

EVALUATION OF THE GRAM SARAYAK PROGRAMME, 1961

1. The Study

The Evaluation of Gram Sahayak Programme was undertaken at the instance of the Ministry of Community Development and Cooperation. In 1957, there was a significant shift in the emphasis of the Community Development Programme in favour of Agricultural production. The field of agriculture, including animal husbandry and minor irrigation was accordingly made the focus of training and follow-up programme for village leaders who were given the new designation of Gram Sahayak. It was this reoriented programme of village leaders training and follow-up which had been evaluated in this report. The approach to the study had been derived from the basic objective of the village leaders, programme "to educate leaders through their followers and the whole community in methods of improving the village life in its various aspects, leading on to growing, speedy and continuous acceptance of these methods". Thus, the programme with a long-term view sought education to accelerate the operation of a process of chain reaction. The evaluation was made more qualitative than quantitative with case study method. The emphasis in the study was on understanding and analysing the nature and types of problems faced in implementing the programme than on verifying the physical achievements reported by concerned departments or agencies.

2. Objectives

- i) To analyse in the light of accepted interpretation of rural leadership, the procedure followed for the selection of Gram Sahayaks;
- ii) To assess the organisational and administrative aspects of the Gram Sahayak training camps;
- iii) To examine the method and content of training imparted to the trainees;
- iv) To evaluate the performance of the trained Gram Sahayaks on their farms and in their villages; and

- v) To crystalize issues and suggestions having a bearing on the lines of improvement in the programme.

3. **Sample Size/Criteria for Selection of Sample**

The method of composite case study was used in analysis, which is based on field data collected from 22 blocks in 11 districts in ten States. In each selected district, one relatively more successful and one less successful blocks selected purposively. Villages were selected at random after being arranged alphabetically. From each block five villages were selected. 25 Gram Sahayaks were selected as respondents from each Block. Thus, a total of 528 Gram Sahayaks were selected as respondents.

4. **Reference Period**

The enquiries for the purpose of this study were conducted between October, 1960 and March 1961 in purposively selected blocks in districts where the programme worked relatively more successfully.

5. **Main Findings**

1. It was planned to train in stay type camps of three-days' duration in their villages functional leaders i.e. agriculturists who were relatively more skilled in the techniques and methods of agricultural production. The concept of functional leader and the hypothesis about the effectiveness of such leadership in strengthening agricultural extension and development formed the basis of the programme. -But in laying down the instructions for guidance of field workers, the Ministry of Community Development extended the programme to all types of leaders, ,voluntary, functional and natural. In these and a few others, there were few contradictions in some of the statements in the Manual prepared by the Ministry. These have created some confusion which permeated the whole training programme. Different states interpreted the objectives somewhat differently.

2. An officer was placed in overall incharge of the implementation of the programme in every state. The officer-in-charge in many states' came from Revenue Deptt., and many of them had very little or no practical experience of conducting training programmes.

3. Though the district officers of Agriculutre, Animal Husbandry, Cooperatives and Panchayats were expected to participate actively in the planning and

conduct of these camps and to provide technical guidance in the respective fields, very few of them were able to give sufficient attention because of a large number of camps organised.

4. Training of trainers was organised at the regional level by the Ministry of Community Development before the initiation of the programme in the field, but in most states, no training was organised for officers who joined the Department subsequently.

5. Most states organised 3 days camps for the **training of the** Gram Sahayaks.

6. The extent of guidance given and supervision exercised by the district and State level officers on the whole, was inadequate except in U.P. , where a larger number of officers of different departments were engaged with these duties. In states or areas where Panchayati Raj had been introduced, the State level officers tended to think that in the changed set up they were *unable* to help materially in the execution of this programme and can only play an advisory role.

7. Nearly 30 per cent of the Gram Sahavaks in the sample came to the camps without having been selected by the Block personnel. only 13 per cent reported that they had been selected by the Block Staff in consultation with the -local institutions. The largest proportion of **them had been** selected by the VLW without the consultation with local institutions.

8. The economic status of Gram Sahayaks was characterised by relatively high proportion of large & medium land owning farmer. More than one fourth ^{61%} the Gram Sahayaks belonged to the cultivator class. About 54 per cent were in medium cultivator class, while about 29 per cent were small cultivators. The selection procedure adopted led to a consideration of trainees in the big and medium cultivator groups. Since these farmers-had the means and the resources to adopt new practices and withstand possible risks, this bias in selection might have been deliberate. Thus, the movement reached farmers with small holding to a relatively small extent. The number of Harijans and landless labourers was negligibly small.

9. About one-half of the Gram Sahayaks (47 per cent) were members of statutory and registered institutions.

10. Gram Sahayaks were not intended to become expert as a result of three day training. The basic expectation behind the programme was to enlarge their outlook.

11. **About three** fourths of the Gram Sahayaks attended non-stay type camps in the 'Campaign' states, while the same proportion attended stay type camps in the non-campaign' states. The actual management of the camps was mainly in the **hands of the block** officials., The panchayats as institutions did not play any important role in the management of the camps or in the selection of Gram Sahayaks. But, the Sarpanches or Pradhans-helped the programme as individuals.

12. **About** one-third of the Gram Sahayaks reported the formation of Committees for Managing the camps. A large number reported that no such committees were formed. The Committees even when formed, did not function effectively; in many cases In Madras, Madhya Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh and Rajasthan, the Committees were quite effective.

13. The Gram Sahayaks who asked questions or participated in discussions were normally general leaders. They were naturally more articulate and tended to dominate the discussions. The less articulate and shy persons were not especially encouraged to speak. Separate discussion Camps were formed in some states but these were utilised more for the management of the camps than for subject matter discussion. The general atmosphere in the camps was reported to be congenial, informal and enthusiastic.

14. Drama, one of the most effective mass media, could not be used In the camps because of their short-duration. Bhajans, kirtan and songs were organised in the evenings. But the number of Gram Sahayaks who participated in these was very small, as most of them went back home to their villages at night.

15. Considerable stress was given to, and detailed instructions laid down for the follow-up of the training received by the Gram Sahayaks. One of the important items of the follow-up programme was to assign to the Gram Sahayak trainees before the closure of the camp, specific projects or topics taken up for group discussions and lectures. About two-fifths of Gram Sahayaks were given projects. The projects assigned were for Japanese method of cultivation, compost making, fertilizers, line sowing, green manuring and dibbling (in descending order). Some other projects related to Animal

Husbandry, Sanitation and soil conservation were assigned in Bihar, Andhra Pradesh, Madras and Uttar Pradesh.

16. About one-fourth of the Gram **Sahayaks** reported that the Panchayat played a role in the follow-up.

17. The co-operatives were also helpful in follow-up. About one-fifth of the Gram Sahayaks reported some role having been played by the cooperatives, particularly in Madras, Andhra and Uttar Pradesh.

18. Leaflets and pamphlets on the Gram Sahayak training programme and on the Rabi and Khariff campaigns reached about one-half of the Gram Sahayaks only. The Block staff consulted the Gram Sahayaks in the distribution of supplies. Only about three-tenths of the Gram Sahayaks, in all the States included in the sample reported that village production plans were prepared for their villages.

19. Farm plans were reported to have been prepared by only one-fifth of the Gram Sahayaks, mostly in Himachal Pradesh, U.P. and Madras. About one-half (55 per cent) of the Gram Sahayaks reported **that they** were consulted by the block staff in respect of the supply of seeds, fertilizers etc. Individual contacts constituted the most common method of approach. Group contacts were not attempted and group meetings were not held as frequently as desired.

20. Over two-thirds (71 per cent) of the Gram Sahayaks reported that they had talked to other farmers with a view to extending the established campaign items of improved practice while 63 per cent of the Gram Sahayaks claimed that some agricultural practices had been adopted by the contacted persons at their instance.

21. As high as 90 per cent of the Gram Sahayaks reported the adoption of one or more practices as a result of the training they received in the camp.

22. About 71 per cent of the gram sahayaks claimed to have talked of the programmes to others, and 63 per cent claimed that other farmers had adopted practices as a result of their persuasion. The responses of these contacted persons showed that about 92 per cent of them had reportedly been approached by Gram Sahayaks, and 84 per cent adopted improved agricultural practices at their instance.

23. The Gram Sahayak programme succeeded more as an agricultural extension programme than as one of the training and development of village leaders and the institutionalization of such leadership.

6. Major Suggestions

1. If the Gram Sahayak training programme was to be pursued with all seriousness and earnestness and if its objective was to be as was originally intended, "a change in the outlook," of the Gram Sahayaks and their followers needed, the training camps should be held for a longer period of say 5 or 6 days. There was certainly no justification for having camps lasting for one day; as happened in the campaign' states in the last year or two. Such camps should not be held too frequently as they lose their significance and attraction and become a routine affair.

2. The camps should be followed by a well organised study trip programme, preferably outside the block area.

3. Emphasis should be given more on selecting a relatively small number of effective leaders than on mobilising a large number of farmers or making up the targeted number of participants.

4. Teachers of agricultural institutions or research officers in the field with ability to communicate could be the ideal group to act as trainers.

5. In selecting Extension officers as trainers their ability to communicate should be made the basis of selection more than their academic degree. It might be desirable to form a pool of trainers in each district out of the Extension officers including technically qualified BDO's posted **there**.

6. The VLW's should not be entrusted with the task of delivering lectures to the village leaders or leading group discussions. Their mutual familiarity might distract from the seriousness of the programme, at least in the minds of village leaders.

7. The coverage of the training should not be confined to the already well known practices of methods like fertilizers, seeds and manures, but should extend to items like proper use of irrigation water, dry farming soil conservation, pesticides and disease control.

8. The animal **husbandry** group of subjects should not be given less importance in the training **programme than the improved agricultural practices** and techniques.

9. The instructional and discussion programme in the camps should be planned in advance so that the different topics receive adequate attention.

10. Formation of small groups for the identification of local problems and the obtaining of suggestions for their solution should be given careful attention. The extension officers should be given special training in the techniques of using such group methods, since the objective is not only to impart information but to develop group leadership.

11. The follow-up activities should be planned and systematically pursued. Specific projects should be voluntarily accepted by the trainees themselves without any imposition, as the advantage of group discussions and information lectures based on them were mostly lost without a clear decision.

12, **Attempts** should be made to persuade the trainees to accept as projects, practices and methods which were neither fairly well known and well established nor already adopted by the trainees themselves. The Gram Sahayaks should be helped by the VLW as well as Extension officers in the execution of these projects at different stages .

13. Full care should be taken to see that the items discussed were closely related to the local problems. The state pattern or the district pattern of training should be modified for this purpose, if necessary.

14. Sarpanches or individual village leaders do take interest in the organisation of the programme in some villages, but as individuals without necessarily involving the Panchayat and Cooperative organisations. These organisations could be brought into the picture for specific activities falling within their jurisdiction, in no case, should these be left out.

15. Whatever peoples' contribution can be made available should be elicited in advance through local institutions, rather than from the selected trainees of the host village.

16. Literature prepared for village leaders# training should be brief and illustrated; and its supply should also be timely and adequate. Efforts to publish the follow-up literature at State level might defeat their very purpose by covering all the items related to all areas of the State. Such literature should as far as possible be prepared at the block or district level and not at regional or state level.

17. The Gram Sahayak training programme, if it is intended to build up and develop leadership need be linked essentially with the agricultural crop campaigns as has been done in some of the States.