

TRAINING PROGRAM  
FOR  
VILLAGE LEVEL WORKERS  
MADHYA PRADESH, INDIA



INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION ADMINISTRATIVE

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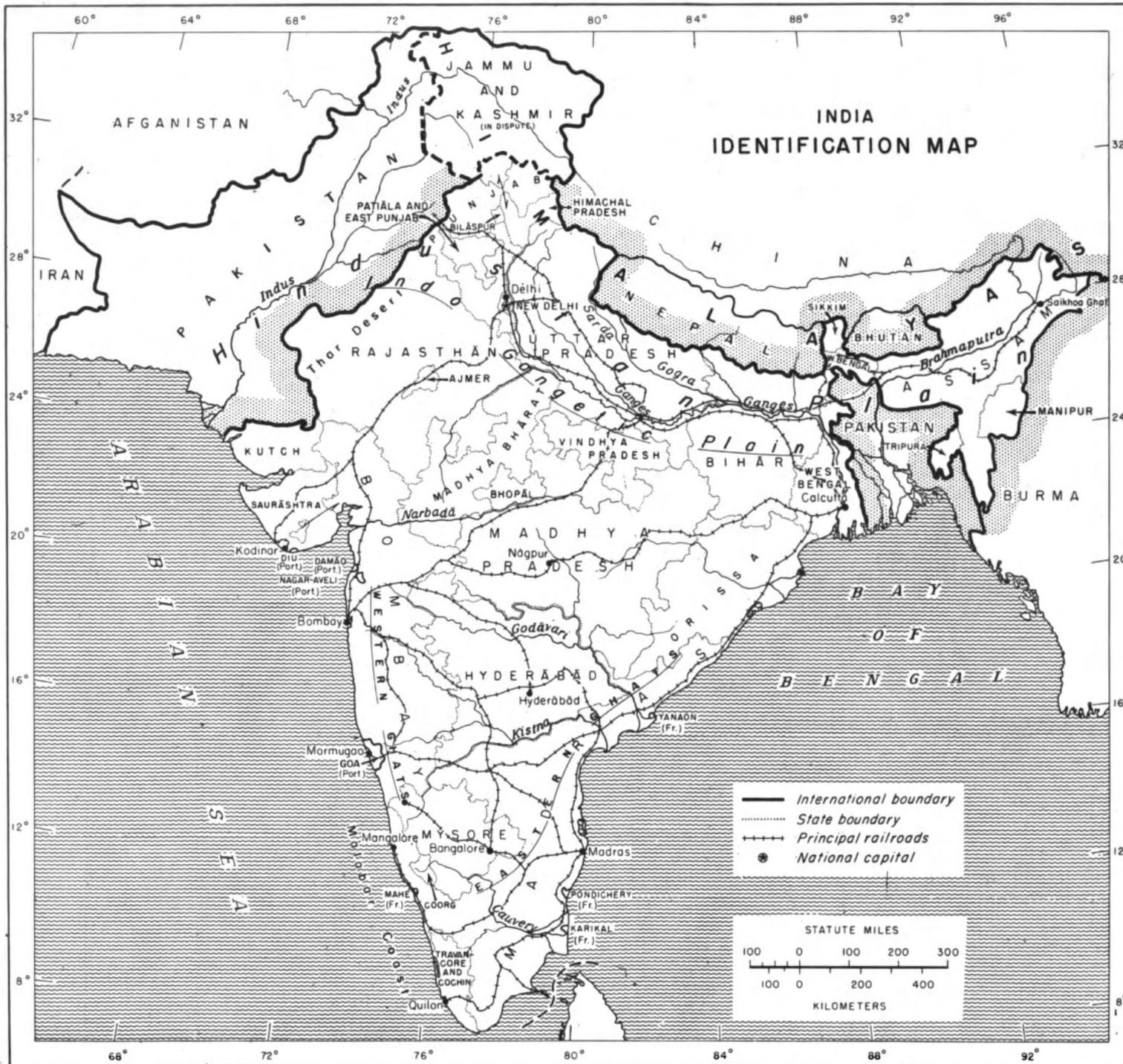
By

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### Cover:

For hundreds of years, the inhabitants here saw no need to build roads among the villages. The people had learned to carry heavy burdens like these double loads of firewood over their shoulders along shoulder-wide jungle trails. But they now find useful and convenient these leveled and widened by volunteers. Photo courtesy of ICA



Frank W. Sheppard, ICA agricultural extension assistant, and S. L. Vishnoi, officer in charge, at the side of the tent in which Sheppard lives. Photo courtesy of ICA.

## INTRODUCTION

On October 19, 1952, this adviser arrived in Nagpur. It was decided that the first Village Worker Training Center then being opened at Powarkheda would be the field of work. Arrangements were made for a two-week orientation with the District Development Officer at Hoshangabad, Shri. Reinboth, who has been of much assistance during the period of assignment.

The first group to undertake the six months' extension training course was ordered to Powarkheda Center, November 3, 1952, by the Director of Agriculture. These 80 multi-purpose trained kamdars and overseers came from the field staff of the Agriculture Department. The training was divided into three general periods. During the first period the trainees visited all the villages near the Training Center under the guidance of a teacher in order to familiarize themselves with the problems of the area, and to observe demonstrations of extension techniques by teachers. During the second period 4 trainees were allotted to each village where extension techniques were practiced under supervision of teachers. The afternoons were devoted to lectures, demonstrations, discussions, etc. Finally 2 trainees remained in the village all week while the other two assigned to the village remained in camp. Trainees exchanged duties each week.

The second group, consisting of 70 trainees began their training April 1, 1953. The same general procedure outlined above was followed. The completion of their training in September 1953 brought the total number of multipurpose trained gram sewaks to 140.

A selection procedure for recruiting gram sewak candidates outside of government was initiated. The Training Center was re-opened on December 15, 1953, as a basic Training Center with 80 of these candidates. Agriculture, veterinary and public health training was to be given over a period of one year, followed by 6 months' extension training.

This group is presently in training. As the plans for expansion of the community projects and national extension service began to materialize, an expanded training program was initiated. During the winter months a total of 450 candidates was selected and began (the) basic training at four new Training Centers.

Of the many problems facing the state officials in establishing the training program this advisor assisted in the following:

- I. Selection of candidates for training as gram sewaks.

- II. Selection and training of staff members.
- III. Introduction of improved teaching methods.
- IV. Revision of curriculum and syllabus.
- V. Relationships between the training center staff and the development staff working in the area surrounding the Training Center.
- VI. Evaluation of teaching, trainees work, and the contents of the training program.
- VII. On-the-job training for workers posted in the development blocks.
- VIII. Starting rural youth clubs.
- IX. Expanding research work.
- X. Production of materials for use of gram sewak.

Each of these problems will be discussed in detail, indicating situations, action tried, results, and recommended future action.

I. Selection of candidates for training as gram sewaks:

Agriculture and veterinary department kamandars, overseers, and stock supervisors became the first gram sewaks in Madhya Pradesh by order of their respective departments. Individual abilities, attitudes, suitability for village work and personal desires were not considered by departments. Many of these gram sewaks did not like the nature of the new work and were discontented and unhappy when transferred into areas of strange languages, cultures, and social structures.

It was soon apparent that the number of available persons in the agriculture and veterinary departments was inadequate to supply the needed demand for gram sewaks. To supply this demand it was felt that a selection procedure should be set up, whereby, candidates who desired this work and who had a rural background, matriculation education minimum, higher preferred, and who exhibited leadership and organizing ability, exhibited ability and willingness to work with hands in villages, and who possessed good health, could be selected. Permanent status after six months, and good promotion prospects were offered as incentives to applicants.

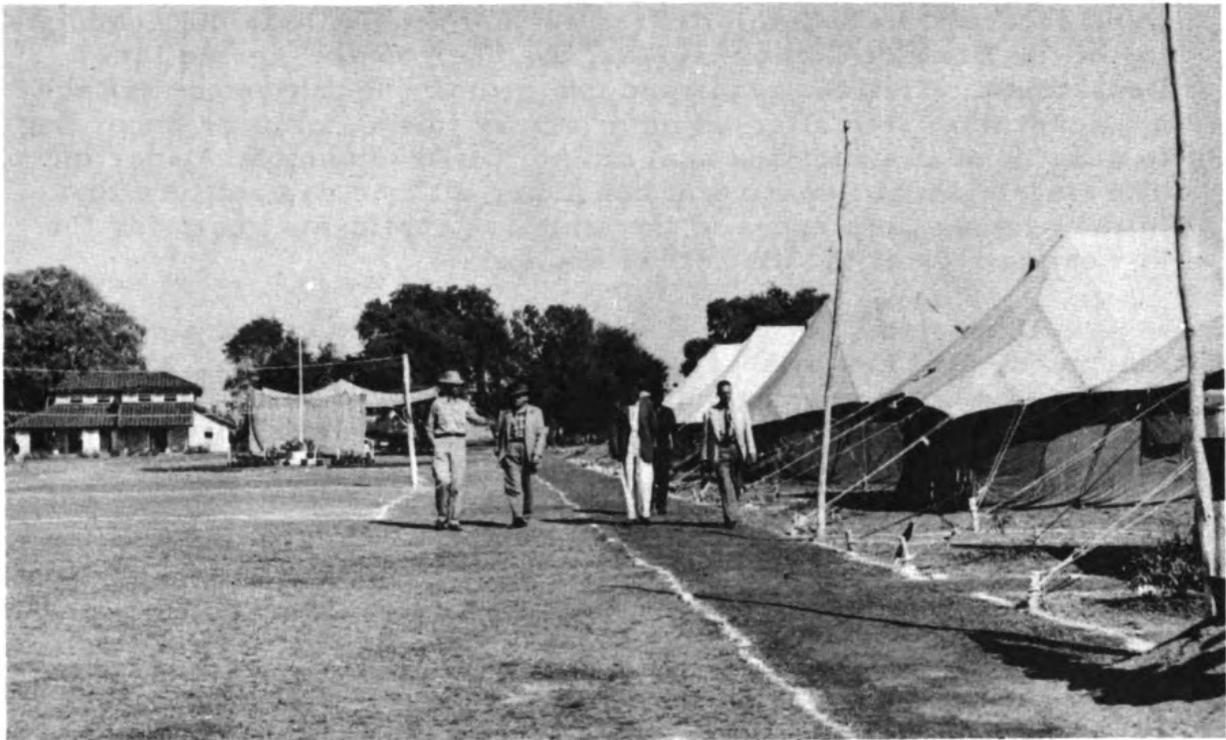
Selection procedures used in Uttar Pradesh, Allahabad Agriculture College, and Barpali Friends Service Project in Orissa, were provided the Development Department. Conferences were held to finally plan an aptitude test. Two training center principals, Deputy Director of Agriculture for Extension, three TCM training advisers, and the State Psychologist, participated in these conferences. These recommendations were approved by the development department.

The following recruitment procedure was carried out: A newspaper advertisement setting forth the aims and purpose of community projects, methods of work, working conditions, including pay, etc., was published and applications invited from Matriculates aged 20-25. The 6,000 response to the advertisement were screened by a Committee in each of the 25 Districts, consisting of the District Commissioner, member of the Agriculture Department, Civil Surgeon, and two prominent cultivators. Each applicant was interviewed after an interview by this Committee according to a letter of instructions sent out by the Development Department. The Development Department conducted a three day aptitude test in the various crop zones of the state for applicants receiving the highest ratings at the district interviews.

During this aptitude test, physical condition, mental alertness, attitude towards work, leadership, initiative, singing, extemporaneous speaking were observed by putting the candidates in many types of situations. Intelligence tests were also given. A final interview was conducted with all of the information gathered during the three-day test before the Committee, where final ratings were given. Candidates receiving the highest ratings from the aptitude tests were called for training.

420 of these candidates are now in training in Madhya Pradesh. Their attitude, mental alertness, and general physical condition impresses all visitors at the training centers. There is no doubt this selection procedure is producing a higher type of candidate. Many states are modelling their gram sevak selection procedure after this program. It is one of the best methods in operation in India at the present time.

The only criticism of this selection procedure found to date has been that many of the candidates have an urban background. This adviser recommends that when additional selections take place more consideration be given to candidates with rural background. It is obvious a young man with an urban life will face many difficulties in adapting himself to the conditions of rural India. However, a sincere desire to work with village people with dedicated zeal is regarded as the most important single factor.



A stroll through the training center. Left to right, Frank W. Sheppard, Grady Richardson from ICA/New Delhi, S. L. Vishnoi and Martin Howell, ICA training specialist from the nearby state of Bhopal. Photo courtesy of ICA.

## II. Selection and training of staff members:

Serious attention has always been devoted to the staff problem for it is recognized that the skills and attitudes of the gram sewak trained at the center will be in direct proportion to the attitudes and skills of the staff members of the training center.

Staff assignment to the training centers brought the following individual problems:

1. Lack of understanding and confidence in the philosophy and methods of extension work to be used by gram sewaks.
2. Lack of statement of objectives of training in terms of specific skills and information in each subject field.
3. Lack of personal experience of the type work expected of the gram sewak.
4. Lack of desire to serve as a teacher. (individual consent to the assignment was not taken from those ordered to the centers by the respective department heads.)
5. Lack of desire to do original thinking and to initiate action required to establish a training course.
6. Lack of normal association with traditional departmental work and supervision leading to a feeling of being 'cut off' and the fear that normal promotions would be lost.
7. Lack of facilities granted in parent department, such as peon, travelling allowance, quarters (in case of doctors and veterinarians), and necessity to maintain a double establishment all lead to financial loss.
8. Lack of proven scientific information for use of gram sewaks within individual technical field.

Initially staff members were only interested in discussing their difficulties. Activities were initiated in the form of an in-service training program to help correct these deficiencies. Lectures, discussions, literature, and experienced workers were used to help gain an understanding of extension philosophy and

methods. Individual staff members were assisted in the preparation of detailed objectives in terms of skills and information trainees must learn. Classes on systematic lesson preparation and presentation were held, followed by individual assistance in preparation and evaluation of class. Three of the original instructors were graduates of the extension advisor's course at Sindewahi. These persons were able to fit into the village worker training program better than other staff members. Staff members were encouraged to visit community projects in operation to gain a better understanding of the work. At this writing a large number of the members have attended the Allahabad training short course. Statewise training conferences have been held to earnestly discuss current training problems. The last conference cited specific problems and produced recommendations for improving the training program. Orientation training was planned and carried out for the principals and staff members ordered to the four new basic centers. Lesson preparation, introduction, presentation, review, test, and correction, were carefully considered. The effectiveness of this orientation was reduced due to the lack of uniform reporting. All the persons ordered for orientation training were never present at the same time. These activities have helped correct many of the difficulties initially mentioned but have not wholly achieved their objective. Buildings and equipment help make a training institution but the final worth rests entirely with the staff members. At present, the staff problem is the most critical problem in the training program in this state.

An ideal staff member would have: (1) a strong desire to teach in a training center; (2) personal experience of the problems, methods of work, technical information and skills needed by the gram sewak; (3) a sincere belief that the aims and objectives of Community Projects and National Extension Service offer the greatest present hope for the development of rural India. Must possess an enthusiasm and zeal for this work which will readily spread to other people; (4) must have a personality which leads to pleasant relationships with other people; (5) must possess the spirit of service which will enable him to accomplish the purpose of his assignment in spite of difficulties which come his way.

It is recommended that a committee consisting of Deputy Secretaries of the Development Department, Deputy Director of Agriculture for Extension, and one Training Center Principal, meet to establish a procedure for securing replacement teachers for present teachers and principals unwilling to continue serving, for those found unfit, and to fill new positions. It is further recommended that this Committee consider the following suggestions: (1) candidates must earnestly desire a particular teaching position; (2) final selection be

done by a Committee consisting of Deputy Secretary Development Department, Head of the Department concerned, Deputy Director of Agriculture for Extension, and a training center Principal, after an interview with each of the prospective teachers.

### III. Introduction of improved teaching methods:

The objective has been to present information and skills to the students in such a manner that thinking and judgment ability is learned. The successful gram sewak must know how to identify and plan the solution of problems by systematic thinking. He must also know how to get village people to do the same. Scientific studies have shown that students remember and use information learned through the problem solving technique better. A smaller total amount of information can be presented in this manner but the method encourages teachers to carefully select only information the student must know.

Conferences of teachers to seriously study methods have been only fairly effective. Demonstration teaching has greater utility and has been used frequently. Individual conferences with teachers to assist in lesson preparation, then attending the class with the teacher as an observer; and finally, discussing the classroom techniques carefully with the teacher after class, has proved to be the most valuable technique for improving lesson preparation and presentation. Considerable effort has been devoted to having each teacher fix definite objectives for his course and for each individual class so as to systematically achieve these objectives. Only partial success has been achieved in this matter. Orientation training for combined groups of teachers has usually been a failure due to tardy reporting and general poor attendance. The six weeks of orientation training at Allahabad has been very valuable in fixing extension philosophy and methods in the mind of the student and should be required of all prospective staff members including principals. State level conferences are proving to be a valuable activity and should be continued. Staff members have been encouraged to visit community projects to keep themselves informed of the responsibilities of the gram sewak on-the-job. No enthusiasm has been exhibited by the staff members to do this even though encouraged by the Deputy Director for Extension. There may be a feeling prevalent that they are unwelcome in community projects, or no encouragement is given by principals, and purposes and methods to use while on tour are not carefully thought out. Individual staff members staying with one of the better gram sewaks in a block for a fortnight to observe, could be a most valuable training. This would enable the staff member to teach from personal experience.

Developing a sense of initiative and individual responsibility among the staff members from chowkidar to principal, offers one of the best means of immediately improving training centers. Inspirational talks have been given, favorable notice has been taken of individual good work, and discussions have been held on developing better men to build personality and character. Individual research work has been encouraged and as a result two staff members have enrolled themselves for graduate study. The Deputy Director of Agriculture for Extension has always helped encourage staff members in this matter.

Teachers still use the traditional lecture method too much. Some of them think of themselves as lecturers.

#### IV. Revision of curriculum and syllabus:

The syllabus initially used at the extension center was based on what the experts thought the gram sewak would need to know. It is significant that in Madhya Pradesh the syllabus has never been printed. It has been undergoing continuous revision.

Staff members have been encouraged to use individual initiative in dividing knowledge into must know, good to know, and nice to know. information and devoting principal attention to 'must know'. The one year basic syllabus is now partly stated in terms of problems facing the gram sewak. Completion of this work is desirable. It is recommended that the Principal, staff members and the DDA for Extension examine the syllabus after the completion of each training cycle with a view to improvement.

Further plans should anticipate that block and higher positions will be filled by promotions from the gram sewaks; therefore, the educational standard of the gram sewak should be raised as rapidly as possible.

The present training program in Madhya Pradesh provides each gram sewak candidate with one year basic training where training in agriculture, veterinary and public health skills and technical information is given. After the completion of the one year basic training, six months extension training will be provided, where the candidate may gain experience and develop a confidence in the operation of the various extension methods and techniques. It is the opinion of this technician that this is a minimum training period, and should not be shortened in spite of the current pressing demand for gram sewaks. Long range plans and requirements for gram sewaks are currently being worked out in accordance with present expansion plans of the development department.

It is recommended this type training should be thought of as a 'stop gap' arrangement and that the agricultural college enrollment should be increased enough to supply the state needs for gram sewaks on a long range basis.



**Street markets in Madhya Pradesh, India.**  
Photo courtesy of ICA.

**V. Relationship between the Training Center staff**  
**and the development staff in the area surrounding**  
**the training center.**

Trainees engaged in extension training must work in villages if they are to successfully accomplish their training. All of the extension training centers are located within some type of development block. It is recognized that a close relationship must exist between the regularly posted development staff and the training center staff. In most cases this desired close relationship is not found.

Efforts have been made to draw these two groups of people together. This is difficult because the development staff is most interested in accomplishing results in villages and the training center staff is most interested in providing experience in extension techniques for the training candidates. Separate administrative channels also form a dividing force.

The following activities should help encourage two groups to carry out this joint responsibility. Although invited to them, the training center is seldom represented at the development block meeting. Training center staff members should tour with the development block staff frequently to effectively keep up with the development work and develop their own skills in extension techniques. Development block specialist should be of great assistance to staff members in planning practical exercises and revising syllabus at the training center.

The Hoshangabad Development officials and the Powarkheda Training Center staff have evolved a camp training idea to serve this need. A group of trainees with extension training staff members camped in the village for one week. During this time trainees visited and became acquainted with individual cultivators and families during the morning and engaged in group discussions in the afternoon concerning the problems found. In the evening village programs where village problems were discussed and various entertainment programs conducted. This close contact with the village life coupled with the guidance of an experienced and enthusiastic staff member could provide the very best extension training. It is hoped that this new idea will be vigorously pursued during the next few months. This type program could easily replace the first two periods of the extension training. Leaders on the National Level have exhibited keen interest in this camp idea and are anxiously watching the out-come.

## VI. Evaluation of teaching, trainees work and contents of the Training Program:

Every activity should be accompanied by continuing evaluation so that defects may be found and corrected while the program is in progress. At present, no complete evaluation program of our training program, as such exists. During the process of training the progress of each trainee is carefully followed and evaluated. In the past this careful student evaluation has been of no particular benefit since all trainees have been posted to development work regardless of the rating received during training and the recommendation of the training center staff. To evaluate teaching, the trainees fill out a performance form and offer constructive suggestions at the close of training. Many useful suggestions have been found in this manner. Trainees complain that staff members do not spend enough time with them in the villages. The training center principals supervise and discuss with each staff member their teaching methods, contents of individual course, and progress of extra activities trusted to staff members. These evaluation activities serve to keep check on the methods and contents of training at the training center.

The standards of grading at present give a trainee a passing mark with little as 40 percent correct marks on final examinations. With the type of teaching being used at the training centers it is recommended that this standard should be raised. Students should experience no difficulty in learning 70 percent or more, because of the careful attention to teaching methods.

At this time the subject matter of the training could be carefully analyzed in view of the jobs the graduates have actually performed during the past year. Efforts are currently being made to devise such a procedure for use in Madhya Pradesh. This systematic evaluation of the syllabus is immediately necessary because of the divergent opinions of the utility of the training program being expressed by some development department people. Some say the extension trained gram sewaks are useless, while others say they want all their gram sewaks to have extension training. An Evaluation Committee, consisting of representatives of the training program and development department should determine the reasons for this wide divergency of opinion and recommend solutions.



Fencing like this in the jungle countryside of Madhya Pradesh means tigers. While the tiger or wild boar is capable of destroying or leaping over such an obstacle, he rarely tries to enter an area so set apart. Photo by Chappelles.

## VII. On-the-job Training for Workers Posted on the Development Blocks:

Our training program can never hope to give all of the information to the gram sewaks which they will need in the villages. It can provide him a basis for securing and understanding additional knowledge and assistance, and methods of working with people.

The following types of in-service training activities have been observed functioning in Madhya Pradesh:

1. Some block officers call the gram sewak's together three or four days per month when each block specialist is given time with the gram sewaks to plan and train the gram sewaks in necessary skills to carry out the next months work.
2. One of the most valuable extension techniques for the village worker is the group discussion method. Amravati officials train their gram sewaks in this technique by having the gram sewaks preside over fortnightly block meetings. This gives the gram sewak an opportunity to develop skills and confidence in conducting a group discussion.
3. Some block officials have gram sewaks explain procedures and techniques that have led to successful completion of some items of village work during the regular block meeting. This helps the gram sewaks to learn through the experience of others.
4. In some blocks each member of the technical staff plans his tour program so that he visits each village worker in his village at least once during the month for a 24 hour period. During this visit careful attention is devoted to observing the methods and techniques which the gram sewak is using in his work with village people. Constructive suggestions are given the gram sewak in personal discussions. Then the staff member demonstrates these improved methods in the village.

The objectives of such a program would be to help the gram sewaks develop confidence in himself and in methods he is expected to use.

The following recommendations are made to implement the gram sewaks' in-service training program:

1. The Development department should appoint an officer to assist block officers plan and carry out in-service training programs in each block.
2. An annual conference of all the block development officers and supervisory staff be held on a crop zone basis where general meetings and technical group meetings may be planned to encourage exchange of technical information and successful extension techniques.
3. The development staff including the gram sewaks meet annually by districts for inspirational talks, review of work, and exchange of information and successful methods.
4. A state wide newsletter for gram sewaks be initiated on an experimental basis to publicize results of research and proven extension techniques. Contributions from sewaks would be encouraged.
5. Development department should assist block specialist in securing needed technical information. This may necessitate special persons on the state level to answer field inquiries since field personnel complain of poor response from departmental sources. Present districts field staffs of the various development departments may also be encouraged to offer greater assistance to block staff in this matter.

#### VIII. Starting Youth Clubs.

The Friend's Service Committee at Hoshangabad has always been interested in rural boys. It was a privilege to participate in one of their youth camps where youth organizations over the world were studied and plans made for beginning agricultural youth clubs. Shri. Devon is devoting considerable time to youth clubs. Shri. Verma, the Chief Social Education Organizer for the Hoshangabad Community Projects, is also initiating youth organizations. Sindewahi development staff has made a strong beginning with about 20 clubs in operation. Experiences with these efforts have lead to these conclusions:

1. The children are interested, eager to learn, have the time to participate, and can carry on small projects.
2. Club projects have served to teach parents new methods. Club projects in Japanese rice cultivation have lead to expanded acreage on parents' land at Sindewahi.

3. Citizenship and rural leadership are being learned through practice.
4. Village adults willing to devote time to children are available but need assistance.
5. Children have ability to exert a tremendous influence on the parents.

These initial successes here should be expanded. It is recommended that one state level specialist be appointed to devote full time to training adult leaders, initiating club work, developing literature, and strengthening existing clubs through National Extension Service and Community Project staff.

Present workers with agricultural youth clubs should be brought together in a conference to exchange experiences and present recommendations to government for the growth of the movement over the state.

#### IX. Expanding Research Work.

Extension techniques in themselves are only a tool for transferring scientific knowledge from research workers to practicing cultivators and organizing people for group action. With the rapid expansion of the extension program the research program should also be expanded to provide scientific findings which the extension worker may carry to the cultivator. Some examples of desirable types of research are listed below:

1. Electric power is rapidly becoming available in rural areas. What are the economics and use of electrical power for cultivators? It is noticed with deep concern that no electricity is available on the Nagpur Farm for doing any type of research for use of electricity in agriculture.
2. What cropping programs should the extension worker recommend to the cultivator to build the fertility of his land, control soil erosion, and obtain the maximum total per acre yields?
3. What practices should the extension worker recommend to increase the rate of water absorption and the quantity of water the soil can absorb during the monsoons? (Basic soil conservation problem).
4. What recommendation should the extension worker make to the villager to help him find his supply of wood for fuel and agriculture purposes? Are village forests practical?

5. What recommendation should the extension worker make to cultivators on methods of marketing his products, citrus, vegetables, and grains in particular?
6. What agricultural hand tools and bullock drawn implements should the extension worker recommend to the cultivator?
7. What recommendations should the extension worker make in regards to improving quality and quantity of food for livestock in the village?
8. What sanitary structures should the Gram Sewak recommend to the cultivator? Latrines, soak pits, wells, etc.
9. How can the mass of cultivators not eligible for government loans under present regulations be provided agricultural credit?
10. What vegetables and fruits should the gram sewak recommend (varieties, source of seed, etc.), and how may surpluses be preserved by the cultivator for his own use during times of scarcity?
11. Increased attention must be devoted to the provision of a free flow of information, questions, answers, and problems between the research worker and the field staff. Many research workers seem to be unaware of the daily problems facing the field staff.

#### X. Production of Materials for use of Gram Sewaks.

A part of the gram sewak's work is introducing and teaching improved practices to village people. To make this teaching more effective and easier to present use of visual aids should be encouraged. Locally prepared aids are more adaptable and can be made available when needed. Funds and instructions in preparation and use should be provided the field staff. Centrally prepared campaigns should include materials designed for use of the gram sewak in the village.

An illustrated leaflet on increasing wheat production was prepared with the assistance of Shri. Ekbote, Madhya Pradesh Wheat Specialist, and Shri. B. L. Choudhri, Gram Sewak, Nitaya Village near Hoshangabad. The Director of Agriculture was so impressed by this leaflet that he requested his Deputy Directors to see to the preparation of similar leaflets on other principal crops of the State. These leaflets will cost from four to six annas each and should be furnished the gram sewak free of charge. The block extension officer should demonstrate the proper use of these leaflets.

Orders have been placed for leaflets describing proper methods of giving method and result demonstrations, and conducting group discussions. Additional material is needed emphasizing the extension techniques.

Charts and posters are needed for use in villages on the various village problems being taken up in the development work.

The Deputy Director of Agriculture for Extension has presented a proposal for a Materials Production Center to be located at Nagpur. This or a similar plan should be adopted to provide gram sewaks with current, locally adaptable, easy to use, teaching aids.

Experience has shown that mass distribution of aids without instruction in use is a waste. Block development officers and the technical staff should be encouraged to use teaching aids in preference to lecture method of teaching.

The office facilities and staff provided the advisor by the State Government are excellent and are greatly appreciated.