

**Evaluation Report on Working of Community Projects
during the six months from October, 1953 to March, 1954**

1. The Study

The study was undertaken to assess the progress of Community Projects which were going to complete second year. The report has several features of interest for those who are responsible for planning and guiding the progress of community projects.

The report was brought out in two parts. The first part contained the general report and composite tables of budget, staff and activities relating to the 19 projects and blocks under intensive evaluation. The second part contained reports on progress of individual programmes received from the evaluation centres.

2. Objectives

- i) To assess the tempo of development of various activities/programmes taken up in the selected projects; and
- ii) To study the deficiencies in the programme and to suggest measures to overcome those.

3. Sample size/criteria for selection of sample

It was neither feasible nor possible to cover every project unit. Hence the same 19 centres evaluated after their first year working were chosen from among the community projects working under the community projects administration and pilot extension projects working under the general direction of the Ministry of Food and Agriculture as these were the two principal types of rural development projects in existence at that time. Of the 19 selected projects, 14 were community projects, one national extension project and four pilot extension projects.

4. Reference period

The study was started in April, 1954 and was completed in November, 1954. The data was collected for the period October, 1952 to March, 1954.

5. Main Findings

1. Increase in the area covered was reported from most projects. However, in many projects, even though a block had been taken up, some parts of it had remained uncovered for which shortage of staff had been the main reason. It was also observed that in some projects concentration was on the larger or more accessible villages and to ignore the smaller or less accessible ones.

2. In most of the projects, considerable efforts had been made in recent months towards revision of targets and plans and making them more detailed. Another noteworthy development was that attempts were being made in some projects to draw/ involve people actively into the process of formulating plans and targets of work.

3. It was reported from most projects that the records were not properly checked or supervised and were, therefore, not being properly maintained. This was mainly due to lack of interest among project officers and supervisory staff.

4. Increase in expenditure was noticed in all fields but the most marked increases were in the field of (i) irrigation; (ii) agriculture and animal husbandry; (iii) rural health and sanitation; and (iv) communications. It was also noticed that part of this increase was due to seasonal and administrative reasons. It was further observed that the budget figures of different projects differ very greatly.

5. During the period under review, there had been improvement in the availability of staff at project level. The number of selected categories of project staff in 17 evaluation centres for which comparable data was available had indicated that 68.1% of sanctioned strength was available by September, 1953 which rose to 84.3% by the end of March, 1954. Shortages of personnel which continued to exist were sometimes due to local factors such as area of operation and the population covered.

6. Though there has been little improvement but still project Advisory Committees continued to be ineffective and in many projects they were virtually non-existent. The very large composition of most committees was partly responsible for their ineffectiveness. Moreover, meetings of these committees did not take place for months together.

7. Because of slack season for agriculture in many parts of the country, the scope of agriculture extension activities was limited. The programme was taken up actively only in the Rabi and areas like Punjab, Uttar Pradesh, Madras etc. In other areas very little work could be done. However, propagation of improved seed and fertilizers continued to be the most important activities in the agricultural sphere.

8. Demonstration plots were laid out in fair numbers in most projects but the results obtained were good only in some projects. This was so because the planning of the programme and supervision of these plots by the VLWs and the agricultural staff was not satisfactory in many projects.

9. Though the expenditure reported under irrigation had increased markedly yet it was much below the amounts provided for this programme in most projects and the progress had been very uneven in different areas.

10. With regard to education, considerable progress had been made in opening of new schools. In some projects the targets were achieved well in advance. But in the matter of conversion of existing primary schools to junior basic schools, which was a major objective of

community projects, progress had been rather slow. The shortage of basic trained teachers was reported to be the most important difficulty in making such change.

11. The programme of providing additional medical facilities in the project areas through opening of dispensaries or primary health centres was moving particularly slowly. Only in few areas such centres had been opened. Procedural delays were the main reasons for slow progress.

12. Of the four pilot extension blocks under review, active progress was reported only from one i.e. Bhadson in PEPSU. In the other three blocks very little work was reported to have been done. This was due to seasonal factors and conversion of these blocks to NES blocks.

6. Major suggestions

1. A clear conception of the relationship between surveys and development effort and the types of surveys which should be undertaken in the community development or extension projects is necessary. The project authorities should concentrate on collecting only those types of specific data which it is now considered would be actually utilized in programme planning.

2. The basic records should be adopted all over the country with suitable modifications or additions to meet the particular needs of different areas. Such a system of basic records has to be evolved at the earliest, so that uniform methods of reporting progress can emerge. The CPA has recognized this need and a manual of village records prepared by the PEO in consultation with the CPA and the Development Commissioners is being sent round to all States.

3. There is a need to provide clearer guidance than has been heretofore on the number of families which may be served by a VLW. The role of VLW – his functions and limitations – should be more clearly understood and a clear line of action on this subject should be formulated.

4. The basic idea of the project Advisory Committee is sound but the present form is not proving suitable and its revision is called for.

5. The importance of proper arrangements for multiplication and procurement of quality seed can hardly be over emphasized and hence they need to be improved.

6. Demonstrations occupy a crucial role in the extension programme. Carefully planned and properly supervised demonstrations give good results. Indifferently conducted and unsuccessful ones can do considerable harm. There is, therefore, need for adjusting the size of demonstration programme to the resources of VLWs and supervisory staff available with the project and reducing the numbers wherever necessary.