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U. S. TRAINING FOR EXTENSION WORKERS FROM OTHER COUNTRIES



U. S. Operations Missions

Tell Us ...

- . How Well The Job Is Done
- . How To Improve It

A. I. D. HISTORICAL AND
TECHNICAL REFERENCE
ROOM 1660 NS

A Summary of Replies from 44 Missions - January, 1961

ER&T-36(2-61)

This summary was prepared by the Foreign Educational Branch, Division of Extension Research and Training, Federal Extension Service, United States Department of Agriculture, at the request of the International Cooperation Administration.

UNITED STATES OPERATIONS MISSIONS SUBMIT OBSERVATIONS ON PARTICIPANT TRAINING

The study of cooperative extension work in the United States has been an area of major interest since the beginning of participant training. Hundreds of extension workers from cooperating countries have completed training programs in the United States and are back at work in their home countries. The interest in extension continues. Many countries are making good progress in building extension organizations. Land-grant colleges and universities and State extension services deserve great credit for making this training so meaningful, helpful, and productive.

However, institutions and individuals assisting in extension training of foreign visitors are ever concerned with strengthening and improving the training.

It was with this idea in mind that ICA sent an airgram on August 11, 1960, to USOM's in 69 countries asking for their observations of the training extension participants are receiving in the United States. Missions were asked what they consider the strong points and the weak points in training, and to offer suggestions for making the training more useful and applicable.

Forty-four countries responded to the airgram and the information received is most constructive and helpful. Some replies included the opinions of various government officials of the country.

GENERAL APPROVAL OF TRAINING IS EXPRESSED

General observations included many expressions about the high quality of training participants receive in the United States. Twenty-four countries specifically referred to the quality of extension training in such terms as "excellent," "very satisfactory," "quite good," "well pleased," "reasonably satisfactory," "satisfactory," etc.

Some of the results of training reflected in the replies are that:

Returning participants --

are very effective,

reflect sound training in quality of their work,

exhibit technical competence,

show excellent response to their United States training,

have definitely improved their knowledge, attitude, and ability,

are largely responsible for the well-organized leadership and

organization of extension at the national and district level in
their country,

are responsible for the ready acceptance of extension in the country

by the manner in which they have applied the knowledge and skill
learned in the United States to their home situations.

... One country said United States participant training plays the most
important role in the agricultural development of the country, and
that extension training is the most successful technical assistance
in the country.

... Another pointed out that even more important than technical training
is the opportunity provided for participants to promote understanding
between their country and the United States.

STRONG POINTS CITED

Participants Get Good Background and Understanding of Extension Organization and Philosophy.

This was referred to by 14 countries in such summary statements as:

... Participants return well grounded in the spirit and philosophy of
extension.

- ... Participants have an opportunity to observe firsthand a well-organized, smoothly functioning extension service in actual operation, at national, State, and county levels, an extension service that is mature, but still developing.
- ... Participants have an opportunity to learn well the fundamental principles and philosophy of extension and to see firsthand that a well-organized extension service can and does provide rural people with an opportunity to improve their status.
- ... Participants have an opportunity to see firsthand a practical, sincere, and unselfish approach to extension.
- ... Participants acquire a concept of the role of research and extension in the agricultural development of the United States.
- ... Participants are impressed by the efficient organization and capable workers in extension in the United States.

Training Brings Changes in Attitude and Thinking of Participants.

Nine countries, in referring to the changes, stated participants returned with more faith in the worthwhileness of extension and a greatly increased interest in their work as extension personnel. Their vision and outlook had been broadened, and they developed a personal enthusiasm for their job and a friendly feeling toward the United States. Participants gained an understanding of United States methods of operation, they were impressed by the United States idea of public service, they developed more initiative and self-confidence, more respect for labor, and willingness "to get their hands dirty."

Procedure Followed in Planning Participant Programs is Praised.

There were a number of references to the splendid effort which goes into the planning of programs for participants. One country listed as

strong point "the consideration given to the proposed programs sent in by Missions and the effort made to give the training requested." Another country said "training fits the needs of participants and countries since the country is asked to make recommendations before the program is finalized."

The involvement and cooperation of the many different agencies in planning and carrying out training programs, Missions said, were among the first things that impressed the participant and the evidence of this "spirit of togetherness" is one of the most valuable lessons to him.

Other strong points brought out on program planning:

- ...The coordination of different phases of training so that participants never feel "disoriented" during their program.
- ...The capable guidance of the technical leader.
- ...The individual help and attention each participant receives.
- ...The friendly interest and reception on the part of those involved in training.

Training at the County Level is One of Most Valuable Training Experiences.

Missions reported that the training with county extension workers and the contacts with local leaders contribute much to the success of United States training. Time spent in the field with local extension agents has helped participants get a better understanding of the philosophy, organization, and operation of extension. Participants have been greatly impressed with the democratic approach in the involvement of people in planning the extension program in counties. The opportunity to acquire a firsthand knowledge of the United States farm family is most valuable.

Participants Like Short Courses and "On-Campus" Study.

Short courses and academic training on the university campus were listed as strong points. There were such comments as: "high level training at the best colleges and universities," "excellency of the short courses and workshops," "subject matter well thought out."

Working With People From Other Countries Enriches Training Program.

The opportunity provided in group training for participants to study and work with people from other countries is most helpful. They discuss mutual problems and learn from each other.

Orientation is Good.

One country commented that entry orientation is excellent and another that the final week in Washington after formal training is completed is one of the strong points.

Number of Training Locations and Length of Stay in Each is Important.

...One Mission stated that participants kept in one State 3 to 4 months is good, because a better teaching situation is created when the trainee stays in one place long enough to get adjusted.

...Observation in more than one State and more than one region enables participants to fit different aspects of extension into their country program and to see that extension is flexible and not static.

United States Extension Training is Strong in It's Emphasis on:

Extension education.

Community development.

4-H leadership training.

Development and use of local leaders.

Involving the people in program planning.

The cooperation of Extension with other agencies.

SUGGESTIONS OFFERED BY MISSIONS FOR STRENGTHENING UNITED STATES TRAINING

More Training at the County Level.

Training which participants receive with local extension workers and the contacts with farm people appeared, from the reports of Missions, to be among the most important phases of training. Eleven countries stated that they thought there was not enough opportunity provided in training programs for participants to study in counties where work is done with farm families. Seventeen countries suggested in various ways that participants spend more time with county extension agents to actually see and learn how extension principles are applied in working with people and how subject-matter materials are used.

Some specific suggestions were that participants be given an opportunity to:

- ..Become thoroughly familiar with the extension work of a single agent in a single county.
- ...Spend more time in farm homes.
- ...Visit farms and homes and attend club meetings.
- ...Learn more by doing, have personal experience in giving demonstrations, and do more actual work on farms.

Other specific suggestions were:

- ...Greater part of the training program carried out through assignment with county and district agents so that trainees can learn the daily work of the county agent.
- ...Continued attention be given to centering extension training on the simplest possible principles.
- ...Trainees who lack English proficiency would benefit more from a practical on-the-job training course than from academic work.

...One country reported more and more participants were expected to come from field extension staffs and should have training in practical field experience in the United States and suggested comparable experiences to the Texas "Visiting Extension Agent" be arranged in many States. This country added that they would probably send 20 participants per year for the next 5 years if inservice assistant county agent training, similar to the Texas plan, were to be available.

More Training in Areas Similar to Those of Participants' Home Countries.

Eight countries referred to the value of participants receiving as much training as possible in the areas of the United States where the climate and agriculture are more similar to those of participants' home countries. For example, one country said that training is more helpful when the participant sees and understands how farm families make use of their resources, and these resources need to be comparable to those in their own country. Some countries pointed out that their extension work was with small farmers, who farm by hand or with primitive animal equipment, and that it was difficult to apply observations made on modern mechanized farms in the United States. If too much of the training is given in the highly developed areas of the United States, participants find difficulty in making adaptations of what they see to situations in their home countries, and when they are not able to apply the information they acquire in training they often become disillusioned, frustrated, and discouraged.

Other suggestions include more training in low-income areas where agriculture is less highly developed, where there are more family-sized farms and where simple farm equipment and practices are used.

Fewer Training Locations, Less Travel, and Longer Stay in Each Place.

A number of Missions pointed out that, even with the thoughtful and careful scheduling which goes into the planning of programs, some participants felt they traveled too much and did not stay long enough in one place to become adjusted. A better teaching situation results when the stay in one place is longer. Visiting too many different areas, having too many stops, and staying only a short time in each, often tends to confuse participants and calls for adjustment to each new location. One country reported that participants frequently referred to things learned at places where they spent longer time, but rarely did they mention learning experiences in places where they had brief periods of training. "Brief training periods tend to break the thread in basic extension philosophy." One country said "Keep participants in one location three or four months." Another said, "in a program of 9 months or less a maximum of two States should be visited." The suggestion - "more practical work at fewer places" - seems to summarize many similar statements in the replies.

Continued Interest in Short Courses and Academic Training.

While some Missions thought parts of the United States training too advanced and too academic, particularly for those participants who do not handle English well and for those who need to develop more practical know-how in getting the job done, other Missions recommended:

- (a) that participants should be enrolled in short courses, or regular college courses, to the greatest extent possible;
- (b) that participants should be taught more subject matter, such as agriculture, home economics, evaluation, sociology, etc.;
- (c) that later phases of extension training be in short courses;

- (d) that more emphasis be placed on how to apply principles and relate subject matter to particular problems and working conditions in home country;
- (e) that possibly too much time was spent studying broad agricultural problems, beyond comprehension of the participants;
- (f) that training programs leading to degrees need further consideration from a policy standpoint.

Special Training Should be Developed in Administration and Supervision.

Some Missions in Latin America stated their greater need in the future would be training in administration and supervision and suggested that special training be developed in these fields. Many Latin American extension services now in "Serviceos" will need to be integrated into Ministries of Agriculture and participants need to know and understand the problems of such integration. It was further suggested that more emphasis be placed on the importance of administration and supervision.

Four short courses are offered in this general area:

- (a) Administration of Agriculture and Home Economics Programs (18).
- (b) Supervision for Extension Workers (29).
- (c) Supervision for Latin American Extension Workers (28).
- (d) Public Administration in Agricultural Development (11).

More Attention to the Grouping of Participants.

When participants from several countries are grouped for training they should have about the same level of education, experience, and training. Often when supervisors, specialists, home economists, youth and information personnel are grouped together, their individual interests may not receive the attention they feel is desirable. Grouping by rank and position should be considered. Supervisors and administrators

need more of an overall view. Field personnel need more concentrated emphasis on philosophy and methods. English proficiency is also an important consideration in grouping. One country mentioned that special interests of a participant may be neglected because he is part of a group following a rigid schedule.

Third Country Training Should be Increased.

Seven Missions emphasized the importance of training in a third country where conditions are more similar to those of the countries from which participants come. One suggested that serious consideration needs to be given to the development of training facilities within third countries where more local level staff could be trained, and supervisory and administrative staff sent to the United States where possible.

In supplementing United States training in a third country, there were suggestions that this experience come after the United States training, but other countries said the stop in a third country should be made on the way to the United States, thereby lessening the cultural shock of coming first to the United States.

While the above suggestions emphasize the need for third country training, three countries pointed out that trainees get extension principles, methods, and philosophy in the United States, which cannot be obtained in the same degree in any other country, and also that intangible results, such as attitude toward public service, initiative, self-confidence, respect for physical work, etc., can best be gotten in the United States.

United States Trainers and Technical Advisors Should Know Problems in Participants' Countries.

Missions suggested United States trainers and technical advisors need to be informed on problems and conditions in participants' countries

if they are to provide the most helpful training. Participants might well be given an opportunity to discuss the problems of their own countries with their United States trainers as a means of informing them. United States personnel need to help participants see how to adapt and apply basic extension principles and methods to their own country situation. They need to help them evaluate their own problems. It was pointed out, too, if United States trainers used examples more familiar to participants it would be helpful. Some institutions and United States trainers need a better understanding of the purpose of the participant program and what is desired of them.

More Evaluation Would be Helpful.

It was suggested that more time for evaluation and summation would be very worthwhile. Two countries recommended that more evaluation be done at the end of training in each State to help the participant digest what he has seen and heard in terms of his own country, before he goes into another training situation.

One country stated participants need time and help in analyzing the situation in their own country and how they can apply what they are learning.

Suggestions on Program Procedure.

- ...Programs should be forwarded to USOM's well in advance of departure of participant so that USOM's will have time to orient the trainee and if necessary suggest changes and additions.
- ...Programs should follow the PIO/P as closely as possible.
- ...No major changes should be made in a program after agreement with host country, USOM, and participant. If changes are indicated they should be initiated and made through official USOM channels.

The USOM's Can Help Strengthen Training.

The Missions pointed up their own responsibility in helping to strengthen United States training by better selection of participants and more assistance upon their return home in making use of the training received. One country indicated that the success of the training varied with the participant's interest in extension and his interest in receiving training rather than the trip itself. Participants should be carefully chosen, Missions said, with as much English proficiency as possible. It was further suggested by one Mission that they might include more background information on both the country's problems and on the trainee himself in the PIO/P, and thereby be more helpful to the United States trainers and program planning committee.

For the fine response to the airgram, our thanks to the Missions
and to the various government officials of the countries listed below:

Countries Replying to ICA Airgram

Africa

1. Nigeria
2. Libya
3. Ethiopia
4. Sudan
5. Tunisia
6. Ghana
7. Liberia
8. Morocco
9. Somalia

Latin America

1. Costa Rica
2. Chile
3. Paraguay
4. Venezuela
5. Honduras
6. Guatemala
7. Bolivia
8. Panama
9. Colombia
10. Peru
11. Brazil
12. Ecuador

Far East

1. Japan
2. Philippines
3. Korea
4. Vietnam
5. Indonesia
6. Cambodia
7. Taiwan
8. Laos
9. Thailand

Middle East and South Asia

1. Iran
2. Lebanon
3. Greece
4. Afghanistan
5. Ceylon
6. Pakistan
7. India
8. Israel
9. Nepal
10. Turkey

Europe

1. Yugoslavia
2. Spain

Carribbean

1. Trinidad
2. Haiti