and continue to walk until I give the order to stop, at pace X, in direction Y'). Fortunately, the conscious mind thereafter will not have to do very much, except to vary pace or direction or (monitored by the eye) give instructions to go down a step or avoid a puddle. Man already possesses a superbly trained machine of nerves and muscles and reflexes which is retaining upright posture, balance, and the exact output and timing of energy in each of hundreds of muscles to achieve the result of 'walking'. This is, in small degree, a trained process; although the basic equipment is given, a baby must 'learn' to walk. On slippery ground more conscious direction is needed; over jumbled boulders on a beach, much more; in skilled rock-climbing, intense concentration of conscious faculties. An exact, micro account of the sequence of nervous-muscular events of walking would take half a book. (*Note: The apparent complexity of local planning is due to planners and researchers trying to write this book, and 'transformation' is rock-climbing with a vengeance.*)

Society, of course, is not like human physiology. It does not possess this superb, co-ordinated system which, with some training, will translate simple commands into highly complex actions. For one thing the last link in the social chain – the human individual – does not always obey; even under dictatorship forms of refusal are always possible. But a closer look indicates that the difference is not so total. For society does have a norm of living on its own, a system of customs and habits and social reflexes which is the basis of Everyman's daily life. And, particularly in a fairly static society, government as the central brain can get simple changes effected with quite general commands and quite simple tools. All governments possess some

school teachers, tax collectors, customs officers, policemen; a minor change in such systems can often be achieved with a little planning and not much fuss. All the while, an incalculable number of things will be proceeding without central direction — cows being milked, women cooking, carpenters sawing, clerks filing — life being lived. This is society walking by itself, though in an environment regulated by government.

But if a more fundamental change is needed — a new way of sowing and ploughing and harvesting — general directions will not do. Even though the central government has some tools, perhaps not very efficient (the administration and extension service), the message has either to be an order (which requires an impossible scale of sanctions) or a combination of persuasion and incentive, which may fail to persuade.

From this rather childish statement four things emerge which are central to the chapter.

- (1) Social reality, like human physiology, is immensely complex, and its central brain could not function at all if it had to attend to the micro-level execution of its orders. Custom and habit enable a fairly static society to 'walk' without detailing every micro-action.
- (2) Social action and potential initiative exists already. It does not have to be totally recreated by the centre. It is change which requires more conscious planning.
- (3) Not only has the central social brain a very imperfect instrument for transmitting orders or incentives: its authority often only reaches just short of the point of action. At that point both consent and effort have to come voluntarily from the final actors.
- (4) The point at which a lower-level, semi-autonomous mechanism can take over action varies with time (development). It may be that orders/incentives have to reach the very smallest social unit from the centre. But increasing social organisation may raise this level, so that the central brain need only reach a major nerve centre (district) with a general instruction ('walk westwards'), which will be translated into detailed action. This time factor — the time for a learning and organising system to become established above the smallest unit — is vital, and often long, and is a key element in the process of building 'participation'.

Centuries of political philosophy and administrative designing have been concerned with this basic problem of developing and training a responsive, semi-autonomous system which can translate and transform the general intentions of the centre into forms of co-operative action which will gradually be built into custom and social reflexes.

Action at the junction

We can treat the district as the main junction of the downline of planning and suggestion from the centre and the upline from the villages. Here some preliminary resolution must take place between the necessarily broad and generalised suggestions of the centre and the particular data and problems coming up from the villages (hopefully, the result of local consultation and diagnosis!). In countries with an already well developed, semi-autonomous local representative machinery (eg Farmer Association of the Taiwan type, possibly Chinese Commune), some of the qualitative and localised factors can easily be brought into the implementation planning, which would already be mainly the task of this representative body, in close consultation with officials. In other countries (the majority), where the district is still official-dominated, the real junction of down and upline will be at a lower level — perhaps at sub-district, sometimes right down at village. We have already noted this time-difference in the development of levels of participation, and Barnett also notes it as part of the problem of dependency.

Where this level is below the district, district officials can do only part of the job — the part which deals with some logistics and executive resource planning, and with scrutiny of the village, and sub-district schemes coming up to it. Paul Devitt has emphasised that the district cannot do the village job, nor the centre the district's job, and vice-versa. It is from a sub-district or village level that information about what precisely *can* be done must emerge. Nor is this simply information: it must at a very early stage become agreement and practical field trial (ie action) by a unity of actors (farmers) and instigators (junior field staff), ie a fusion of what is separate at higher levels — the planners and the planned.

This involves some elapse of time. For the district officials are making suggestions, offering services and perhaps minor investments; it remains to be seen how and where these suggestions are turned into action. As was seen in the Kenya Special Rural Development Programmes, the local plan has to be tentative and flexible, waiting to reinforce success where it appears and to eliminate rejected elements.

We can now move on to some sequences and functions, starting from the village.

(a) The village, sub-district

Actions which the village, or possibly groups within the village, wish either to initiate or extend, and for which help is needed, would be the result of consultations among farmers, with possibly help from the junior field staff, hopefully in line with a previous diagnosis which was also consultative. They would come up to sub-district, not as a 'superior', but to note and decide if any help can be given at that level. Sub-district committees (if they exist) or staff will not be experts; but they will necessarily be involved in

some degree of help in implementation. This will not be a planning function, but a scrutinising and help-giving function, and a channel of communication which can give district some more aggregated information of what is in the wind.

(b) District

It is assumed, for the moment, that district is not yet run mainly by a representative body, but is primarily a group of officials with some considerable training and authority. It is also assumed that there will be a senior officer in charge of agricultural schemes of all kinds, and in liaison with other departmental officers concerned with wider issues of rural development. It is also assumed that district has some expertise (veterinary, irrigation, pest control, etc) and also a small planning staff (in a staff relationship to the executive at district level).

The last assumption is not yet true in many countries.

District will have a number of tasks. It will have to play its part in some centrally controlled executive investments, mainly as agent; and with more discretion and imagination in more general central initiatives, such as rural works or employment schemes. It will have to send a great deal of information to the centre, and periodically beg for funds with detailed and reasoned support. Districts in most countries are in fact overloaded with the machine-gun fire of questions and directives from the centre – of which more below.

But from the point of view of this chapter, the point of emphasis is that development itself takes place in the villages and small towns of the district. Thus the real *development* task of district is to act as a supporting father-figure to the efforts of sub-district and field staff in their efforts to support and stimulate small, sometimes tiny initiatives and group action, not only in agriculture but in many other ways which seem important to farmers and traders and parents and young people; this is what is meant by 'enabling'.

In terms of planning, the district planning staff will probably have to look after the collation and supply of a large volume of information; to scrutinise those local schemes which have reached a stage where district help or finance is needed – at any one time a small proportion of the total activity which is brewing. They may have some concern with 'growth centres', once some place actually shows signs of growing. The associated technical staff will have both trouble-shooting and consultancy jobs. To talk of a 'District Plan' is not to talk of a single document which suddenly has to be produced; it is something which will gradually take shape as a result of action, over several years, not prescribed but occasionally pushed in logical directions or guided away from pitfalls.

Although this is the briefest list, with more omissions than content, it is enough to make clear that district will need a large measure of financial dis-

cretion from the centre, within an upper limit fixed by the centre. It will need to switch expenditures between items in one departmental area, and to *negotiate* switches between departments. Without such power it can neither reinforce success nor cut down expenditure which has proved to be mistaken or unnecessary. Whether this is done in this way, or by the use of a block grant, much favoured by Chambers,⁹ used at district discretion for such purposes, is a matter of country decision.

If those who write about development (academics, consultants, donor agencies, etc) and those who practise development (mainly governments) seriously mean that an upward movement of participatory action is necessary (ie that officials cannot do it by themselves) and not merely vaguely desirable, then it seems impossible to avoid this tentative and progressive type of local planning, based on offer and acceptance, in which acceptance transfigures the abstract offer into action, so that the actors are implementing what is felt to be their own plan, with the aid of services and resources from outside which it is the narrower duty of the planners to provide.

Section III: The official input

There is always a danger that, in stressing one side of a problem (in this case, local dynamics), one may be accused of underestimating the other — what government must contribute. We certainly do not believe that government should sit and wait for local farmers to put up excellent projects, and then, only, support them.

There is here a certain issue of *timing*, and of *types of action*. As regards the poorest villages, Paul Devitt's paper does indeed suggest a patient and non-directive attitude, followed by support, probably on a small scale at first, to initiatives which they themselves (with a little encouragement) may be able to take. We believe this to be right; but even this involves the presence of a catalyst.

But a village does not often consist only of the poor. There are larger and more self-confident farmers who will need and can use government services of the fairly standard type. The catalytic action is really designed to help the poorer sections to break through the barriers which Devitt admirably describes, and (in the long run) to be able to make much more use of more sophisticated methods and services. There is a range of things which are possible, and the weaker members probably have to make use of them one step at a time. Persuading farmers and helping them to sow in rows is a preliminary step to advising fertiliser use (which encourages weeds as well as crops). A great deal of the necessary logistical and departmental planning begins only when much more considerable use of inputs, credit, and marketing services are needed by a much larger proportion of the farming population.

All the problems of diagnosis, of group formation, of logistics of supply, and of technical and regulatory supervision and information, which we have dealt with in Dr Jiggins' paper and our earlier papers, continue to exist. So, also, do planning problems of rationing scarce supplies and scarce finance. Once again, my paper is not attempting to enter the details of this local planning process. It is attempting only to be clearer about the *nature* of planning; the need for flexibility, the adaptation of administrative and financial arrangements which are needed if local planning is to have a chance of success.

Section IV: Difficulties

It would be unrealistic not to mention the great array of difficulties inherent in this generalised description of a possible system. To practitioners, planning and development seem to be an endless series of practical conundrums and obstacles, of personality and procedural road blocks, of desperate efforts to achieve coherent objectives along a course constantly made more tortuous by necessary compromises; much more a matter of negotiation and compromise than a quiet scientific analysis from which logical action flows. The air must be thick with their cries of outrage.

Some of these difficulties, such as the relation of political masters to planners, or the relations of pure planners to executive departments, are left on one side; they are material for practitioners' seminars. Some really concern *management* rather than planning, and these have been particularly investigated in useful detail by the work of Belshaw and Chambers. There is a larger volume of difficulties than is often appreciated. Some relate to the actual structure and philosophy of local planning, and to these we must turn. But other serious difficulties remain.

First, it can be argued that the task allotted to district and sub-district is simply beyond the imagination and capacity of the staff likely to be available at those levels. This is often true; it is remediable, but only slowly. A great help would be to transfer a considerable number of central upper-middle staff to district work. This involves some changes in salaries and career-rewards and status. Just a few early years at district followed by 25 years at the centre is not good enough; substantial mid-career field responsibility should be demanded. Perhaps, incidentally, to have fewer people at the centre would reduce the temptation to try to run districts by headquarters directives.

Closely related is the concept of authority. Even quite a junior post at the centre is apt to be regarded as automatically senior to any district post. Devolution of more responsibility to district work implies a reversal of this attitude, except for the very top posts at the centre.

Another and major difficulty surrounds aspects of control. Budgetary control is essential. K.J. Davey¹⁰ has summarised some of the arguments for block

allocation of funds to districts, and some of the difficulties and dangers of waste. He adds two encouraging remarks: 'The opportunity cost of small local white elephants is quite likely to be a large national white elephant', and 'Money is not necessarily more beneficial in the public purse than in the peasant's pocket'. Trapman's¹¹ study of Kenyan administration underlines the frustrations of districts in obtaining 'Authority to Incur Expenditure' through a long chain of correspondence through district, province, Ministry, Treasury and back by the same route. Control of speculation and of excessive or illegitimate expenditures also adds to the delays and frustrations of field administration. There is no answer to this question but a prudent courage at the centre, skilfully managed by minimal checks at critical points. Unless this courage is to be found, most of what is said in this chapter will be empty words.

The next major difficulty concerns orderly timing, and is closely related to budgetary control. There must be an annual budget, with proposed expenditures by each main department. While planning is still regarded as almost wholly centrally controlled, districts are called upon to submit detailed estimates, which, willy nilly, are pruned and adjusted centrally; and eventually (often well after the start of the new financial year) firm allocations are made. But if district programmes are, as suggested here, really dependent upon the emergence of initiatives and the gradual shaping and testing of locally agreed programmes at the lowest field level, this punctual annual commitment for a whole district is both illusory in one sense and unduly committing and restrictive in another. If it has to be made, districts will put forward what they know for certain (perhaps covering half of the programme) and cook up hopes for other parts, rounded out with the inevitable shopping list of schools, clinics, access roads, staff and staff-housing, etc.

In fact the process of real development is both continuous and very uneven — some areas go ahead in two years, others, often neighbouring, take five or ten years to reach the same point. Since the annual estimate *must* be made, the only solution would be to make it in two parts, one consisting of firm estimates for local or national programmes with known requirements, the other a block grant for the process of supporting that large part of development which depends upon self-powered efforts, both agricultural and social, which the sub-districts and junior field staff are continuously fostering, of which some — not all — may become active in a given twelve months. Social, as well as agricultural, is emphasised. For these initiatives may be in crafts, small rural works, home or workshop production of components 'put-out' by a firm, tin roofs for houses,¹² shared transport, simple medical aids; they may come from voluntary organisations, religious or secular, from enterprising individuals, from traditional groups or newly-formed informal groups, as well as from official instigation. If planning and aid is to respond quickly and flexibly, it cannot be centrally straight-jacketed in annual 'planned

expenditure' detailed, in each department, down to the last clerk in the last sub-office to the last shilling.

Section V: A major, unanswered question

Finally, the whole conception of development through stimulating initiatives of the people themselves at low levels can be criticised as a mere dream. Certainly, critics will say, here and there such things happen, and are seized upon as evidence for enormous generalisations and idealist schemes; but they do not cover one per cent of the field of development. In vast numbers of villages there is inertia, or total dependency, or both. In vast numbers there is not even a technical solution which is workable for more than a few bigger farmers.

There is some truth in this. But the critics offer few, if any, alternative solutions. It is at least open to suggest that inertia reflects inappropriate, centrally-devised programmes, to which at least the smaller and poorer people *cannot* respond, and which they see as alien and imposed; and to suggest that the technical solutions so far offered from outside are, for many reasons, unsuited to the majority of clients. There is not much to be lost in trying out a solution of which the first principle is to involve far more people in things which they *are* able to do, even from very simple beginnings: there may be much to be gained. If there is to be a chance of making such gains, then a far higher degree of devolution of planning to field units, a considerable strengthening of a staff and expert function at district level, and a rethinking of the training, attitudes and management of the staff who are in actual contact with farmers and villages will have to take place.

There are, indeed, a number of ways in which an external management function does *seem* to be needed. How is the fragmentation even of small holdings to be handled? Access to capital for reshaping irrigation land, which must affect dozens of holdings? Discipline in disease control, or marketing quality control? Simultaneous pest-control over many adjacent holdings? Covering risk on input investment?

We have evidence of the success of some kinds of commodity-based management — sugar, tea, etc. We have evidence, here and there, of success of benevolent landlord-tenant relations, making a sizeable farm yet with small tenancies. Yet commodity-wise control is of limited applicability; a totally landlord-dependent system must be counted out. We have evidence of failure of government-instigated formal co-operatives, and of most co-operative production. We have evidence that extension to individual farmers is, by itself, largely ineffective for the mass of smaller farmers. What is left which offers better hope?

I think that this question must be asked; for we must recognise that, over the range of developing countries, a remarkable number of experiments, and

Planning and the Small Farmer

a remarkable effort has been made; yet the centre of the problem has not yet been reached on a wide scale; over huge tracts of land no one knows quite what to do, the poor remain poor, population grows, holdings shrink, under-employment grows, output does not.

It cannot be good enough to say 'The people must find their own solutions' and stand back. Yet in all probability it is from people's very local solutions that answers, of different types, will begin to come, if they are actively sought and wisely supported. They must, indeed, be more than improvements in individual farms, one by one. They must certainly include an element of people's management, externally supported. And by management I mean agreement, by the farmers themselves, to solve the very management problems I have mentioned. To agree a detailed scheme for defragmentation; to agree and enforce the disciplines of pest control, water control, stock control, quality control; to share risk; to assist, with their labour and skills, water investment or land-shaping for which external expertise and funds can be contributed. None of these requirements are impossible; many different ways may be found in practice to meet them. At the heart of them all is some form of co-operation (emphatically with a small 'c').

Are there other answers?

Annex:

Excerpts from ‘Planning and Implementation: Towards an “Open” Approach’, by A.S. Barnett. (IDS Bulletin Vol 8, No 1, 1976)

Planning decisions occur at central, regional and local levels, but almost always in the context of government. The ultimate consumers, the members of the local community, see and experience the final result – the plan – as something which has its origins outside themselves and their local communities.

Administrators working in the post-colonial state within this historical tradition may tend towards perceptions of authority rather than communication – activeness rather than reactivity. In short, they will behave and will be experienced as ‘other’ than their clients, and this will be reinforced by class and other differences. In these situations initiative and original thought will be either completely stifled or discounted as not fitting into the existing rules.

Planning theory and action has by and large been the possession of the more educated groups, both local and foreign – the Mandarins.

‘Quantitative planning has exercised what amounts to methodological imperialism largely because no useful way existed for incorporating other elements into decisions about goals or the allocation of resources.’¹³

To the planner, who has an overall view, they may be clearly perceived as adaptable, but to those below they are understood and experienced as directives.

A common typification of the steps in planning might look as follows:

- (1) identification of objectives – decisions about policies;
- (2) quantification of targets;
- (3) allocation of resources and decisions about phasing;
- (4) implementation;
- (5) supervision;
- (6) evaluation.

A more useful approach might be borrowed from semantics, the study of meaning and communication of meaning. We need to understand planning and plan implementation as an aspect of the communication of meaning, rather than as some kind of total logical, scientific and mechanical process. Concentration on processes of planning and implementation directs our

attention away from the total field of meaning of which the process may be only one part.

I have indicated that, as presently practised, the bureaucratic and technical assumptions vest power in the planners' views and opinions. This produces an asymmetrical relationship between planner and client. To rectify this tendency, we need to consider the problem of the appropriate forms of social organisation; and the problem of balance between 'technique', the planner's perceptual apparatus which is essentially exterior, general and foreign to the client's perception (and may in addition be quantitative or algebraic) and the perception of the consumer, which is more likely to be qualitative and local.

An attempt to come to terms with this problem is found in the work of Robert Caillot, who argues that the mass of the population should be mobilised to draft a plan, not only to execute it. For Caillot it is understood that:

- (1) problems which are concretely experienced are not reducible to any intellectual or ideological perspective anyone has of them;
 - (2) the possession of knowledge confers on no one, including planners and technical experts, the right to decide on behalf of others who are in their terms less knowledgeable;
 - (3) no one can possess more than a partial view of reality.
-

In this process, 'In a certain sense, there is no longer any distinction between surveyors and the surveyed (one might add here between the planners and planned), there are only instigators and actors. The former helped to clarify the dimensions of problems, the latter exercise choices and made decisions, each one at his own level in professional or administrative life'.¹⁴

References

- 1 An edited version of which, along with comments from some 'networkers', comprise AAU Occasional Paper 1: *Stimulating Local Development*, ODI, 1976.
- 2 See J.D.M. Hardie, 'A Guide to Basic Agricultural Project Appraisal in Developing Countries', School of Agriculture, Aberdeen, Miscellaneous Publication No 12, 1976. 'With a generous sweep of his arm, an enthusiastic technician can drain and irrigate a large valley and inspire his listeners with the prospect of X thousand hectares at Y tonnes per acre. The farming inhabitants can be sorted out later. However, development is *first* the concern of the people in a society and only *second* the concern of technical inputs.'
- 3 V.M. Dandekar, *Indian Journal of Agricultural Economics*, XXII, 1967 January–March. These remarks were quoted in G.Hunter, *The Administration of Agricultural Development*, London, Oxford University Press, 1970, with a number of other quotations on planning and targets (p61 ff).
- 4 See particularly Frank A. Wilson, 'The Planning and Appraisal of Rural Development Projects', IADS – Reading University Seminar, Reading, September 1976.
- 5 A.S. Barnett 'Planning and Implementation: Towards an Open Approach', *IDS Bulletin* (Special Issue) Vol 8, No 1, 1976, IDS, Sussex.
- 6 On projects generally, see Uma Lele, *The Design of Rural Development*, Johns Hopkins for the World Bank, 1975.
- 7 Ian Little in *Stimulating Local Development*, AAU Occasional Paper 1, p17.
- 8 D.G.R. Belshaw 'Appropriate Methodology for Development Research', *IDS Bulletin* Vol 8, No 1, IDS, Sussex.
- 9 Robert Chambers, *Managing Rural Development*, Uppsala, Scandinavian Institute of African Studies, 1974. See also his 'Planning for Rural Areas in East Africa: Experiences and Prescriptions', *The African Review*, Vol 1, No 3, January 1972.
- 10 A valuable paper by K.J. Davey is briefly summarised in the report on the Second International Seminar on Change in Agriculture at Reading University, published as *Policy and Practice in Rural Development*, ed Hunter, Bunting, Bottrall, London, Croom Helm/ODI, 1976. The full paper is available from Professor Bunting, Plant Science Laboratories, University of Reading.
- 11 C. Trapman, *Change in Administrative Structures*, ODI, 1974.
- 12 This is a reference to the 'Mabati' (tin-roof) campaign successfully run by women's groups in Kenya.
- 13 D. Goulet, *The Cruel Choice: a New Concept in the Theory of Development*, Atheneum, New York, 1971.
- 14 R. Caillot, 'L'Enquête – participation à économie et humanisme', in Cahiers de l'Institut d'éducation des adultes, no 3, February 1967.



Agricultural Administration Unit

The Agricultural Administration Unit (AAU) was established at ODI at the beginning of September 1975, with financial support from the Ministry of Overseas Development (ODM) and a number of British commercial enterprises.

As its title implies, the Unit is concerned with the study of agricultural administration and institutions in less developed countries, with the emphasis on field implementation — the planning and programming of development, the provision and co-ordination of services, and the support of participatory and self-managing groups.

A major objective of the AAU is to provide a bridge between 'thinkers' and 'doers'. Accordingly, each research subject is studied in collaboration with a 'network' of individuals in the UK and overseas who have been directly concerned with the problems of implementation in ldecs. Network members are drawn from a wide range of nationalities, professional backgrounds, and disciplines. The intention is that their relationship with the AAU should be reciprocal, in that they should both provide the Unit with information and instructive criticism from their own experience and use the Unit themselves as a source of information and advice derived from experience elsewhere.

The purpose of the AAU's 'Occasional Papers', is to disseminate the findings of this collaborative effort to a wide audience of interested people in an easily accessible format. The first Paper, entitled *Stimulating Local Development*, appeared in December 1976, and is available from ODI, price £1.

Further information about the work of the Unit may be obtained from the AAU, Overseas Development Institute, 10-11 Percy Street, London W1P 0JB.

July 1977

Price £1.00