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AGRICULTURAL EXTENSION - A Project Approach for its
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The Agricultural Extension Service is one of the "exportable techniques" that the United States Foreign Aid Program, over the years, has very frequently used in assisting with the development of the agricultural resources in cooperating countries.

Having just concluded more than four years' duty in the Somali Republic, formerly the U.N. Trusteeship of Somalia, which period of time extended over the realization of Independence, I hope this brief report will suggest a modified, practical and realistic approach to the development of an effective Agricultural Extension service in evolving countries.

I went to Somalia in 1957 and was assigned to Baidoa, 165 miles inland, where there were no other Americans, and no provisions for living quarters, to work on a dry-land farming development program, set up by the Italian Trust Administration and designated as Project No. 5. At that time the Italian Government was busy preparing its former colony, Italian Somaliland, for independence in 1960. My assignment was to develop an Agricultural Extension pilot demonstration in the Upper Giuba Region.

The U.S. Foreign Aid Administration had made an agreement with the Government of Italy, under which the United States would assist the

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Italian government in the economic phases of the Somalia Development program. The Italian Trust administration had organized various projects, which were financed by the Somalia development fund, to which the USA was making financial commitments. We also made available counterpart funds, - Italian currency accumulated in Italy from the sale of surplus food-stuffs under the provision of Public Law 480.

On my first visit to the assigned area, Upper Giuba Region, I noted a modest, but established Agricultural Experiment station, and an institute the Italian Administration had set up to train Agricultural Extension agents. The Istituto Propaganda Agraria - Bonka consisted of one long dormitory with a native type thatched roof, one small class room, and an outdoor "kitchen." Water had to be hauled five kilometers from the village. I met the Italian technicians and the Somali government officials.

The road, often unpassable in the rainy season, to the Upper Giuba was through "bush country" of a very desert-like appearance. The area is primarily a livestock country, but also has immense areas of very fertile land. The limiting factor is whether or not there will be sufficient rainfall for crop production during the two rainy seasons of the year. Practically all the preparation of the ground was done with a short handled hoe, although some work had been done in training oxen as farm draft animals at Bonka.

By the time I had returned on my second survey tour, I had concluded that the program to help farmers train and use oxen was in order. I was encouraged when I learned that Project No. 5 had 18-20 Somali Agricultural workers on its payroll, solely to work with the farmers.

In full accord with the Italian chief of the Agricultural section and the authorities in Mogadiscio, a "refresher" course for these men was carried out. They were then dispatched in two teams, one team to a district, to work with farmers. They barely completed the circuit when the spring rains began, after about 35 teams of oxen were trained. In the four years I was there, this paid off, as the men continued this work along with their other agricultural activities, and scores of teams of oxen were trained and large numbers of plows and cultivators distributed.

A program of showing documentary films, which I also initiated, at one time included a film from India of farmers driving oxen, instead of leading them according to the Italian method of teaching. This resulted in our men training oxen to be driven and no longer led with nose rings.

With the aid of a generator this film program grew until we had as many as 25 centers where films were projected regularly in the open. Our Extension men used a microphone attachment to explain the films on agriculture, news of Africa, public health, etc., in the native language.

The Bonka Agricultural Institute and Experiment Station was used to supplement Agricultural Extension activities throughout the Region. Besides the courses for potential agricultural extension workers, a Field-day for farmers was held each year, when farmers from all the six districts were brought in to see what was being done, and the results achieved at the Experiment station and the Institute. These were well attended and a great success.

The policy of AID and its predecessor agencies rightly stresses the principle of self-help. However, the significance of self-help is not

always understood in these evolving countries, as paternalism has generally been an integral part of colonial development. Furthermore, even where potential leaders have been trained, they were not expected or permitted to exercise much authority or initiative.

This paternalism first became evident in the fact that the young men were paid to come to the "school." We substituted a system of scholarships instead of a daily cash allowance and gradually reduced the amount. Courses were improved and youths from other regions were encouraged to come. Over two hundred young men participated in the courses in the first three years.

The six months' course being given at Bonka was originally to prepare agricultural extension agents. However, more were taking the course than could possibly be placed, and it sometimes gave them delusions of importance. Too many of these youths felt that they were "educated" for higher positions and should leave farming. In order to reach the farmers' sons and not keep them away from the farm too long, the course was shortened to 45 days and then extended to two months. Thus the "trainees" could go back to the farm and put into practice the things they had learned.

During the course of these events, the date for independence was moved up from December 1960 to July of that year. In preparing for the charge over of administration, the Italian-Somali Ministry of Agriculture and USOM agreed to cooperate on setting up a National Agricultural Extension service.

In emerging countries, when AID is invited to develop a program for a country, it is only natural that the nationals of the former Colonial

power may resent the efforts of the "newcomers," and either consciously or unconscicously oppose them.

As to the indigenous leaders of these "new" nations, since they are relatively inexperienced in planning and are accustomed to having plans made for them, it behooves a Mission to exercise considerable caution in planning programs. It is so easy to assume that the leaders understand what is involved, when they really do not have the background for comprehension.

So, in the plan for setting up the National Agricultural Extension service it soon became evident that each of the three groups concerned had a different idea of what Agricultural Extension was to accomplish. When project 5 was phased out, the Extension workers were transferred to the Ministry of Agricultural rolls at a greatly reduced grade and salary. Also, there was no consideration given to the fact that we had been training these men as Agricultural Extension agents for more than two years.

While there must be an overall Country program to give coherence and define objectives. In Agricultural Extension, this plan should begin with individual projects, planned and executed on the level at which they will be understood by the people. The difficulties of communication, transportation or the lack of teaching and demonstration materials, or adequately trained personnel must not be overlooked. It is here that the principle of self help comes in. The project must be on a subject consistent with their experience to appreciate its value, with in their ability to take part, so that they may be encouraged to participate in its growth and contribute to its support.

Consequently, on a local level, progress continued to be made at Bonka Institute. Since all life in this arid area revolves around adequate water supplies, we prevailed upon the governor to have the well drilling crew put in a well nearby Bonka Institute and a good source of water was established. We obtained Mission agreement to have United States funds allocated to build a carpentering shop and forge; a building in which to take showers and do laundry, and an electric generator with the necessary wiring to provide electric lights for the "school's" facilities.

The 20 acres of land on which Bonka stood, had been leased by the Italian government from a local Somali citizen. He had to be persuaded that, for the ultimate good of the community and his countrymen, he would have to sign off for a reasonable sum.

From the results of the Farmers' Field days it could be seen that more immediate results could be achieved through working with older farmers, and if this time could be lengthened to at least two weeks, much could be accomplished. This was especially true, since the Agricultural Experiment Station was adjacent to the Bonka Institute, and the work observed first hand, if the Institute could be changed into a farmers' training center.

The building program itself, using an Italian Public Works' supervisor and local labor, progressed and was completed. But no agreement as to the use of the improved center could be reached.

During the period of controversy and conflict of ideas at headquarters, and consequent inactivity at Bonka, I learned of a farmers'

training center development in the British Colony of Kenya, and while on TDY in 1961 I was able to make a thorough study of the Kenya program for training adult farmers.

My conclusion to establish a farmers training center program at Bonka coincided with the AID mission decision to withdraw all support for national agricultural extension program and concentrate all its effort in agricultural development in the Upper Giuba with the Bonka Farmers' Training Center as the "Hub" of the program.

As soon as the end of the rainy season permitted, I returned to Baidoa in late 1961 and opened the Bonka Institute as an adult farmers training center. But first, an all weather road had to be put in, weathering damages even to the new buildings had to be repaired, and a refresher course given to the remaining extension workers, including those whom I had been able to send out of the country for special training. Two of the latter had been sent to Ethiopia for work in poultry care and they had put their knowledge to work building a poultry center of native materials at Bonka. Chicks of good stock were flown in from Kenya and the care of poultry was included in the course. Bonka was definitely changed to an adult farmers training center and the first course for 25 farmers of two weeks duration opened for the farmers in late December 1961. Farmers from two districts in turn came in for a course. The Extension worker from each of the districts accompanied his group of farmers so as to follow up the work when they all returned to their homes.

Several metal grain storage bins were erected at Bonka and proper grain storage added to the course, which by this time included oxen

training, planting crops in rows, seed selection, insect control, crop rotation, water conservation, rope making from sisal and other improved practices applicable to climate, rainfall and soil, of the region.

I also included work in the carpenter shop with simple hand tools, and the making of rammed earth blocks for building purposes. Beans, dura seed, (grain sorghum), peanuts for planting, sisal bulbs and sunflower seeds, enough for each farmer to plant small demonstration plots were distributed to the farmers at the close of each course.

Finally two young men from the Agricultural college of the American University of Beirut came to teach, and a Somali director, trained in England and acceptable to the Somali Minister of Agriculture, came to take charge.

I left in March 1962, and reports that the Center is continuing in progress and influence have been very encouraging. Even inspectors from the Inspector-Generals' office of the Department of State, visiting it recently, pronounced it as one of the cleanest and possibly one of the most effective programs they have seen in their visits to several USAID Missions.

In evaluating our efforts to develop an Agricultural Extension demonstration program in Somali, the following points are to be noted. A start was made at the level of the local people, and they, as well as ourselves could grasp the progress made with a project based on their needs. The self-help concept was stressed again and again and accepted. The amount of local resources required was within their ability to supply.

In the Center itself there is something tangible to see, a place that belongs to the farmers, themselves; a busy place, where they

participate in many different kinds of useful work; a place to show with pride to visitors. When they return to their communities, there are enough farmers in a group going forward to make an impact, and not an isolated farmer struggling alone.

Building this Center did not cost an enormous amount of money - about \$27,000, with a capacity for training at least 300 farmers a year; nor will it leave a heritage that the government eventually cannot afford to continue.

It can be concluded that a National Agricultural Extension program was initiated before there was a complete understanding as to what was involved. Further the resources of the country in terms of funds and trained personnel were not sufficient to support the program as first envisaged. Nevertheless, I firmly believe that an Agricultural Extension Service for the whole of Somali will eventually grow out of the Bonka Farmers' Training Center which is basically the limited project approach. However it must be borne in mind that an Agricultural Extension Program for the cooperating country will not develop out of a Farmer Training Center Demonstration Project without further effort.

In five years' time for example there would be quite a number of relatively small groups of farmers who have been trained in improved methods of agricultural production. They have been given follow-up assistance and guidance. Some have returned for further training. Responsible leadership has been found and developed. They have been informed of and know from experience the value of research and experimental work, of practical demonstration, etc.

The host country has observed the value of the program and also appreciates the cost of the same. Likewise, the host country has become informed on the cost as well as the value of an Agricultural Extension Program.

Possibly in the follow-up with these neighborhood groups efforts have been made to bring them together and to effect a coordinated district-wide program. This would certainly give further impetus to the agricultural development of the District. What is more important, there has been considerable training of personnel through on-the-job training conferences, seminars, and most likely, participants have been sent both to third countries and the United States for training in Agricultural Extension Program development.

It is therefore appropriate at the end of the period of demonstration of the Farmers Training Center Program to give serious thought as to how and in what form a National Agricultural Extension Service can be developed, utilizing the results of the Farmers Training Center as a basis for this further development.