

NOTES ON A DISCUSSION REGARDING A

CENTRAL INSTITUTE FOR PANCHAYAT AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT

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1. The Panchayat Ministry has a unique contribution to make in relation to the other Ministries of N.M.C. It is concerned both with the political philosophy of the country and the practical structure from the village up to the national level. It stands for the active participation of the people in nation-building and in the task of development. Wherever the ordinary citizen is involved in whatever technical project, the Panchayat structure has a vital role to play.

2. It follows that any training programme provided by the Ministry - no matter to what level the participants may have risen and function - must base its contribution on what has been experienced and what has been learned about how the Nepali people do, can and should operate in the national effort.

3. In the above sense a Panchayat training centre should not be like its counterpart institutions seeking an academic tradition, but must be a practical, field-based problem-solving, action-oriented establishment dealing in practical realities and the application of knowledge, rather than abstracted 'subjects'.

4. It is worth mentioning that the Ministry has already invested resources with the N.T.S. in the process of building training from the grass roots up. N.T.S. processes aim at placing training institutes in an operationally crucial and strategic role between policy intentions and field implementation, with built-in ways of feeding field situations back into the decision-making levels, so informing and improving upon the policy formulating processes.

5. N.T.S. aims to begin a continuity of development in training, from which a National Centre could naturally grow, based on solid foundations. The foundations are the experiences gradually put together from the field by the trainers.

6. At the moment N.T.S. stands at an important stage of its first phase, in which, among other things:

a) Detailed collaborative processes are being worked out with the Agricultural Department.

b) Possibilities are opening up to work out village involvement with the (Asian Development Bank financed) Kathmandu Irrigation Project.

c) A major collaborative effort is being encouraged with N.M.C. and the Ministry of Health.

d) The detailed operational task of the new Panchayat Village Secretary is being carefully constructed.

e) The contribution of Women Workers is being worked out in producing Supervisors for women's involvement in village planning and implementation in the new SAMP areas. (This probably will tie in with UNICEF inputs). It is expected that these 'supervisors' would fruitfully join the technical staff, as a kind of social technician, under the project manager of the SAMP.

3) Most importantly, it is now clear that a village Panchayat "delivery of service" structure with full-scale popular participation is necessary if development is realistically to take place. M.T.S. has spelled this out in a paper: "A Task Group Approach".

This structure seems to us the most important contribution that the Panchayat Ministry could make at the present time - and its positive implications are many and need to be discussed fully.

All the areas above are ripe for and require Action Research and work at the village level.

If we can get these matters right the training centres will have unique content and materials for training at all levels and speak with great authority. Participants at the Principals Seminar will remember the exposition of how, if we can build the 'task groups' and the role of the Panchayat Village Secretary well, then the role of the PDCs can be clearly defined and taught as complementary to the village activity, and thereafter the PDC's role can be successfully developed into that of the PDC's (an example of working from the grass-roots up) in planning and implementation and in providing active democratization to bring change in the deep-rooted old style authoritarian attitudes and ways of working. Included also will be the working out of constructive models of relationships between elected and government-appointed officials.

The establishment of a National Centre at the moment will face the problem of lack of immediately available staff who are suitably trained themselves. The main source of instructors is the staffs of the Regional Centres. Transfer to the National Centre would ordinarily result in the weakening of the Regional Centres and the moving of the trainers even further away from the field operations upon which, to our mind, the strength and real contribution of a National Centre would reside.

Our solution to this fundamental problem would be as follows:

1) To start, the National Centre should be seen as a 'holding centre', providing mainly short course orientations. Its staff could be appropriately assigned to the centre, but this work should be firmly located in Regional based work. Substantial periods of 'secondment' should in any case be the pattern, even when the Centre is fully working. Practice and its importance cannot be taught unless trainees can be on-going practitioners!

2) M.T.S. groups are already in existence - Solo Analysis, Teaching Methods and Materials, Pottery, Technical Collaboration, Action Research, Social Policy, etc. The work of these groups should be taken up and continued right away by the National Centre.

3) The work at Jhapa should now be followed through with an improved programme (modified by the valuable experience gained so far) with the Potential staff of the National Centre seconded to one of the Regional Centres (and involving the Regional staff also).

4) Action Research with the emphasis on Action should be focussed on the important areas we have discussed earlier, these efforts being the focus for a systematic on-going training in Action Research for the participants.

5) An arrangement such as suggested here would enable the M.T.S. to contribute fully to the immediate possibilities of a National Centre (if the proposal is agreed quickly enough) during the 4 months that we are now being requested to stay, and not only would the firm outlines of such a Centre emerge during this time, but a full range of long-term possibilities could be examined and proposed by M.T.S. as part of its work if H.M.G. so desired.

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**RURAL WATER SUPPLY PROJECT --
THE SOCIAL ASPECTS**

The Rural Water Supply Project was initiated as an outcome of the WHO sponsored Country Health Programming.

Gradually the matter slipped out of the influence of the Ministry of Health. After many months of obscure response by the Rural Water Supply Department (Ministry of Agriculture) regarding the activities necessary to meet the health and social objectives, they began to say unambiguously and authoritatively that " our responsibilities and with bringing the water to the surface." The donating Australian Government (ADAB), although very sympathetic to the original broader objectives of the project, however, took the position that they were only committed to financing 'hardware' components of the programme. This leaves UNICEF in the position of having to pull the project back onto its proper social- and health-related course. Without such action we will find that at great expense, we have drilled 3,100 holes in the ground which could in fact, ironically, create health hazards which had not previously existed, because provision has not been made for the necessary sanitation measures associated with the new water supply. Absent too, are processes for knowing to what extent the selected villages see drinking water as their priority; deciding on the most advantageous social location for the water supply (given geological considerations); designing, and funding hygienic storage tanks, and making sure that villages can actually obtain the materials for constructing these; ensuring fair-sharing of the water supply; arranging for village contributions to capital and maintenance costs; securing year-round fuel for the engines and paying for this; the arranging for regular maintenance; etc. All these elements, and much more, in relation to raising the capacity for associated and future village development, should be the result of successful community participatory processes.

These fundamental matters of community involvement were long eclipsed by passionate debate on drills, pumps, pipes, screens, etc.

By persistent raising of the issues, and the quoting of experience and the (unreleased) findings from the 150 villages in the Dry Zone Basic-Line

Survey, along with UNICEF's readiness to respond to the request for a 'social aspects' support project to the Rural Water Supply Programme it was at last officially recognised by all at the Tripartite Review in September that this objectives were to be realised other than in terms of 'Holes in the ground'.

The Tripartite Review designated a 'Task Force' to produce a project proposal within eight weeks.

Represented on the Task Force were

The task force included representatives from FIRD, RNSD, Department of Health (which includes HCB and HSD), Department of Social Welfare, Institute of Economics, Department of Psychology, ADAB, WHO and UNICEF and met formally on five occasions.

The proposal was agreed and was said by the Task Force Chairman Dr. De HI to be satisfactory as far as the Government was concerned. UNICEF responded by giving assurances in relation to funding, expertise etc.

However at the Ministry of Planning and Finance the funds have spanked off all kinds of alternate ideas unrelated to our present Rural Water Supply Programme and totally divorced from the identified threat to our present objectives and commitments.

Both the Australians and ourselves and many in Government are now actually aware of the village level problems which may well destroy the successful outcome of this project and for which the proposal has been designed to deal.

The fact is that there are powerful forces within Government pulling in different directions and long-standing rivalry between sectors.

It is essential for the project that UNICEF makes it clear.

- a) that support has been assured for a project directly related to and an integral part of our present big commitment.
- b) that failure to deal with the identified and agreed problems not only threaten the present programmes but will jeopardise UNICEF's (and probably the Australian Government's) interest in future water development.

The Government must be asked to make

- a) an urgent decision regarding the 'social aspects' proposal.

- b) designate the administrative responsibility for this intersectoral activity.
- c) decide on the nature and source of light expenditure.
- d) decide on the way to meet the transport requirements of very mobile teams of village level workers.
- e) in the meantime as a matter of urgency, give the famous "green light" for the preparatory steps of the project to commence.

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subjectively a real sense of an improved quality of community life. These considerations are inherent, although usually not stated, and form part of the formal objectives - but they should be emphasised.

Water Supply as an Aspect of Wider Development

Although in this working paper we shall be considering community participation as it relates to Water Supply programmes, it is important to keep the wider context under attention. UNICEF supports Water Supply programmes in terms of supplying clean drinking water to reduce water-borne diseases and the drudgery that falls upon the children and women as water carriers, and to supply water for improvement of sanitary conditions. However, UNICEF operates within a wider policy base of converging and basic services, which aims at contributing to overall development. In relation to water this is particularly apt, for water means many things to communities: especially in rural areas where water is scarce, animals and irrigation are likely to feature high on the community's list of priorities; and where diesel engines are to be supplied for pumps, electricity for light and power might become an added possibility that communities will come to think about.

Drinking water specifically for health purposes as far as the rural community is concerned is likely not to be too high on their priority list. However, the coming of water is full of drama and very visible. Unlike many development activities, the product, water, is swift to follow the activity; there is the excitement of rigs, strangers, strange noises, sights, smells, and activity, and (God and geology willing) suddenly there is water where there was none (or less) before. The excitement and interest aroused by water and these happenings can and should be the stimulation upon which much else in development can ride. Where there are problems in matching the community's and the planners' priorities (such as is characteristic in public health matters) the drama and obvious utility of water lend themselves to practical "trade-offs" which should be formalised in some kind of contractual arrangement between the appropriate community authority and the technical authorities responsible for the hardware and the skills.