

Rural Development in India

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In October 1952 the Government of India launched an ambitious programme of rural development. The immediate aims of the programme are to increase agricultural production, combat rural under-employment and improve living conditions, but its fundamental objective is to imbue the members of rural communities with the desire and will to live a fuller life. With a view to promoting self-help and co-operation, stress is laid on the participation by the villagers in the planning and execution of the programme.

The following article outlines the aims and scope of the programme and describes the administrative machinery and operational methods adopted to help the people in half a million villages to improve their working and living conditions.

THE most challenging problem of India, brought to a sharp focus by a number of political and economic factors¹, is the twofold problem of rural underemployment and underproduction. As a result the Government and the people of the country are compelled to devote increasing effort towards its solution, and rural development has assumed a central place in national planning.²

¹ These include the depression of the thirties, the national propaganda for political freedom, the Second World War, the achievement of independence, the establishment of a welfare state in India, the first general elections based on adult suffrage for the Union and state legislatures and propaganda for economic improvement by political parties with "leftist" views.

² This article is based on personal observation of rural development work in a number of places in Northern India and discussions with a number of villagers and officials connected with the work. The latter included officials of the Government of India Planning Commission (in particular of the Community Project Administration) and the Ministry of Agriculture, and the heads of the United States Technical Co-operation Administration and the Ford Foundation in India. For the factual data the principal sources used are the following:

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA: *Fiscal Commission Report, 1949-50*, Vol. 1;
MINISTRY OF FOOD AND AGRICULTURE: *Report of the Grow More Food*

Over 80 per cent. of India's population, or about 60 million families, live in about 500,000 villages, where, owing to seasonal conditions, about four-fifths can find work in farming occupations for only three to four months and the rest for about six to eight months in the year.¹ This enormous underemployment and unemployment in rural areas is further accentuated by a normal increase in the population in these areas of over 3 million persons a year.² In spite of the increasing pressure on land, however, while industry has developed considerably since 1920, the agricultural sector has remained practically stagnant, with little increase in the total yield of agricultural crops and little change in the occupational pattern or the character of agriculture. During the same period, furthermore, there has been a continuous emigration from the village to the town of persons with initiative, ambition and education, who leave the rural life, with its poverty, ignorance and disease, to move sluggishly in its traditional grooves.

It is commonly recognised that the solution of this problem lies in a twofold programme: to increase efficiency in agriculture and to draw away surplus labour from the land into industry and other occupations. The first implies the improvement of agricultural methods and the promotion of more intensive systems of farming, including mixed farming, in order to increase production in terms of yield per acre and output per man. The second requires the development of cottage and small-scale industries, large-scale industries, tertiary occupations and occupations subsidiary to agriculture. This, in fact, is the general approach of the Five-Year Plan, which allocates 44.6 per cent. of the total outlay to agriculture

Inquiry Committee (June 1952); *The First Five-Year Plan* (1952); COMMUNITY PROJECTS ADMINISTRATION, Planning Commission: *Development Commissioners' Conference on Community Projects, 7-13 May 1952, Summary Record*; *Organisation of a National Extension Service and Expansion of the Community Development Programme*; *Manual for Village-Level Workers*; *The Five-Year Plan and Rural India* (June 1953); *Public Co-operation for National Development* (May 1952); *Community Projects (A Draft Outline)* (Apr. 1952); *Kurukshetra*, Special Number, 2 Oct. 1953; *Orientation and Training Course for Project Executive Officers at Nilokheri, 22 July-16 Aug. 1952, Summary Record of Talks*. PLANNING COMMISSION: *Unemployment*, Circular No. PC(VI)L/48/53 to state governments, 30 July 1953; J. D. N. VERSLUYS: *Village Development Schemes in Ceylon and India*; FORD FOUNDATION: *Preliminary Report on Programs in India Receiving Ford Foundation Assistance* (New Delhi, 1952); K. N. KATJU, Minister of Home Affairs and States: *Rural Development through Self-Help*.

¹ Work in agriculture is available for six to eight months in the year only in irrigated areas, which constitute only 18.9 per cent. (1949-50) of the cultivated area.

² Mr. V. T. KRISHNAMACHARI, Deputy Chairman of the Planning Commission, stated at the Second Development Commissioners' Conference (16-19 Apr. 1953): "Year after year, about 3 to 3½ million people are added to the rural populations".

and related subjects.¹ Prior to the adoption of the Plan, however, a number of organised efforts were made with varying degrees of success for the improvement of village life in different parts of the country.

EARLIER RURAL DEVELOPMENT SCHEMES

In 1922 Rabindranath Tagore established an institute of rural reconstruction as a part of Viswa Bharati, the poet's educational centre at Shantiniketan, West Bengal. Now, as a department of rural reconstruction at Siriniketan, its two principal activities are (i) an improvement programme for an area comprising about 80 villages, 17 of which are worked intensively, and (ii) the provision of industrial training and employment in a number of small factories and centres.

It was Mahatma Gandhi who emphasised, with the unflagging zeal of a reformer, the importance of rural rehabilitation as an essential basis for the social and economic progress of the country, and a large number of devoted workers inspired and trained by him have carried out village improvement work, known as the "constructive programme"², in different parts of the country. In the twenties, Mr. F. L. Brayne, an ardent and idealistic member of the Indian Civil Service, carried out a bold experiment in rural reconstruction in the Gurgaon district of the Punjab.³

Apart from these three schemes, initiated by outstanding personalities, a number of other rural development projects have produced appreciable results. These include: (i) a government pilot project in Uttar Pradesh, first organised in 1932 and given a great impetus by the popular government first established in 1937, which led to the organisation of a pilot project in Etawah in 1948⁴; (ii) the India Village Service established by the American Presbyterian Mission in 1945; (iii) the *firka* development project in Madras, which was started in 1946-47 in 34 *firkas*⁵ (administrative units each covering approximately 40 villages); and (iv) the

¹ Cf. "Development Planning in India", in *International Labour Review*, Vol. LXVIII, No. 2, Aug. 1953, p. 186.

² The "constructive programme", which included handspinning, the uplift and emancipation of women, the fostering of unity among different religious communities, the eradication of untouchability, drink and the drug evil, was, according to the Mahatma, for a non-violent army what drill and practice in the use of arms is for the ordinary army.

³ Cf. F. L. BRAYNE: *Village Uplift in India* (Allahabad, The Pioneer Press, 1937).

⁴ See S. K. JAIN: "An Indian Experiment in Rural Development: The Etawah Pilot Project", in *International Labour Review*, Vol. LXVIII, Nos. 4-5, Oct.-Nov. 1953, p. 393.

⁵ On 1 Apr. 1950 it was extended to 50 adjacent *firkas*.

Sarvodaya ("Uplift of All")¹ schemes started by the Government of Bombay in October 1949. All these schemes had the same general objectives : increased farm production, improved standards of health and sanitation, a finer village group life, enhanced national consciousness and the development of the individual.

Although a measure of success had been achieved under these schemes, it became obvious that in order to secure rapid progress the rural development programme must be properly integrated and carried out on a nation-wide scale. The experience acquired in the execution of these schemes and from the activities of various development departments in a number of larger states made it possible to draw certain conclusions. It became clear that, apart from the general apathy of the villagers and the lack of adequate resources, the most serious handicaps were the shortage of properly trained village workers and the absence of adequate co-ordination among different departments at the level of the state. For instance, the Grow More Food Inquiry Committee found that departments concerned with development programmes in a number of states "worked independently of one another, following their own programmes and without a sense of common objectives". Each approached the village through its own hierarchy ; in each case the greatest weakness was that the junior officials who had to work with the rural population were "inadequately trained and incapable of providing guidance". These experiments, furthermore, clearly indicated (i) that measures for village improvement could not be imposed from the top ; (ii) that the active and dynamic co-operation of the villagers was essential for their success ; and (iii) that it was unwise to tackle only one aspect of rural life, since all aspects of village life are inter-related, and all must be improved if abiding benefits are to be ensured.

It is interesting to note that the Royal Commission on Agriculture in India (1928) concluded that the demand for a better life could be stimulated only by a deliberate and concerted effort to improve the general conditions of the countryside. It emphasised that without effecting a change in the surroundings and in the psychology of the peasant there could be no hope of substantially raising his standard of living. It recommended that all the resources at the disposal of the State should be brought to bear on the problem of rural uplift.²

¹ These schemes, which were started as an act of homage to Mahatma Gandhi, aim at carrying out different aspects of the Mahatma's "constructive programme". In 1952 the schemes were operative in 25 areas, each of which consists of approximately 45 villages comprising about 20,000 inhabitants.

² GOVERNMENT OF INDIA : *Abridged Report of the Royal Commission on Agriculture in India* (London, H.M. Stationery Office, 1928), p. 89.

RURAL DEVELOPMENT AND THE CONSTITUTION

The Constitution of India, which was adopted by the Indian Constituent Assembly on 26 November 1949, enunciates certain directive principles of state policy concerning the improvement of living conditions of the rural population. They provide that the State shall endeavour "to organise agriculture and animal husbandry on modern scientific lines" and "to promote cottage industries on an individual or co-operative basis in rural areas", with a view to raising "the level of nutrition and the standard of living of its people and the improvement of public health" and to securing for "all workers, agricultural, industrial or otherwise, work, a living wage, conditions of work ensuring a decent standard of life, and full enjoyment of leisure and social and cultural opportunities".¹

The new Constitution has established a welfare state in India, and the principal task facing the country is the realisation of this objective. This requires not only increased production but also a basic change in the social philosophy and psychology of both the administration and the people. The Five-Year Plan is the first organised national endeavour in this direction. With a full realisation of the importance of rural development, it initiated, among other things, a process of transformation of the social and economic life of the villagers, and provided 900 million rupees for a community development programme. It also proposed to establish, over a period of about ten years, a network of workers throughout the country for intensive rural work, and to organise a National Extension Service as a permanent body for this purpose.

The community development projects and the National Extension Service are founded on the same basic principles, and their aims and methods are identical. The main difference between the two lies in the fact that a higher standard of development is attempted in the community project areas by allotting a larger proportion of expenditure for a given period, usually of three years. Community projects, furthermore, are temporary, while the National Extension Service is a permanent organisation, as the improvement of rural life is a continuous process.

ASSISTANCE FROM THE UNITED STATES

Technical Co-operation

On 5 January 1952 the Governments of India and the United States signed an agreement by which the United States agreed to contribute 50 million dollars and India 410 million rupees to a

¹ *The Constitution of India* (Delhi, 1949), Part IV, articles 43, 47 and 48, pp. 20-21.

fund known as the Indo-American Technical Co-operation Fund, to be devoted to 11 projects organised primarily for increasing agricultural efficiency and food production in the country. Community development is the most significant of these, and under this project 55 development blocks have been started in different states. Other projects relate to the sinking of tube wells, the supply of fertilisers and iron and steel for implements, aid to irrigation projects, the training of village workers, locust control, malaria control, soil survey, forest research and fisheries. Owing to the importance of adequately trained village workers, 25 new training centres have been established under one of the projects. All projects are to be completed within three years, and the additional amenities created in the areas are expected to be maintained by the increase in the income of the people.

The programme was supplemented on 3 November 1952. In the two years of the programme the United States has provided a total of 88,350,000 dollars for the projects, and India has contributed 723 million rupees. The dollar allocations of the United States Government, which are held in a fund in the United States, are available for the purposes of equipment and supplies as well as for technical experts from abroad.¹ The basic method used in technical co-operation consists of the exchange of knowledge and skills, largely through the medium of technical experts in particular fields and through the further training of individuals engaged in specific technical work. For instance, as of 1 July 1953, there were 62 United States technical specialists in India, mostly in the field of agricultural extension, and the number of Indian technicians who had trained or were under training in the United States was 176. Another 25 had been selected to go to the United States.²

It is to be noted that the co-operative projects are not administered by the Technical Co-operation Administration or the Ford Foundation but by the Government of India ; community projects are under the Community Projects Administration of the Planning Commission.

Contribution by the Ford Foundation

The Ford Foundation³ has taken the responsibility for 15 development blocks established under the Community Projects

¹ The rupee expenditure is devoted to items such as irrigation, canals, wells, roads, land reclamation, housing and salaries of personnel.

² Fields of advanced training include agriculture, forestry and fisheries, health and sanitation, education, natural resources, industrial productivity, transportation and public works, public administration, labour and community services.

³ The Ford Foundation, which has a major part of the Ford fortune at its disposal, was established for the purpose of "advancing human welfare".

Administration. It meets the full expenditure during the first two years. During the third year it pays 50 per cent. of the expenditure, while the remainder is shared between the Union and the state governments, which together are responsible for the entire expenditure during the fourth and fifth years.

The Ford Foundation has made a special contribution for the training of personnel. It has provided over 11 million rupees for the establishment of five training centres and is sharing expenditure with the Government of India for the establishment of another 25. It has also strengthened, at a cost of 6.7 million rupees, the extension work of six agricultural colleges. It has also set aside nearly half a million rupees for the training abroad of Indian extension leaders, and it provides assistance for the evaluation of programmes. By 31 May 1952 the Foundation had approved grants totalling 4,849,000 dollars for various projects.

BASIC PRINCIPLES

The guiding principle of both the community development projects and the National Extension Service is to change the mentality of 60 million families living in the countryside, and to fire them with the ambition and the will to live a better life. This essentially human and psychological problem is to be solved through action in three directions—

(i) by increasing employment and production through the application of scientific methods of agriculture and the establishment of subsidiary and cottage industries ;

(ii) by promoting self-help, self-reliance and co-operation¹ ; and

(iii) by diverting a part of the immense unutilised energy and time in the countryside for the benefit of the community.

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS

The community development project is both an economic measure and an expression of the new democracy. Historically it is the synthesis of considerable experience acquired as a result of rural development experiments in India and abroad. Although

¹ In spite of the fact that co-operative societies have existed in rural communities for a period of nearly 40 years, even in areas where such societies are most developed only 30 per cent. of the families engaged in agriculture are eligible for obtaining credit on the terms on which co-operative societies can offer credit to agriculturists. Cf. V. T. KRISHNAMACHARI: *Remarks at the Second Development Commissioners' Conference (16-19 Apr. 1953)* (New Delhi, 1953), p. 2.

its primary emphasis is on agricultural production¹, its basic purpose is to establish the people's right to a full life. The method adopted is to apply, by organised effort, a mass of available knowledge to community development through the active participation of the villager.

The Indian Government launched on 2 October 1952 community development projects covering about 15 million persons in 55 areas (49 rural areas and six rural-urban townships). Each rural project covered approximately 300 villages, with a total area of some 450-500 square miles, a cultivated area of about 150,000 acres and a population of about 200,000. The project area is divided into three development blocks, each consisting of about 100 villages with a population of 60,000-70,000. Each development block is in turn divided into groups of five villages, each group being the field of operation for a village worker.

Activities

The main activities undertaken in a community project are agricultural and related matters; irrigation; communications; education; health; supplementary employment; housing; training; and social welfare.

Agriculture and Related Matters.

The programme includes the reclamation of available virgin and waste land; the provision of commercial fertilisers and improved seeds; the promotion of fruit and vegetable cultivation, of improved agricultural techniques and land utilisation; the supply of technical information, improved agricultural implements and improved marketing and credit facilities; soil surveys and the prevention of soil erosion; the encouragement of the use of natural and compost manures; and the improvement of livestock, largely by the establishment of key villages for breeding pedigree stock and the provision of veterinary aid, as well as artificial insemination centres.

It also includes the encouragement of the growth of a healthy co-operative movement. The aim is to establish in every village or group of villages at least one multi-purpose society in which practically every rural family is represented. Such societies are to be used for practically every development activity in the community project area, including the encouragement of rural arts and crafts.

¹ In view of the fact that India spends about \$500-600 million on foreign exchange each year to import food and cotton, emphasis on agriculture is essential.

Irrigation.

The programme visualises the provision of water for agriculture through minor irrigation works, e.g., tanks (water reservoirs), canals, surface wells, tube wells, etc. The objective is to serve at least half of the agricultural land, if possible, with irrigation facilities.

Communications.

The road system on the countryside is to be so developed as to link all the villages within the project area ; feeder roads are to be constructed up to a maximum distance of half a mile from each village through the voluntary labour of the villagers themselves ; only the main roads will be provided and maintained by the state or other public agencies.

Education.

The community projects have been planned to provide for social education, the expansion and improvement of primary and secondary education and the promotion of youth welfare. Vocational and technical training is to be emphasised at all stages of the educational programme. Training facilities are to be provided for imparting improved techniques to artisans and technicians. Training centres that already exist in any area are to be strengthened and developed, and new ones are to be established to meet the requirements of the project area.

Health.

The health organisation of the project consists of three primary health units in the development blocks and a secondary health unit equipped with a hospital and a mobile dispensary at the headquarters of the project area, which serve the area as a whole. The objectives of the programme are the improvement of environmental hygiene, including the provision and protection of water supply ; proper disposal of human and animal waste ; and control of epidemic diseases, such as malaria, cholera, smallpox, tuberculosis, etc.

Supplementary Employment.

The unemployed and underemployed persons in the village community are to be provided with gainful employment as far as possible by the development of cottage and small-scale industries, the construction of brick kilns and saw mills and the encouragement of employment in the tertiary sector of the economy.

Housing.

Apart from the provision of housing for community project personnel, steps are to be taken, wherever possible, to provide demonstration and training in improved techniques and designs for rural housing. In congested villages other action may be necessary, such as the development of new sites, the opening of village parks and playgrounds and assistance in the supply of building materials.

Training.

The training of village workers, project supervisors and other personnel for the Community Development Programme is emphasised. Each training centre is to have facilities for about 70 trainees. In view of the great demand on the centres to train people quickly for the opening of new projects the training period is to be limited to six months in the first instance.

In addition to the training of village workers and supervisors, the agricultural extension service workers in the project areas are to take steps for the training of the agriculturists, elected representatives and village leaders.

Social Welfare.

This includes the provision of audio-visual aid for instruction and recreation and the organisations of community entertainment, sports activities, local festivals and celebrations.

Administration

The administrative machinery of the programme is based upon the maximum utilisation of the existing machinery of the Government. In view of the known dangers of imposing a programme from the top, a serious attempt has been made to ensure the people's participation in the execution as well as the planning of the programme.

Central Organisation.

The committee of management for the projects is the Central Committee, which consists of the members of the Planning Commission, with the Prime Minister as Chairman. It is assisted by an Advisory Board consisting of three officials from the Ministry of Food and Agriculture, the Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of Natural Resources and Scientific Research. The organisation responsible for the implementation of the projects is the Community Project Administration. Its chief executive officer, the Administrator, is advised by a committee consisting of the nominees

of the various Ministries of the Government of India concerned and assisted by a group of field operators or technical experts in different fields. These, in turn, are assisted by four service sections in matters of personnel, planning, finance and administration.

State Organisation.

The pattern adopted at New Delhi provides for administration at the level of the states. There is a state development committee consisting of the different Ministers concerned, with the chief Minister as the Chairman ; an advisory board consisting of the secretaries of the principal departments ; and a development commissioner, the chief executive officer, who is assisted by a technical advisory committee and a team of specialists. The commissioner is also responsible for general development in the state as outlined in the Five-Year Plan.

District Organisation.

At the district level a district development officer (also known as a commissioner) is responsible for development programmes and especially community projects. He is assisted by a district development committee.

Project Level.

A project executive officer is responsible for the rural development programme in the project area. He is assisted by the existing development departments of the state government as well as by additional personnel designated for the project.

As the villagers must participate in the planning as well as the execution of the project, the executive officer is assisted in the planning of the development programme by a project advisory committee, which includes, besides the principal officers concerned, leading public workers, a few representative agriculturists, the chairman of the district board and local representatives in the Union and state legislatures.

In order to ensure the villagers' participation in the execution of the programme, special emphasis is placed on the establishment of effective voluntary organisations to secure the maximum contribution in cash and in labour for the implementation of the programme.

Training of Personnel

As the fundamental objective of community projects is not merely increased production but also an all-round development of the individual and the community, it is of the greatest importance

that persons engaged in this work should be carefully selected and adequately trained.

Project Executive Officers.

Project executive officers receive training in (i) instructional activities, (ii) field activities and (iii) recreational activities. The first includes lectures on agriculture, education, cottage industries, health, housing, roads, social welfare, etc. The second, which emphasises manual work with the object of establishing the dignity of labour, includes sanitation, the planting of trees, group life, women's and children's welfare and adult education. The recreational activities include Indian games and sports, music and dancing, wrestling, film shows and dramatic performances. A course organised at Nilokheri in the Punjab from 22 July to 16 August 1952 was attended by project executive officers from different parts of the country. It helped to develop (i) uniformity of outlook concerning rural development programmes ; (ii) a spirit of co-operation with fellow workers ; (iii) loyalty to India's culture and traditions and a desire to bring about a renaissance ; and (iv) an understanding of the role that government officers should play in a welfare state.

Village Workers.

The village worker, who is responsible for the execution of the programme in five villages within the project area, is obviously the key person for the success of the programme. As the villager must attend to a number of different jobs, the village worker must be a multi-purpose man. For instance, he has to advise and instruct villagers concerning agriculture (preparation of soil, selection of seed, cultivation, protection of crops against pests, harvesting, threshing and storage of grain), irrigation, sanitation, the securing of credit, the management of co-operatives, and the organisation of the village council. The selection and training of village workers, therefore, require great care.

The centres organised for their training have three principal objectives. First, they seek to give a clear understanding of the nature of the rural development programme and its significance to the future of India. Secondly, they attempt to develop in the trainees a spirit of service to the people, which is essential in effectively "helping village people to help themselves". Thirdly, they provide practical experience in the application of principles and methods of rural development ; each training centre is located near a development project in order to facilitate such experience under adequate supervision. The subjects covered include agri-

culture, irrigation, simple agricultural engineering, plant protection, animal husbandry, vegetable gardening, health, sanitation, social education, co-operation and village administration. Classroom study is supplemented by practical work in the villages. Seminar discussions are held to give the trainees opportunities to analyse their experience and exchange ideas on effective methods of working with village people.

PROGRAMME EVALUATION ORGANISATION

A programme evaluation organisation was established on 1 April 1953 as a result of an agreement between the Ford Foundation and the Government of India. It keeps all concerned informed of the progress being made in achieving the objectives of the programme, provides a periodic check on the relative merits of different development methods and procedures employed and makes it possible to improve the programme continuously. It not only indicates to the people the value of the programme and its impact on the economy and culture of the country but also creates a sense of accomplishment in the minds of those who are actually engaged in it.

PROJECT TARGETS

The Community Development Programme aims at giving each village a balanced occupational distribution. The percentage distribution in a village of about 100 families or about 500 persons is expected to be as follows : agriculture, 50 ; agricultural labour, tractor and pump drivers, etc., 10 ; arts, crafts and cottage industries, 12 ; urban small-scale industries, 10 ; building trades, 1.5 ; transport, 2 ; shopkeepers, 3.5 ; miscellaneous, 11.

The project also includes a number of specific improvements in the village. These include two surface wells, tube wells or tanks for drinking water ; adequate drainage ; the provision of a number of services (agricultural, veterinary and sanitary) ; and the establishment of a primary school and a primary adult education and recreation centre. Furthermore at least half of the cultivated land is to be brought under irrigation where necessary and one-third of the area of the village reserved for housing, grazing fields and fuel forests.

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PROJECT

The implementation of the project, which takes three years, is planned in five stages : conception (three months) ; initiation (six months) ; operation (18 months) ; consolidation (six months) ; finalisation (three months). During the first stage a survey of the

area and detailed plans of the project are completed. The second is devoted to the establishment of various services, the recruitment of staff, communications, the provision of housing for staff, the reclamation of existing disused wells, the strengthening of existing schools, etc. The operation stage is the period of intensive work. During consolidation senior members of the personnel are shifted to new project areas, and preparations are made for the existing administrative machinery to take charge. Finalisation is a period of finishing touches, when the normal administration takes over all the services established and consolidated.

The scope and operation of the rural development project vary according to the economic and social conditions of the area concerned. Certain general principles and methods, however, are normally observed at the local level.

Preliminaries regarding the development project at this level include—

- (i) an analysis of the existing economic situation of the area ;
- (ii) the determination of the obstacles to development peculiar to the area ;
- (iii) an assessment of the material and human resources of the area ;
- (iv) an examination of the relationship of the area to the outside world on the basis of its production and consumption and their dependence on exports, imports or other financial transactions outside the area ;
- (v) the determination of the existing patterns of utilisation of the resources of the area ;
- (vi) the determination of the possibility of increasing the efficiency of utilisation of existing resources ;
- (vii) a consideration of such potential increase in the light of its desirability in terms of social well-being or other criteria deemed suitable ;
- (viii) the determination of priorities (the lines on which technical progress should be planned and the directions in which the austerity programme should proceed) ;
- (ix) the fitting in of such objectives as are possible into the framework of development—financial and physical—laid down by the community project plans ;
- (x) the preparation of a manpower budget to enable the population to be distributed in the different categories and to bring about the desired structural shifts in occupation ;

(xi) an examination of the possibilities of creating employment opportunities for surplus population ;

(xii) the determination of methods of canalising the increased purchasing power resulting from the project.

A detailed questionnaire is prepared for the assessment of the resources of the area, and the data gathered through it are used to determine the various needs. In the first place, owing to the great need to increase food production at this stage, agricultural development constitutes an important part of all projects. Although irrigation, the provision of fertilisers and better quality seeds, the improvement and care of cattle and the encouragement of co-operatives and cottage industries find a place in every programme, the emphasis placed on each item depends on the particular requirement of the area concerned. Secondly, as one of the objectives of the programme is to open the village to dynamic influences from the outside, the improvement of various means of communication and the introduction of new ideas through education are given special consideration. Thirdly, owing to large-scale unemployment and underemployment in rural areas, labour intensive items are given priority. It is fully realised, nevertheless, that the different items are interdependent.

In principle the project is not to be initiated until it has the full support of the village people, who, in fact, should share, through their representatives, in the selection of various items and in general planning, as only then will they be able and willing to take it over after the initial period and make it self-perpetuating. The support of the people is further assured by the contributory financing of the programme, under which the Union Government or the state provides only a portion of the total expenditure, and the rest (money and labour) is the responsibility of the community concerned.

As the rural development programme is still in a very early stage and rural conditions vary in different parts of India, it is difficult to state precisely how these principles are translated into action in a given socio-economic context. This, in fact, is left largely to the discretion of the persons in charge of the programme, who are in close contact with the people and the problems of the area. Furthermore, since at the local level planning, administration and operation overlap, the persons in charge of the programme—project executive officers and village workers—play a decisive role at this stage. It is their ability to understand village problems and to give an effective lead towards their solution through the active support of the villagers themselves, rather than adherence to certain definite operational methods, that will be fruitful.

THE NATIONAL EXTENSION SERVICE ORGANISATION

The National Extension Service Organisation was started in October 1953 to expedite rural development by reducing the programme in terms of expenditure. Extension of community projects on a nation-wide scale with the existing administrative machinery and resources would have taken 35 years. The new organisation plans to complete it by 1961.

The National Extension Service is organised in units of one or more development blocks so as to constitute a compact administrative charge under a subdivisional official or a subcollector. Normally the administrative unit under a subdivisional officer comprises 300 villages. The organisation has to cover about one-quarter of the country by the end of 1956, which means initiation of work in 1,200 development blocks, each consisting of 100 villages with a population of about 60,000. The existing 55 community projects and the additional 55 development blocks under the Technical Co-operation Aid Agreement are regarded as equivalent to 300 development blocks. As a result, 900 National Extension Service blocks have to be established during the rest of the period of the Plan : 180 in 1953-54, 270 in 1954-55 and 450 in 1955-56.

The essentials of the programme in the National Extension Service development block are the provision of staff and necessary equipment ; administrative buildings ; a small operational programme forming a nucleus of productive activities in respect of basic amenities ; and loans of different types.

Each development block is estimated to cost, for a period of three years, about 750,000 rupees. Of this, the Union Government provides 325,000 and the state government 125,000 rupees ; the remaining 300,000 are secured through short-term loans from the Reserve Bank of India, co-operative societies and state governments.

It is planned, furthermore, that about 400 of the National Extension Service development blocks (150 in 1954-55 and 250 in 1955-56) will be selected for intensive development on the pattern of the community projects. This would mean an additional expenditure per block, where three years' work has already been completed, of about 1,050,000 rupees.¹ In regard to the entire programme the Union Government, apart from granting other than short-term loans, bears about 75 per cent. of the non-recurring and 50 per cent. of the recurring expenditure.

It is intended that on the completion of the programme the National Extension Service personnel will be retained on each

¹ The total cost of development (basic type of community project) is estimated at 1,500,000 rupees ; 750,000 rupees (minus 300,000, the amount in loans) would have already been spent during the three-year period.

development block (of either type) on a permanent basis. The Union Government will bear 50 per cent. of the recurring expenditure on such personnel.

The Union Ministry of Food and Agriculture is responsible for the training of village workers for rural development. By October 1953 it had established, in close co-operation with the states concerned, 34 extension training centres. They are operated and administered by the state governments.¹ By the middle of February 1954 4,000 village workers had completed their training and 1,700 were under training.

Table I gives an estimate of the total cost of the rural development programme. It will be seen that of the total cost of 1,562

TABLE I. COST OF RURAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME
(Summary statement, millions of rupees)

Item	Cost	Contribution by Union	Contribution by states	Loan for short-term credit
Cost of 900 National Extension Service development blocks	383.0	166.0	64.0	153.0
Training schemes, etc.	— ¹	(50.0)	— ¹	—
Cost of existing 55 community projects and 55 additional development blocks under T.C.A. Programme (including dollar cost)	467.0	379.0	88.0	—
Cost of 400 intensive development blocks on the lines of the Community Development Programme	166.0	138.0	28.0	—
Total cost during period of Plan	1,016.0	733.0	180.0	153.0
Expenditure after period of Plan	546.0	339.0	90.0	117.0
Total cost of the Programme	1,562.0	1,072.0	270.0	270.0

Source: COMMUNITY PROJECTS ADMINISTRATION: *Organisation of a National Extension Service and Expansion of the Community Development Programme* (New Delhi, the President's Press, 1953), Annex IV.

¹ At the time when the estimate was made this question was under consideration, but it was assumed for purposes of planning that the share of the Centre may be 50 million rupees. The state governments are expected to contribute from 12 to 15 per cent. of the expenditure.

¹ A good deal of experience has already been gained as a result of operating these institutions. For instance, in April 1953 a conference of the principals of agricultural extension training centres was convened at Bhopal by the Indian Council of Agriculture for the pooling of the experience gained in different parts of the country and to consider how to use them most effectively in future.

million rupees the Government of India will contribute 1,072 million and the state governments 270 million. The remainder, is secured through short-term loans from the Reserve Bank of India, co-operative societies and state governments. Except for the United States aid in this programme, which amounts to 6 per cent. of the total expenditure, it is financed out of national resources.

RURAL DEVELOPMENT AND EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES

The rural development programme aims at creating employment opportunities in rural areas by (i) promoting intensive cultivation by the provision of more water and better soil conservation practices; (ii) encouraging migration to places with better employment possibilities; (iii) undertaking village work on a community basis; (iv) establishing cottage industries based on local raw materials and local markets; and (v) promoting the production of hand-spun and hand-woven cloth.

The programme is also expected to relieve unemployment among the educated, which is becoming very acute owing to the addition of an increasing number of graduates to the labour force every year. For instance, in 1951-52 the number of young persons who passed university matriculation, intermediate and degree

TABLE II. ENVISAGED EMPLOYMENT OF THE EDUCATED
IN THE RURAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME

Category	Number
Village workers	12,440
Ministerial staff	12,300
Agricultural graduates	1,120
Project executive officers	1,120
Schoolteachers	38,440
Midwives	2,480
Overseers	1,740
Veterinary doctors, stockmen, etc.	3,600
Co-operative inspectors	1,120
Social education organisers	2,240
Graduates in social sciences	207
Doctors, compounders, sanitary inspectors, and lady health visitors	2,480
Engineers	207
Arts and crafts supervisors	1,240
Mechanics	1,860
Sweepers	1,240
Total	<u>83,834</u>

examinations was almost double that of 1947-48¹, while the increase in employment possibilities during this period has been negligible. The National Extension Service scheme envisages a total employment of 83,834 educated persons, as shown in table II.

PEOPLE'S PARTICIPATION

The implementation of such an extensive and multi-pronged programme is impossible without the active and wholehearted support of the rural population. It must, in fact, become a movement of the people, for basically it is the people themselves who must study their requirements, plan their own programmes and carry them out, with the help and guidance of the Government and through self-help and active co-operation among themselves. In order to secure such co-operation village councils (*panchayats*)² have been revived and the *Bharat Sevak Samaj*³ established. Furthermore numerous voluntary organisations have made a very useful contribution.

Village Councils

Although the village councils are very ancient institutions⁴ in India, and for a long time managed effectively the affairs of rural communities, they have for various reasons been reduced during the last few centuries to bare husks, without influence and authority. In recent years, however, comprehensive legislation has been undertaken to reorganise them and to endow them with such powers and authority as may be necessary to enable them to function as units of self-government, and to play an effective role in the task of rural reconstruction.

They are authorised, in general, to make provision for the construction and maintenance of public roads, drains and bridges; sanitation; medical relief and first aid; the supply of drinking water; and the supervision and maintenance of public buildings,

¹ The number of successful candidates in the matriculation examinations was 270,000 (estimated) in 1951-52 as compared with 116,680 in 1947-48. Corresponding figures for intermediate (arts and science) examinations are 78,000 and 39,840; for B.A. and B.Sc. examinations 35,000 and 20,766; and for graduates in professional subjects 19,500 and 10,364. (These figures are illustrative, since data from certain states were not available at the time of computation.)

² Literally administration by five people.

³ Literally "Servants of India Society".

⁴ Kautilya's *Arthashastra*, written about the fourth century B.C., mentions a highly evolved village organisation composed of the village elders. Through centuries they watched over the welfare of the community, maintained law and order, dispensed rough and ready justice, collected revenue and organised defence against external danger.

forest and grazing lands and village schools. They may extend their functions in certain directions. They are entitled to call for contributions, in labour¹ or money, from all adult able-bodied males. During the period of the Plan (1951-56), their number is expected to increase by 14,000 to reach a total of 69,000.

Bharat Sevak Samaj

The *Bharat Sevak Samaj*, a non-political and non-official national organisation, was established in 1952 with a view to securing public co-operation for the national development plan, including the improvement of living conditions in the villages. Apart from assisting in the development of existing voluntary organisations, the principal functions of the organisation are (i) to find and develop avenues of voluntary service for the people of the country and (ii) to draw out the available unused time, energy and other resources of the people and direct them into various fields of social and economic activity.²

Voluntary Organisations for Rural Reconstruction

A number of voluntary organisations have contributed a great deal towards rural reconstruction in different states. These include, the American Friends Service Committee in Orissa; the *Jana Seva Sangh* in Bombay; the *Adimjati Seva Mandal* and *Santal Paharia Seva Mandal* for the advancement of the aborigines in Bihar; the Friends' Rural Centre at Rasaulia (Hoshangabad) in Madhya Pradesh. In Mysore the three principal organisations, namely, the Bharat Scouts and Guides, the *Bharat Seva Dal* and the Kasturba Gandhi Memorial Trust, are engaged in village uplift work. Similar organisations are engaged in rural development activities in the Punjab, Madras, Rajasthan, Travancore-Cochin and other states.

ACHIEVEMENTS

The progress report on the Rural Development Programme during the first year (October 1952 to October 1953) indicates that people have taken to it with enthusiasm. They have made considerable contributions in money, materials and labour to the construction of roads, canals, water reservoirs and other irrigation works, the building of schools, the organisation of village

¹ For a period of one year this amounts to 48 man-hours in the Punjab, four days' work in Orissa, 15 days' work in Madhya Pradesh and 36 days' work in Assam.

² PLANNING COMMISSION: *Bharat Sevak Samaj* (1952), p. 28.

councils, the establishment of health centres and the improvement of sanitation. Social and cultural activities have been greatly increased. Veterinary services for the protection of cattle against disease have made headway.¹

As one of the fundamental purposes of the programme is to bring about a wholesome change in the mentality of rural people, material achievements are not an adequate criterion of its success. Although the extent of the psychological change brought about among the people is difficult to gauge, the reception given to the programme has been encouraging.

"The community projects and the National Extension Service", Mr. Jawaharlal Nehru has stated, "present us with a unique opportunity for creating a peaceful revolution in this country and more especially in the rural areas, which were so neglected in the past." The creation of such a revolution in an old, stratified, rural society, however, is faced with enormous difficulties.

In the first place the villager must feel the need for reform and improvement. Although for some time numerous dynamic forces have been impinging upon his static society, he is still very much under the sway of custom and tradition. Neglected by governments in the past except for such matters as the collection of revenue and the enforcement of law and order, he has learned to look at government officials with scepticism, suspicion and fear. This is likely to continue till the officials, particularly on the lower rungs of the administration, have learned to behave as servants rather than rulers of the people and have won the villagers' confidence through friendly guidance and assistance. Both of these psychological changes are far more difficult to bring about than the constitutional change that created a welfare state in India.

Secondly, rural life fails to attract and retain persons with intelligence, education, drive and ambition. Individuals imbued with the ideal of personal success and progress seek to realise it in cities and towns, which offer greater possibilities. It is therefore

¹ The following items indicate some of these achievements: *Assam*: 71 miles of new village roads built by voluntary labour; *Bihar*: 116 night schools started for adults; *Madhya Pradesh*: a sum of 48,000 rupees contributed towards the improvement and construction of hospitals, school buildings and community works; *Punjab*: 163 miles of unmetalled roads and 6 miles of metalled roads completed; *Uttar Pradesh*: in the Faizabad community development block 41 tube wells sunk, which provide increased irrigation facilities for 15,000 acres; *Hyderabad*: 7,500 acres of fallow land brought under cultivation, and irrigation facilities provided for 15,000 acres; *Madhya Bharat*: 1,364 wells sunk and 1,032 old wells deepened and repaired; *Mysore*: 13 water reservoirs and four miles of feeder channels built; *Patiala and East Punjab States Union*: 53 co-educational primary schools started.

not easy to secure young persons with suitable qualities to serve as village workers with missionary zeal.

Thirdly, the tradition of carrying out rural improvement work by different departments in the state governments still prevails and hinders the effective carrying out of a joint co-operative effort.

Viewed technically, the rural development programme appears to have one shortcoming. Although its comprehensive approach to rehabilitate not only rural areas but also the rural man is commendable, it does not, at this stage, include any specific measures for population control. Yet it is impossible to overlook the fact that India's birth rate is high (over 25 per thousand) ¹ and that the death rate is bound to decline with better food and improved sanitation and health services.

If the rural development programme can be implemented successfully, its cumulative effect in terms of increased agricultural production, better housing and sanitation and improved social and cultural amenities is bound to be impressive. It is therefore desirable that increased attention should be given to popularising late marriages and planned parenthood, with a view to controlling population and ensuring that the progress achieved leads to real improvements in living standards.

The programme is planned with great care, and its organisation and administration is in the hands of men with ability, vision, drive and considerable experience. It is practical and meets the imperative need of the people. Unless something untoward happens, it is bound to have a large measure of success and might well become the basis of India's second Five-Year Plan.

There is no doubt that the rural development programme has made remarkable progress in a short period, and has overcome numerous difficulties. Before it can be implemented with complete success, however, much remains to be done through a sustained and co-operative effort of all concerned, channelled through a well co-ordinated organisation, efficiently administered. The most important factor for success, however, is the generation of active enthusiasm among the people. No plan for rural development can succeed unless millions of people living in villages accept its objectives, share in its making, regard it as urgent and are prepared to make the sacrifices necessary to implement it. It will have to be undertaken, in the words of Mr. Nehru, "with something much more than books and statistics, papers and directions and planning and organisation It will have to be undertaken with something fiery about it, with that spirit which moves a nation to high endeavour."

¹ Cf. UNITED NATIONS : *Demographic Yearbook*, 1952, pp. 224-231.