

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA



THE FIFTH  
**EVALUATION REPORT**  
ON WORKING OF  
**COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT**  
AND  
**N.E.S. BLOCKS**  
**SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS**

MAY, 1958

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PROGRAMME EVALUATION ORGANISATION  
PLANNING COMMISSION

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

This is the fifth Evaluation Report. It is based upon four elaborate field enquiries into the organisation and operation of the community development and the N.E.S. programmes, the organisation and working of the panchayats, the dissemination of improved agricultural practices and the growth of people's participation and, finally, the maintenance of records in the development blocks. The emphasis has been on a relatively intensive study of a few selected topics rather than an extensive review of all aspects of the programme. What the study may have lost in comprehensiveness, it has, it is hoped, gained in depth. To the reader, the data and the analysis should be as important as the conclusions reached.

During the year there has been a critical examination of the ment and administration. The Fourth Evaluation Report of the P.E.O. was followed by the Report of the COPP Team, which made a number of important recommendations for the reorientation of the programme\*. The Programme Evaluation Organisation assisted the COPP Team by undertaking a number of special studies.

The major recommendation of the Team was for democratic decentralisation, *i.e.*, transfer of the responsibility for programme and of its relationship with the wider aspects of development and execution of the programme to the representatives of the rural population. The States have accepted the recommendation of the Team in principle, though in applying it to their different conditions, they may adopt different patterns of organisation. Moreover, following the report of the Team, significant changes have been made in the pattern, finance and pace of expansion of the development programme. Development blocks conforming to a single pattern and with a five-year phase are to take the place of the Community Development (C. D.) and National Extension Service (N.E.S.) blocks; the three-year post-intensive phase is to be replaced by a five-year phase with much greater resources; and finally, the date by which the country is to be completely covered with development blocks has been put off by two years.

The recommendations of the Team are in accord with the attitude of the P.E.O. indicated in its successive reports. These have emphasised over and again, the necessity of progressively transferring the responsibility for planning and execution of the programme to the people. The Second Report (1955) recommended that the Block Advisory Committee (B.A.C.) should be a sub-committee of a democratic body at a higher level and should have a non-official chairman. The First

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\*Report of Study Team on Community Projects and National Extension Service, Vol. I to III, Committee on Plan Projects, New Delhi, 1957.

and the Third Reports laid stress on the need to extend the phases of the programme over a longer period—5 or 6 years. The emphasis in all these Reports has been on the working of an intensive programme in fewer areas rather than its rapid extension in a diluted version over the country. The decision to postpone the date of complete coverage of the country with development blocks is in consonance with this view of the P.E.O. This decision should also make possible a thorough re-examination of the programme in terms of its content, its technique and its resources, especially of trained personnel.

The topics selected for this Report are all fundamental to the programme. The first study deals with the size and the organisation of the block and its finance, the jurisdiction and the many-sided responsibility of the Gram Sevak, his relations with specialists, the process of planning at the block level, people's participation etc. These are issues vital to the efficiency of the whole programme.

The concept of Welfare State implies not only conscious effort by the State to promote the people's welfare, but also active participation by the people themselves in the framing and execution of the programme for advance. This is the central purpose of democratic decentralisation, which has been recently recommended by the COPP Team. The first study included in this report throws light on some of the problems of organisation that the attempt to achieve democratic decentralisation will face.

The next study may be broadly divided into two parts. The first part deals with the progress achieved in the dissemination of improved agricultural practices, the second with the creation of social institutions and the promotion of people's participation in activities of common benefit. It is based upon a field enquiry which repeats an earlier enquiry in 1954 into the same subject. It analyses the data collected with a view to bringing out the changes that have taken place during the preceding three years.

The significance of the first part of this study needs no stressing. Though the different aspects of the socio-economic life of a people are inter-related, some are, at a given stage of development, more important for further progress than others. This is the place occupied by agriculture in our economy today. The farmer's income must increase to provide resources for further advance in agriculture as well as in other fields like health and sanitation, social education, social institutions, village government etc. The data of the study throw light on the role played by the programme in agricultural advance, the people's response to and reliance on the facilities provided, the extent of adoption, the extent and the causes of non-adoption, dissatisfaction, and reversion. They reveal the directions in which steps should be taken to consolidate the progress already achieved and to conquer fresh grounds.

The second part of the study describes the advance that has been made in regard to various social institutions in the rural area. Even in a poor country, social welfare is not wholly a matter of economic well-being; social consciousness and social co-operation are, in themselves, elements of social good.

The third study deals with the panchayats, the importance of which, as one of the two basic institutions in the rural area — the other being the co-operatives—needs no emphasis. It brings together data on the organisation and functioning of this institution in different parts of the country, the extent of their resources, actual and potential, the extent and the manner in which they have discharged their multifarious duties, the part they have played in development activities and finally, the handicaps they suffer from, because of the lack of qualification and experience on the part of their members, lack of interest on that of the average villager and the paucity of internal resources. So far the panchayats, in most areas, have either stood outside the development programme or been loosely associated with it. The new pattern, however, includes a separate block level panchayat specialist. This step together with the acceptance of the principle of democratic decentralisation should bring the panchayats into closer association with the development programme. But to establish their proper role, it is necessary to understand their strength and weakness as they have been over the last 30 years or more. The present study should assist in this understanding.

The last chapter describes, in some detail, the current position regarding the maintenance of records in the development blocks. Data on the methods of record keeping, the concepts and standards involved, the coverage of particular items and the adequacy of checking and inspection have been assembled and analysed. The records maintained by the Gram Sevak—the functionary at the base of the organisation and in sight of what is happening in the villages—are the primary source of the material on which the administrators base their judgement and formulate their policy. In earlier Evaluation Reports general comments were made on the deficiency of the records kept by the block staff. The present study has made a special enquiry into this question and brought out detailed information. Better records are an urgent improvement for which this study may be found useful.

## CHAPTER II

### CURRENT EVALUATION STUDY

In view of the rapid expansion of C.D. and N.E.S. blocks during the last two years, it was felt that a rapid survey of a sufficiently large number of blocks aimed primarily at assessing general progress and bringing out problems experienced in functioning of blocks would be useful. This study represents the findings of such a survey conducted in 82 blocks, 36 C.D. and 46 N.E.S. located in all States (except Jammu & Kashmir), and also in Delhi, Manipur and NEFA. Selection of blocks was confined to C.D. and N.E.S. blocks which had completed

one year of working. In each State, roughly 1/15th of the total number of blocks were selected; the selection procedure ensured adequate representation for the different geographic areas within a State.

The enquiry was conducted mainly through discussions and interviews with the persons concerned—the B.D.Os, the Block level subject matter specialists, Gram Sevaks, selected members of the B.A.C. and the District level officers of the concerned departments. Information was gathered from them through general discussions and by filling questionnaires and schedules. An attempt was made to quantify data regarding the activities and methods of operation of the blocks to the maximum extent possible. In addition to the enquiry at the block and district level, 5 villages were visited in each block. The village visits enabled the PEO to get a first-hand knowledge of the work done by the block and also to check some of the data collected through questionnaires and schedules:

### *Development Blocks*

The population, area and number of villages covered by blocks show great inter-block and inter-State variations. These variations arise partly from differences in geographical conditions and partly from the attempt of State Governments to fit the blocks into existing units of administration. The population covered by a block is, on an average, 25% higher than the figure indicated in the block pattern. In the hilly and tribal areas, similarly, most blocks have populations considerably higher than those indicated in the pattern.

The attempt to fit the block into existing administrative units is sensible. To break up, except for very good reasons, existing administrative units which have evolved over long periods of time and are often based on sound economic and geographical conditions would be a retrograde step. On the other hand, there cannot be two basic units, the taluka or anchal or tehsil for general administration and the block for development; a single unit will have to be adopted for both purposes. Where the existing administrative unit, the taluka, is not much larger than the block, it might be best to make the former the unit of development. But there are talukas which are too large, and they have to be suitably broken up into smaller units. The finance, staff and resources of the block should be adjusted to the size of the block. Increase in the size of the unit should not automatically lead to reduction in the coverage by the staff or in finance as would happen if the general block formulae are applied indiscriminately. This happens all too frequently at present.

### *Staff*

The data on posting of subject-matter specialists, both block and departmental, show that the average population served by specialists varies from about 60,000 in case of agriculture to about 1 lakh in case of animal husbandry. These figures show the extent of technical assistance and service available to the rural population.

The extent to which the block has been made the unit for the posting of development staff, varies considerably in different fields in the same area, and in the same field in different areas. However, considerable progress has been made in the important fields of agriculture and works.

### *Shortages*

About 40% of the blocks studied reported absence of BDOs for varying lengths of time, the average being 5 months. As regards agricultural specialists nearly 60% of the blocks, both N.E.S. and C.D., had to do without them on an average for 5 and 10 months respectively or about 1/4th of the average periods of their operation. The position in respect of animal husbandry is even more serious. These figures indicate the difficulties which the States have experienced in manning the rapidly increasing number of blocks.

By contrast the turnover of the both BDOs and the agricultural extension officer is not too high. Also the large majority of the BDOs and the specialists satisfy the minimum qualifications needed for their jobs.

Some States have made progress in drawing people from departments other than Revenue into the post of the BDO. This step had been recommended by the Ministry of Community Development and in more than one Evaluation Report. However, in Bihar and Bombay\* where the BDO is also the revenue officer for the area, and also in Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan all the B.D.Os have been drawn from the Revenue Service. The Programme Evaluation Organisation's views on combination of revenue and development functions in the same block level officer were stated in detail in the Second Evaluation Report.

If the reorganisation that has been recommended—democratic decentralisation, pooling of resources of block and development departments, area development, generally larger blocks with increased number of block staff and VLWs—is to be successful, the BDO will have to be an officer of a higher calibre than at present. He may also have to be given more administrative assistance. His should be a choice post and the incumbents will have to be chosen carefully.

The block pattern of development staff has served a useful purpose. It has focussed attention, on the one hand, on the need for having staff in different fields and on the other, on a basic minimum which has to be attained. The specialists now cover their charge very thinly and their numbers should increase above the basic pattern in accordance with the requirements of the programme in different fields. This should be accompanied by further division of labour within each field; e.g., a block may be given a soil-conservation expert rather than an additional generalist in agriculture. In the field of agriculture

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\*The Bombay Government have recently taken a decision to discontinue the practice.

especially, it will be necessary to strengthen the specialist staff, at least in "the better favoured" blocks where the level of activity is already appreciable.

### *Finance*

It has been noticed that the larger blocks do not have budgets proportionate to their population so that the allotments *per capita* in these blocks are much less than is implied in the general block pattern. This applies both to C.D. and N.E.S. Blocks. Further, in most blocks, both C.D. and N.E.S., the expenditure has been considerably lower than what it should have been if the length of operation of the block is taken into account. The shortfalls in expenditure have occurred in both large and small blocks and are nearly as serious in the N.E.S. (in spite of the fact that N.E.S. budget is extremely modest) as they are in the C.D. blocks.

As a result partly of underbudgeting and even more of shortfall in expenditure, the annual expenditure *per capita* is Rs. 1.4 in the case of N.E.S. Blocks and Rs. 2.0 in the case of C.D. blocks. These figures are 70% and 55% respectively of the expenditure figures envisaged in the block pattern.

As regards the causes of shortfalls in expenditure, most BDOs relate them to delays in sanctions and other procedural steps. In the first two years of Community Projects much advance had been made in decentralisation of sanctioning authority and in other matters of procedure. Obviously, there has not been enough progress and there is still room for considerable improvement. Since the block period has now been extended to 5 years, it should be possible for each block to make a fairly detailed plan in the first few months. After such plans are sanctioned, further periodic sanction should not take much time.

A large number of BDOs feel that the block budgets are inadequate and that the block staff could be more fruitfully employed if they had more funds at their disposal.

### *People's participation*

The value of people's participation in works programmes works out to an average of Re. 1 per person per year in case of N.E.S. blocks and Rs. 1.8 in case of C.D. Blocks. Larger contributions could be mobilised from the people in the C.D. Blocks because of the larger fund available to them. In the case of both C.D. and N.E.S. blocks, the value of people's participation declines as the block period moves towards its end. This is contrary to what one would expect to happen. The people's participation should grow progressively as the years pass, and the educational effort of the staff and the radiational influence of the work done produce their effect. But our data tell a different story, and it would seem the educational effort and the radiational influence have not been effective enough.

### *Activities*

In this chapter a detailed assessment has been made of activities in the field of agriculture. Other activities have been commented upon briefly. The final part of the chapter describes the programmes for the under-privileged groups in the selected villages.

Each BDO was asked to indicate in order of importance eight achievements of the blocks from among all fields of activity. The items listed by the BDOs include all the important items which are associated with the block programme, but the agricultural and constructional items appear most prominently. Among the agricultural items, propagation of improved seeds, chemical fertilizers and the Japanese method of paddy cultivation figure most prominently. By contrast, land improvement occupies a much lower rank. Only minor irrigation is of some importance; other improvements like land reclamation, soil conservation and consolidation of holdings have played roles of little consequence. Among the works items, construction of roads and culverts is the most important, followed by construction of drinking water wells and of school buildings. Social education activities like organisation of community recreation centres, adult literacy centres, are relatively less important. Similarly, institutional items like promotion of panchayats and co-operatives do not figure prominently. The low position occupied by the latter in the BDOs list is due in part to the fact that in most blocks he has not been directly concerned with co-operative work and does not regard it as his special responsibility. Also the block pattern had not so far provided for independent block level specialists for co-operation and panchayats.

### *Improved Seeds*

Some activity either by way of introducing new varieties of seed or spreading the use of existing varieties has been undertaken in all blocks. Similarly, in the case of fertilizers, 90% of the blocks report some achievement either in introducing new fertilisers or increasing the use of those already in vogue. However, progress in augmenting sources of supply and strengthening channels of distribution has not been as rapid as is expected or needed. Only 24 of the 82 blocks studied have established seed farms and the number reporting the existence of some seed multiplication scheme is 55. Most blocks report some activity in increasing distribution outlets for seeds, fertilizers and other agricultural supplies. But the majority of both BDOs and the District Agricultural Officers feel that the number of distribution outlets in their areas is not sufficient. Shortage of improved seeds and chemical fertilisers continues in spite of the efforts made to increase their supplies. The proportions of blocks reporting shortages in the case of seed and chemical fertilisers are as follows:—

Seed .. .. .	Paddy 57%
	Wheat 44%
Chemical fertilizer ..	Ammonium sulphate 38%
	Superphosphate 33%

In quite a number of these blocks, the shortage can be considered serious, in as much as the supply is less than 50% of the quantity indented.



In the case of improved seed, the main difficulty is physical shortage of supply. But in the case of chemical fertilisers delay in the arrival of supplies is also reported by an appreciable number of blocks.

Supply of seed and fertilisers continue to be one of the biggest problems of the block staff. Among the failures in the field of agriculture, distribution of chemical fertilisers has been listed by the largest number of BDOs (14 out of 53 reporting). The block level agricultural specialist as well as the Gram Sevaks consider supplies to be their most important problem.

### *Assessment of the Agricultural Improvement Programme*

In order to obtain an idea of the quantitative achievement in agriculture in the different blocks, data on quantities of chemical fertilisers and pesticides distributed, areas benefited by minor irrigation, land reclamation and soil conservation, and credit advanced by co-operative societies have been worked out relatively to the cultivated area in each block. Figures of improved seeds have been worked out in relation to the areas under individual crops. All these figures are presented for individual blocks along with data on population, rainfall, cultivated areas and proportion of cultivated area under irrigation in order that achievements may be examined against the background of basic factors. The conclusions emerging from this analysis are stated in the following paragraphs :

(1) The level of programme activity in agriculture is generally low outside Punjab and U.P. and individual blocks in other States. As stated above, agricultural activity is concentrated on the dissemination of improved practices, e.g. use of improved seeds and fertilizers and the Japanese method of paddy cultivation. Except for minor irrigation schemes, very little has been done in respect of the land improvement items. The achievements in improved practices are substantial only in areas where the rainfall is adequate and/or the proportion of irrigated total cultivated area is high. But the large majority of the blocks lie outside these favoured areas. Activity in areas which are dry, hilly, inhabited by tribal people or are otherwise backward, is extremely small and in some cases, insignificant.

(2) Even in minor irrigation, the maximum activity is reported in blocks which have already comparatively high percentages of the area under irrigation. Apparently, blocks which have already substantial areas under irrigation can increase them with less difficulty. On the other hand, blocks with low percentages of their area under irrigation, find it difficult to make further advance through *minor* irrigation.

(3) The favoured areas which are better suited to adopt agricultural improvement practices can make much greater contribution to increase of agricultural production in the short run. This conclusion is implied in the recommendation of the last Development Commissioners' Conference which suggested a target of 50% increase in production, by the end of the Second Five Year Plan, for the

favoured tracts as against a 30% increase for other areas. Our data on the agricultural effort made in these two broad divisions of the country suggest that the contribution to increase in agricultural output made by the less favoured areas *vis-a-vis* the more favoured ones will be substantially lower than what is envisaged by the conference.

(4) In the selection of the first community projects, preference was given to areas where the scope for increased agricultural production in the short run was greater. In view of the pressing need for larger agricultural output, it might be well to pursue this principle more vigorously in selecting development blocks during the remaining years of the Second Five Year Plan.

(5) At the same time, it is necessary to develop the content of the programme with reference to the needs of the less favoured areas. The greater part of the cultivated area of the country is located in such areas, and these will not be able to share in agricultural progress if the scope of the programme remains limited as it is at present. One major difficulty of these areas is lack of suitable programmes. Agricultural advance in many of these areas is linked with such basic measures as irrigation, reclamation, conservation of soil and water and changing methods of farming. Besides the fact that these improvements require larger resources and organisation, techniques adapted to different regional conditions are not available in many cases. There is need also for evolving patterns of organisation based upon co-operation by block staff and participation of the people to undertake activities like land reclamation and soil conservation.

#### *Programme for under-privileged groups*

The Project Evaluation Officers in the course of their visit to the five selected villages in each Block obtained data on the extent to which the under-privileged sections of the population had benefited from block programme.

The number of drinking water wells in the 360 reporting villages increased by 8.5 per cent between the beginning of the blocks and the time of the enquiry, while the proportion of wells used by Harijans increased from 42.0 to 47.1 per cent. As a result, the total number of drinking water wells used by Harijans increased by about 20%. Schools existed in about 2/3rd of the villages visited. In 93% of these, the schools were used by all communities. In 5% (13) villages schools were being used by Caste Hindus and in another 2% (6) villages separate schools existed for Harijans and Caste Hindus.

The data collected in these villages do not support the view which is sometimes expressed that benefits of activities of common interest like approach roads or paved lanes are not adequately shared by Harijans or that in the construction of community works, the Harijans or landless labourers are forced to contribute labour or to bear a disproportionately large share of the burden. Streets have been paved in only 23 out of the 400 villages visited, but in all of them Harijans were reported to have benefited along with other sections of the population.

Similarly, in the 190 villages where approach roads have been constructed, the Harijans along with the rest of the villagers have benefited. As regards contributions, in 83% of the reporting villages, Harijans and other backward groups gave their contributions in labour along with other sections of the community; they worked on reduced wage rates in 9% of the villages; did not participate at all in 7% of the villages and had to give labour alone in 1% of the villages.

Harijans have, however, not derived adequate benefits from the loan assistance available from the block or other government sources. Of the total amount of loans advanced in the villages, only 7% have been received by the Harijans and 16% by the other backward groups.

### *Planning and Co-ordination*

Integrated development of the block is a basic concept of the programme. As a first step, it is necessary to make the block the unit of planning. Some progress has been made in this direction. Plans of development departments have begun to be broken down to the block level and block plans based upon the combined resources of the departments and the blocks have begun to be formulated. Progress in this direction has been greater in some States like U.P., Bihar and Orissa than in others. Similarly, progress in the field of agriculture has been greater than in other fields. The plans of the Agriculture Department have been broken down to the block level in about two-thirds of the blocks. In a large number of these, the plans have been made by joint participation of the District Agricultural Officer and the Block Development Officer, and by combining the resources of the Department and the blocks.

However, participation of Block level specialists in the making of these plans is inadequate. Block level specialists, in fact, do not appear to be participating adequately in planning and decision making on the programme. Their contacts with the B.D.Os. are also inadequate in certain cases. Part of the explanation is, of course, that the block has not yet been made the unit of staffing, and extension activities, as distinguished from departmental service activities, have not been adequately developed. This is particularly true in the fields of animal husbandry, public health, co-operation and panchayats.

The basic pattern of the programme envisages that the block level specialists should receive technical guidance from their respective district level officers and should give technical assistance to the field workers i.e., the Gram Sevaks. The data collected by us show that among the problems referred to by the specialists to the district level officers those connected with administrative and financial matters, greatly outnumber the purely technical ones. In the field of agriculture, the largest number of problems related to the arrangements for the supply of seeds, fertilizers etc. In view of this, it is necessary to give further thought to the problem and devise ways by which the concept can be effectively implemented.

An appreciable number of specialists, especially in fields other than agriculture, stated that progress in their fields did not call for assistance by Gram Sevaks. The proportions were particularly large in animal husbandry, co-operation, public health and sanitation. The specialists were of the opinion that the work in the field was too technical for the Gram Sevaks. Other replies stated that the Gram Sevak's assistance was not needed or that there was lack of co-ordination between the specialist and the Gram Sevaks. Nearly half of the reporting Gram Sevaks stated that they had no occasion to refer problems to the specialist in animal husbandry; about 20% felt that the specialist was of no assistance to them. The figures are large also for specialists in public health and sanitation, panchayat and co-operation. Further, analysis of the functions actually performed by the Gram Sevaks shows that in most blocks they are not concerned with routine departmental activities in animal husbandry, public health and sanitation, co-operation and panchayats.

Thus, the system of a team of block level specialists assisting the multi-purpose village level functionary is not working on the lines which the planners have had in mind. Various reasons account for this state of things, viz., absence of co-ordination between the specialists and the Gram Sevaks, the feeling that the Gram Sevak does not have technical training or is not available to the specialist, and, above all, the fact that the extension work has not been developed.

#### *Touring of Specialists*

Data on tours by specialists in the block areas have been obtained for all specialists and analysed in detail in regard to the specialists in agriculture and co-operation. They show that the agriculture specialist could visit only about two-thirds of the villages under his charge once a year the remaining one third could not be visited. The co-operation specialist could visit even less. He could visit, on an average, only about 60% of the villages in the block once a year, the other 40% saw nothing of him over a whole year. Although it may not be feasible or necessary for a specialist to visit every village in the block, a situation in which 30% to 40% of the villages are not visited by the specialists in fields like agriculture and co-operation, cannot be considered satisfactory. Some improvement in the situation may be brought about by more effective planning of tours by the specialists. Attention has been drawn earlier to the fact that a large number of blocks have populations larger than that envisaged in the block pattern. The first step, therefore, is to attain at least the coverage visualised by the programme. In certain fields, notably agriculture, it may be necessary also to have more than one specialist per block.

#### *The Gram Sevak*

The study concerns itself with (i) the jurisdiction of the Gram Sevak and the extent to which it is being covered and (ii) the functions actually performed by Gram Sevaks in different fields of development activity. In the large majority of blocks, Gram Sevaks have to look after populations larger than the norm of 6,600 indicated in the block pattern. The

average population and the number of villages covered by a Gram Sevak is 25% higher than that visualized in the pattern. About 2/3rds of all Gram Sevaks feel that their area of operation is too large. The number who make this complaint is small in blocks where the population is between 60,000 and 75,000.

The optimum jurisdiction suggested by the Gram Sevaks varies from 1,000 to 10,000; but the average comes to 6,600 thus. The optimum charge desired by the Gram Sevaks is about the same as prescribed in the community development programme, but much larger than that recommended by the COPP team. However, the Gram Sevaks have in mind only their present role, while the Team have suggested much heavier responsibility for them. They have recommended, for example, that the Gram Sevak should be the development secretary of all the panchayats in his area. Thus, according to the functions and duties which are at present being performed by the Gram Sevaks, a population of about 6,600 appears to be the optimum, but if more responsibilities are to be imposed upon the Gram Sevaks, the area in his charge has to be reduced accordingly.

### *Coverage of the Jurisdiction*

An average Gram Sevak stays rather more than four days in a month at the block headquarter and makes more than three night-halts there. About 7 days or nearly 1/4th of the total working days, but nearly 2/3rd of the nights are spent at the headquarters village. Other villages take about 17 days in a month but the number of night-halts in them is only about 9. Further, about 45% of the non-headquarter villages are visited at the rate of less than once a month. It is clear from this analysis that the non-headquarter villages still do not receive adequate attention from the Gram Sevaks. Steps to ensure more adequate coverage of such villages are called for. The Gram Sevaks cannot afford to remain a stranger in about half of the villages in his charge.

### *Functions of Gram Sevaks*

The Gram Sevaks are associated with agricultural extension functions, such as, popularisation of improved seeds and fertilizers, etc., in all blocks. However, in about 1/4th of these specialised departmental functionaries also attend to this work. Similarly, the Gram Sevaks have some role in making arrangement for seeds, fertilizers and other supplies in almost all the blocks. The Gram Sevaks feel that they should continue to be associated with the arrangement of loans for seeds and fertilizers, but are not enthusiastic about sharing responsibility for physical distribution of supplies.

Gram Sevaks have been associated with vaccination of cattle and village people in a few States, notably in U. P., Bihar, Orissa and Madhya Pradesh.

Another important function of the Gram Sevaks is in connection with the works programmes. Assisting the development of panchayats and co-operative societies is supposed to be one of the most important

functions of the Gram Sevak. However, he is nowhere associated with the technical functions involved in the supervision of cooperative societies, or in those of the panchayat secretary.

### CHAPTER III

## ACCEPTANCE OF PRACTICES

### *The Enquiry*

The last Evaluation report commented upon the extent to which villages in the blocks had been covered by various programmes. As the ultimate beneficiary is the household, it was felt that an enquiry into the extent to which the programmes had reached it during the last three years would be useful. It is equally important to study the reasons behind adoption, non-adoption and reversion.

With this objective the Acceptance of Practices Enquiry Repeat (A.P.R.) was carried out during September-October, 1957 in 15 blocks—one block each in 15 evaluation centres and in the same villages where the earlier Acceptance of Practices Enquiry (A. P. E.) and the Bench Mark Survey (B.M.S.) had been conducted. Only families with cultivated holdings, owned or leased, on the date of enquiry have been canvassed, the sample being that of the A. P. E. Thus 1954 households in 96 villages were interviewed.

The Enquiry covered two aspects of the programme (i) agricultural practices and (ii) people's participation in community works and village institutions. It was designed to find out, first, the households for which a particular item was relevant and secondly the percentage of relevant households which had adopted it. Comparison with the corresponding data of the A. P. E. gives us a measure of the change (or growth) in adoption over time. The proportion of relevant households which had not adopted a practice or had given it up after trial or though still continuing it are dissatisfied provides a measure of the ground which remains to be covered. The analysis also brings out the role of the different factors which stood in the way of extension of the programme. In the case of people's participation the A.P.R. data are compared with the B.M.S. and not the A.P.E. as the last one did not enquire into the amount and character of the people's contribution.

The main findings of the enquiry are summarised below.

### *Improved seeds*

About 50% of the relevant households adopted improved seeds for food crops, paddy, wheat and jowar; for cash crops, cotton and sugarcane the percentages are higher. The growth in adoption between the two enquiries was maximum for potato and jowar; the percentages of adopting households more than doubled in their cases. The yearly rates of adoption for cotton and sugarcane are much higher for the A.P.R. than for the A.P.E. The yearly adoption rate shows substantial decline in the case of wheat.

Facilities like the provision of finance, free supply, supply at the village, supply at low rates, supply on credit, preferential treatment, etc. had been offered to the people to induce them to adopt improved seeds. These facilities do not, however, seem to have played a very important role; much greater percentages of the relevant households adopted the improved seeds without facility than with facility. The percentages are highest, 70% and 59% respectively, in the case of cotton and sugarcane, the two cash crops *par excellence*. Further, very high percentages of those who were induced by the facility to adopt the improved varieties are willing to continue the practice even if the facility is withdrawn. This may mean that the value of improved seeds is established in the minds of those who have adopted it.

In spite of the general increase in the adoption of improved seeds, a large ground remains to be covered. About half the area under all crops other than cotton remains under Desi seeds, and it is the smaller cultivator who lags behind. Even in the case of cash crops and in irrigated areas, considerable distances have to be traversed before the saturation point can be reached. The magnitude of the task to be performed, is the greatest in the case of potato—with wheat and jowar following closely—and least in that of cotton. It has to be performed at two levels; the non-adopting households have to be covered by the extension service, and the basic work of research and organisation on which extension activity rests has to be improved to convince the reverting and dissatisfied households of the superiority of the truly improved seed.

Among the non-adopting households the percentage of those who had no knowledge of the programme at the time of the A.P.R. was low, 3% in the case of cotton, but as high as 38% and 31% in the case of jowar and sugarcane respectively. Ignorance within individual blocks is, in some cases, enormous, *e.g.*, no single household in a block in which the cotton programme is said to have been sponsored was aware of it, while in some blocks as many as 83% and 79% of jowar and wheat growers did not know about the relevant programmes, even when the programme had been inaugurated quite a few years back. The next important reason for non-adoption seems to be lack of conviction of the superiority of improved seed. Only for wheat, jowar and potato, failure of supply is reported as the most frequent reason for non-adoption. Ignorance and lack of conviction together account for non-adoption in more than one-thirds of the instances. But by the time of the A.P.R., failure of supply seems to have increased in importance as a deterrent factor; while fewer households were still unconvinced of the superiority of the improved seeds an increasing proportion did not adopt them because of difficulties of supply. The supply seems to have failed to keep pace with the increase of demand.

Coming to the overall picture for the six crops taken together, 24.5% of the households have not adopted or have reverted because they still lack faith in the superiority of the improved seed. Another 11.8% have done so because of the failure of the supply and only

2·8% on account of lack of financial resources. Lack of finance is given as the reason by very few households.

### *Fertilisers*

Fortyfive per cent of relevant households have taken to the use of ammonium sulphate. All the other fertilizers are used much less extensively. Between the two enquiries, all fertilizers except green manure have spread more slowly than improved seeds. Finally, fertilizers are used more frequently with improved seeds than their Desi varieties.

There has been a generally expanded use of fertilizers, and more households have taken to them without recourse to the facilities provided by the programme. On the other hand, the proportion of households which are satisfied with the use of the fertilizers has gone down. Among the reasons reported for dissatisfaction, the failure of the yield to come up to expectation is given as the most important. About three-fourth of the relevant households have not either adopted the fertilizers, or given them up after a time, or are dissatisfied with their use. There seems to be no net growth in the adoption of superphosphate, manure mixture and compost.

Lack of finance is reported to be the most important reason for reversion, lack of conviction of its value being next. On the other hand, households which have not taken to fertilizers advance ignorance more often than any other reason to explain their behaviour. Ammonium sulphate is, however, an exception; less than 5% of the non-adopting households say that they did not know about the programme. Difficulties of supply are reported, in the case of superphosphate and green manure. Complaints about ammonium sulphate and mixed manure depleting the soil have increased since the A.P.E.

### *Improved Practices*

Between one half and three-fourth of the relevant households have adopted line sowing, crop rotation and transplantation. Only 15% have taken to the Japanese method of paddy cultivation, but 23% of these households are inclined to give it up even if the facilities offered by the programme are continued. There seems to be fairly widespread ignorance about the Japanese method and line sowing. While the approach to crop rotation has been handicapped by lack of irrigation facilities, farmers are not keen to adopt line sowing and transplantation because of the difficulties of securing enough labour in time.

The reasons for which the cultivating households have given up improved practices vary for different items. The farmers who have given up the Japanese method of paddy cultivation have done so mostly because they did not find the method profitable, it involves more labour. While lack of irrigation facility has led many cultivators to give up transplantation, the complaint about labour shortage in connection with the Japanese method comes mostly from cultivating households with larger holdings.



### *Seeds, Fertilizers and Practices*

2/3rd of all relevant households in our sample have taken to the use of improved seed for some crop or other. The percentage of households which have adopted some fertilizer or other is almost equally high. But the number which are using improved seeds, fertilizers and better techniques together is only 1/3rd of the relevant households in the villages. This would seem to indicate that different improved practices which complement one another are not being sponsored as parts of the integrated programme of farm development.

### *Improved Implements*

Information was collected for only two varieties of improved implements, namely, the cotton drill and improved plough. About 22% of the relevant households are reported to be using these implements. It is noteworthy that while improved seed of cotton is being used by a very large percentage of cultivators, cotton drills are still largely unused. Most farmers who have not taken to the use of the drill expressed doubts about its real efficacy. Those who are unwilling to use the improved plough say that they find it too costly or that it calls for more bullock power.

### *Pesticides*

The use of only two pesticides, namely, gammaxene and agrosan was enquired into. Most households which have taken to the use of these pesticides have done so because of the facility provided by the programme. But the percentage of the adopting households is still very low. Very few farmers are still convinced of the value of agrosan. Moreover, a good number have given up its use because they cannot get their supply easily.

### *People's Participation*

The highest percentage of households participated in the construction of village roads. The proportion was also high in the case of school building. There has been, however, some decline in these percentages since the first enquiry in 1954. This is partly due to the fact that as the same villages were studied at both the enquiries and a good number of them had roads and school buildings built by the time of first enquiry. At both the enquiries, more households made their contribution in labour than in cash to the construction of roads and drinking water wells. On the other hand, the contribution of the village people to the construction of school buildings was made mostly in cash. The percentage of households in relevant villages which participated in these activities has increased in recent years though labour contribution per household has gone down. Cash contribution per household has remained, more or less, the same.

Community centres, youth clubs, vikas mandals and women's clubs exist in a rather small percentage of the villages studied, and even where they do exist, the proportions of inactive institutions are rather high,

and only small percentages of the households participate in them. Women's clubs and vikas mandals seem to have a very small appeal to the village people.

Households with small holdings seem to have a lesser part in the running of the panchayats and a smaller share of the benefits of co-operative societies than those with bigger holdings.

#### CHAPTER IV

### STUDY OF PANCHAYATS

This chapter presents the results of a study of 60 panchayats located in 15 evaluation-blocks, 13 of which formed part of the first community projects. The main purpose of the study was to observe working of panchayats in relation to development programmes. The study was conducted through discussions and interviews with knowledgeable persons *e.g.* panchayat members and village officials, and ordinary villagers. A total of 1080 respondents, divided almost equally between knowledgeable and non-knowledgeable, were interviewed in the panchayat villages. The object of the interview was to assess the respondent's reactions towards the working of the panchayat, his attitude towards panchayat taxes and his suggestions for improving the institution.

Establishment of village panchayats is a Directive Principle of the Constitution of India. Also, panchayats are expected to play a vital role in rural development and regeneration of rural life. There has been considerable activity in the field of panchayats in most States in the post-independence period. A large number of States have established panchayats. Others like Madras which already had panchayats have amended the Panchayat Acts, to bring them in line with the spirit of the Constitution and the requirements of planning. Progress towards the objective of covering all villages with panchayats is being steadily made. However, progress is uneven and there are wide inter-State variations. Thus, West Bengal had not established village level panchayats till the time of the study and two other States, *viz.*, Mysore and Assam had not made any appreciable progress in revitalising their institutions\*. Further, panchayats in different States vary greatly in every major respect—jurisdiction; size and composition of the body; methods of elections of members and President; methods of appointment and status of the panchayat secretary; sources of income; responsibilities in the field of development and administration; and relations with the State Governments and higher level Local Bodies. To an extent these variations are due to regional differences. But they are also due in part to the fact that policy makers in different States have had different ideas about the constitution, functions and duties of these institutions.

The average population of the panchayats included in this study is 2600 with the figures for single village and multi-village panchayats being about 1900 and 3500 respectively. The panchayats are, therefore, on the average, much larger than the figure of 1000 indicated by the Planning Commission in its Report on Second Five Year Plan.

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\* The Panchayat Act was passed in West Bengal in 1956.

Provision for representation of scheduled castes is made in panchayats of most States. Some States also provide for representation of women. However, women members do not generally take adequate interest in panchayat activities and do not even attend their meetings. Interest of scheduled caste members is also inadequate but it is reported from some blocks that election on the basis of adult suffrage and representation of scheduled castes on the panchayats has created among them a keen sense of awareness of their rights.

Panchayats in most blocks do not have a nominated or ex-officio component. In two of the blocks, however, the village patels are nominated by virtue of their office. The very limited experience of this study suggests that the practice has not only not strengthened the institution, but has actually hampered its working.

Provision for meetings between the panchayat and the general body of the village exists in the legislation of some States. The principle on which this is based is a commendable one. But, experience with the village body meetings is not satisfactory. These meetings do not evoke any enthusiasm and are generally ineffective.

### *Elections*

It was observed that panchayat elections have resulted in creating or aggravating factional rivalries in about one-third of the villages in which there was a contest. Unanimous elections which are sometimes advocated, have serious limitations, however. They have been held in about 40% of the panchayat studied, but they are not always an indicator of village solidarity. Frequently, they only indicate lack of interest of the community in the panchayat.

### *Panchayat Members*

Older people, those belonging to cultivating or land-owning castes and those who have some education are preferred for panchayat membership. 60% of the panchayat members are above 40 years of age; nearly 90% are land-owners; the majority in all centres belong to high or rather the locally dominant land-owning or cultivating castes. However, only 33% of them are considered well off by their fellow villagers. A majority of the members in most centres is literate but the standard of education is in most cases low (upto primary stage). The Panchayat Presidents similarly are in most cases older people, of rich, land-owning households and of high or locally dominant castes.

### *Panchayat Secretaries*

There are great variations in different States regarding the status and methods of recruitment of the panchayat secretaries. In some States like U.P., the secretary is a full-time government servant; in others like Bombay, he is a servant, full or part time, of an individual panchayat, while in still others like Madhya Bharat, local persons like the school teachers are expected to do this work in addition to their other duties.

These differences have a great influence on the calibre and qualifications of the secretary. As might be expected, the calibre and qualifications of the secretaries are adequate only in States like U.P. and Kerala where they are full-time government servants.

#### *Panchayats and State Governments*

Most States have special staff for inspection of panchayats. But, even in this, there are exceptions. Thus in Mysore, the Revenue Department officials are expected to attend to panchayat inspection in addition to their other duties. Mainly because of large jurisdictions, the panchayat staff in most States are not able to attend adequately even to the limited function of inspection. Guidance to improve the working of panchayats goes largely by default.

In spite of the fact that wide powers and responsibilities have been given to panchayats, their *de facto* control remains in many cases in the hands of officials. Panchayats in many States cannot incur expenditure except of minor amounts. Their powers in other directions are also circumscribed. Such control on the day-to-day working of panchayats has the effect only of dampening enthusiasm of the members and thwarting their initiative, and creating a feeling among the villagers that the panchayat is a part of the administration.

#### *Resources of panchayats*

The problem of resources is about the most difficult one faced by the panchayats. In most States the Acts include a long list of sources of revenue for them. However, in practice, most of these sources exist only on paper; they are not tapped and the panchayats' income from the few sources which are tapped is very small. In many cases, the self-raised income of the panchayats is barely sufficient to pay for expenditure on establishment.

The income of the panchayat is derived from taxes; other local source of income like village common land and recurring government grants. To these may be added *ad hoc* grants from government received for specific purposes and similar *ad hoc* contributions from the people. Both these have been of special importance for construction of community works during the project period.

#### *Taxes*

Even though the Panchayat laws permit the panchayats to levy a number of taxes, it has been observed in the panchayats studied, that the bulk of the tax income is derived from one, or two or at the most three taxes. The most important taxes levied by the panchayats are: house tax, land cess or surcharge on land revenue and tax on professions and trades. Panchayats in some States like Bihar and Madhya Bharat impose a labour tax. Other taxes tapped by panchayats in a few blocks are, tax on carts, entertainment tax, tax on marriages and on adoption of children. The *house tax* is levied in panchayats of 9 out of the 15 blocks studied. Properly administered, this is one of the most suitable taxes for panchayats because it is simple, direct and makes all persons in the village feel that they have a stake in the panchayat. The tax is not very popular and there are arrears in some cases. But, it is significant that most of the blocks in which the panchayats have undertaken some

activity and in which people show some interest or consciousness about the panchayats, are blocks, where the panchayats levy the house tax. *Land cess* or surcharge on land revenue is levied in a few States. As it is collected along with the land revenue, it does not raise any administrative problems and does not evoke any serious opposition. But, the rates of the surcharge have to be kept low and the yield can only be limited. Taxes on trades and professions are levied in a number of States. They are a good source of income for panchayats in larger villages which have markets—permanent or periodic. As their incidence is limited, they are generally not resented. Labour tax is levied by panchayats in a few States of which Bihar is most important. The tax is not successful in the panchayats studied in the Bihar block as the labour contribution actually mobilised, are much lower than the obligation imposed under the tax.

Realisation of taxes is unsatisfactory in most cases. Except in two blocks, the percentages of realisation are less than 50. The best relative performance is reported from blocks of Punjab and Bombay where the panchayats impose direct financial obligations on the members. On the other hand, in areas where such obligation is sought to be avoided, by resort to indirect taxes or by levying taxes like the labour tax, which mean no financial obligation, the percentages of realisation are generally lower. Panchayats in some States are assisted by revenue staff in collection of taxes, and in some cases where they are not assisted, there is a demand for such assistance. However, reliance on the revenue staff can only have the effect of identifying the panchayats with the executive arm of the government.

#### *Other sources of revenue*

Village common land is the most important source of non-tax income of the panchayats. Income from such land is significant in Punjab, U. P., and Saurashtra. The PEOs concerned report that income from common lands could be substantially increased by proper management and improvement of these, e.g. proper cultivation of the cultivable area through reclamation of waste-lands, afforestation and controlled grazing etc. However, hardly any panchayat has taken any initiative in improving these lands. The lands are generally not well looked after and at times panchayats have difficulty even in getting possession of the land. This has been reported from both Punjab and U.P. In the latter State where the common lands are under the Gaon Samaj, which is the same body as the panchayat but has the lekhpal (patwari) as the Secretary, the difficulties appear to be somewhat greater.

#### *Government grants*

The quantum of government grants varies greatly in different States. In some States like Saurashtra grants are quite liberal; in others they are rather small and in still others like U.P. and Bihar where the State bears the expenses of the panchayat secretary, there are no regular or recurring grants. The recurring grants most commonly take the form of returning to the panchayat a proportion of the land revenue collected

from its area; the proportions varying from 10% in Punjab to 33% in 'A' class panchayats of Saurashtra.

#### *Ad hoc grants*

The system of *ad hoc* grants had been in operation in some States even before the inception of the community projects, but received a great fillip with the coming of these projects. Substantial sums have been available for development works from the projects (and also from other *ad hoc* grants of Government) in the panchayat villages studied. In order to avail of these sums, *ad hoc* contributions, which have been substantial in many villages, have been raised from the people.

#### *Income and Expenditure of the Selected Panchayats*

The regular income (self-raised income plus recurring Government grants) of the selected panchayats varies from a per capita average of Rs. 3·6 in Manavadar (Saurashtra) to Re. 0·17 in Bhadrak (Orissa). Considering the self-raised income alone, the range is from Rs. 1·64 in Erode (Madras) to Re. 0·07 in Cachar (Assam). The figure is less than Re. 0·50 per capita in 5 blocks. These figures bring out the extent of poverty of these institutions.

Since the income of the panchayats is very low, even the most elementary administrative expenditure takes up a large share of it. The proportion of administrative expenditure to the regular income of the panchayats is more than 50% in 3 blocks. After meeting their administrative expenditure, the panchayats in only 3 blocks—Erode (Madras), Bodhan (Andhra) and Sonapat (Punjab) are left with Re. 1 or more per capita for spending on routine civic duties like cleaning of streets or on development activities.

#### *Development expenditure*

Because of substantial grants from the projects, from other Government sources and in some cases substantial contributions from the people, there is appreciable development expenditure in most of the panchayat villages. The average per capita development expenditure per year varies from more than Rs. 3 in the panchayat villages of Bodhan (Andhra) to only 0·57 in those of Morsi (Bombay). Distribution of blocks according to per capita development expenditure is as follows:—

	No.	Blocks
More than Rs. 3 . . . . .	1	Bodhan (Andhra).
Between Rs. 2 and Rs. 3 . . . . .	3	Bhadrak (Orissa), Sonapat (Punjab) and Mandya (Mysore).
Between Re. 1 and Rs. 2 . . . . .	7	Bhathat (U. P.), Pusa (Bihar), Erode (Madras), Kolhapur (Bombay), Rajpur (Madhya Bharat), Cachar (Assam), Batala (Punjab).
Below Re. 1 . . . . .	2	Morsi (Bombay) and Chalakudy (Kerala).

In a large number of blocks (7 out of 13), the contribution of panchayats to development expenditure is low—20% of the total or less. However, when *ad hoc* contributions raised by the people are also included, the total value of popular participation increases considerably. Comparative figures on popular and government participation for the panchayats of different blocks are given in the text. The *ad hoc* contributions mobilised from the people for these development works are larger than the contributions of the panchayats in 7 out of the 13 blocks. Moreover, in 3 cases they are even larger than the normal self-raised income of the panchayats. These figures bring out the significance of *ad hoc* contributions for financing development works. So long as the panchayats are weak and cannot mobilise sufficient resources, this method of obtaining contributions from the people for specific purposes offers about the only possibility of undertaking development works of any magnitude. In order that these contributions might be mobilised, matching specific purpose grants should be available, permanently and for a fairly large list of approved works. A panchayat should be able to qualify for grants for any of the approved works at any time, at which it can raise its own contribution. Availability of specific purpose grants should not be limited to the block period.

#### *Functioning of panchayats*

The panchayats in all States have been entrusted with a long list of functions covering the entire field of civic administration and of social and economic development of the village. In the field of civic administration, panchayats have responsibility for maintaining sanitation, provision of drinking water and elementary medical facilities, education of children, and recreational and social education activities. The panchayats have also been assigned an important role in agricultural and economic development of the villages. They are expected to lay down cultivation standards, to arrange agricultural supplies, to assist in development of irrigation, soil conservation and consolidation of holdings and generally to work for increasing agricultural production, in the village. Promotion of co-operation in all forms, aid to cottage industries, drawing up plans for development of the village, are among the other important functions expected of them.

When considering the functioning of these selected panchayats, it should be remembered that these have functioned under exceptionally favourable conditions, and the difficulties faced by them in attaining a higher level or their failure to undertake certain types of activities might well be expected to be experienced in much greater degree by panchayats in other areas.

The activities actually undertaken by the selected panchayats may be divided into two categories: (i) those for which project funds have been available and (ii) civic activities like lighting and sweeping of village streets. In the former category, construction and repair of roads and construction of drinking water wells are the most important followed by construction of community buildings. These three acti-

vities have been taken up by 71.4%, 46.4% and 30.4% of the panchayats respectively. Among the social education activities, organisation of community centres has been taken up by about half the panchayats studied, but the other activities have been taken up only by isolated panchayats here and there.

### *Panchayats and the Projects*

Considerable financial assistance has been available from the projects for community activities which are properly the responsibility of the panchayats. With this assistance and with the *ad hoc* contributions mobilized from the people, community activities have been undertaken which the panchayats could not have normally done. However, taking up of these activities, has not necessarily had the effect of strengthening the panchayats. The construction activities were taken up in most areas through *ad hoc* development committees called Vikas Mandals. In some areas, these were associated with the panchayat; in others they were not and in at least one block they functioned as rivals of the panchayat. The project staff were concerned primarily with execution of works within specified periods and the opportunity for strengthening the institution which these resources offered, were not adequately utilized. The formal relationship between the panchayats (and panchayat staff) and project staff has varied greatly in different States. All gradations are found from Saurashtra where the BDO was the panchayat officer of the block and for a time the panchayat secretaries were also the Gram Sevaks, to Kerala where there has been practically no relationship between the two staffs. A number of States notably U.P. have taken steps to coordinate the work of the two staffs. But they were handicapped by the fact that the block pattern did not have an independent block level functionary for panchayats and the panchayat inspectors had often jurisdictions different from the block. The recent decision to provide a functionary exclusively for panchayats on the block team should remove this handicap and also improve the inspection of panchayats.

### *Civic amenities*

Street lighting is being done by only one-third of the selected panchayats; sweeping of village streets is reported by about 40%. But, in not all these cases are arrangements adequate or even regular. Thus, about 2/3rd of the panchayats are not able to attend to even these most elementary civic amenities.

The panchayat's role in economic development activities is negligible. In two States, U.P. and Bihar, they are reported to have drawn up village plans. However, these plans have not created any consciousness about planning nor have they had any noteworthy effect on agricultural improvement in the villages. Some assistance to irrigation has been reported by 2 panchayats and to cottage industries by another two. Panchayats have no relation with co-operative societies even



though societies exist in the majority of the panchayat villages and a number of panchayat members are members of co-operative societies also. Panchayats have taken no other initiative in promoting agricultural improvement in the villages, and it has been mentioned above that management of their own lands has been far from satisfactory.

#### *Attitudes towards panchayats*

Data were obtained from respondents, knowledgeable and non-knowledgeable, about their attitudes towards panchayat taxes, functioning of panchayats and how the functioning could be improved.

There is little or no opposition to the house tax among the knowledgeable respondents, but among the non-knowledgeable respondents or ordinary villagers, there is considerable opposition. In contrast, there is very little opposition to the land tax which is collected as part of the land revenue. The licence fees and taxes on trades and professions also do not evoke any particular resistance as their incidence is limited.

Few people favour panchayats levying more taxes. Those who feel that they could levy more taxes have suggested taxes like the house tax, professions or trades tax, tax on vehicles, *i.e.*, taxes which are levied by panchayats in other areas but are not being levied in their own. A large number of respondents feel that the panchayats' income could be increased, by better utilisation of the resources already at their disposal. Proper enforcement of taxes and proper management of panchayat lands are the main steps suggested by respondents for increasing income. It is also interesting to note that suggestions for raising income and for increasing taxes are forthcoming much more readily from those blocks where the panchayats have levied taxes, mobilized resources and shown some activity. On the other hand, in blocks where the panchayats are not active or the resources mobilized by them are meagre, the response is poor. *The co-relation is by no means perfect but the trend does suggest that the very fact of effective functioning of the panchayats for sometime might prove a stimulus for further progress.* Similarly, the response to the question on the steps needed for further improvement of panchayats or the type of assistance needed by them is much greater in blocks where the selected panchayats have been active than in those where they have shown little or no activity. As regards the form of assistance needed, by a panchayat, the great majority of respondents have given first or second priority to financial assistance. Technical assistance especially in execution of community works is also mentioned by a large number of respondents. Among the administrative steps needed for improvement of panchayats, respondents have mentioned better supervision of panchayats by government, better coordination between panchayats and the Government Departments, proper training of secretaries and of panchayat members. Thus, the main deficiencies of the panchayats which have been highlighted in the preceding paragraphs are keenly felt by the people themselves.

## CHAPTER V

## BLOCK RECORDS

The number of blocks covered by the C.D. and the N.E.S. programme has increased to more than 2000. This has made more imperative than before the proper maintenance of records by the Gram Sevak which contain basic information. The Programme Evaluation Organisation, accordingly, undertook a detailed enquiry into records in 19 blocks—one each in 19 evaluation centres. The enquiry was confined to the progress indicators which are reported quarterly by the B.D.Os. to the State Headquarters according to the instructions of the Community Development Ministry. Questions were asked about the types of records maintained, the coverage of the data on performance, the kind and quality of checking of these records by Superior Officers and the role which the B.D.O., Extension Specialist, and the Progress Assistant play at present in the maintenance of these statistics.

The findings of the enquiry are summarised below :

Records like the daily diary of the Gram Sevak's own activities are generally maintained but they vary widely in form and content in different blocks. The practice, however, differs in respect of the submission of the diaries to the block office for scrutiny and inspection. In some blocks, Gram Sevaks are not submitting their diaries to the B.D.O. at all. This should, however, be done.

The progress reports are now maintained generally but the way they are maintained is much less uniform than is the case with the diary. Sometimes no progress record is maintained at the Gram Sevak's headquarter but at the fortnightly meeting the B.D.O. gets him to fill up 'village improvement sheets' which remain at B.D.O. headquarter. These records also differ in respect of their contents. Sometimes they show only the Gram Sevak's own achievement and not the total achievement in his circle.

Very often the Gram Sevak does not hand over the records maintained by him to his successor at the time of his transfer with the result that the records are lost for ever and the new comer is put at great disadvantage.

The concepts relating to the progress indicators are not always carefully defined nor are the standards uniformly enforced. In the case of improved seeds some blocks report only the nucleus seeds while others include seeds from registered growers, progressive farmers and private nurseries. Some take into account also the natural spread. Again, a farmer is reported as following the Japanese method though he may not be using all the processes involved. Sometimes line sowing and use of fertilizers is taken as the Japanese method. One block under study reported areas under this method even though only dibbling was done. Very often the compost pit does not conform to the standard size and is yet reported as a compost pit. In fact, in some cases even if no pits are dug, and the cowdung is just piled up on the ground, the operation

is considered as composting. Distinction between pits already existing and new pits is not always kept in mind. In one block, a compost pit which is used a second time is reported as a new pit. These instances illustrate the very slack manner in which records are built up and point to the need of laying down, in full detail, the definitions, and concepts and enforcing uniform standards in the field.

The coverage in respect of reporting does not always conform to the instructions of the C. D. Ministry. In particular the departmental performance is often omitted in the case of seeds, drinking water wells and roads. Moreover, the data are not always maintained at the village level. *The performance and the target figures* do not always refer to the same area.

Checking on the spot is at present extremely inadequate; most checking is done at the desk at the B.D.Os office and not on the spot in the villages. Moreover, even where on the spot checks are made, they are done in a perfunctory way, the primary objective being to see whether records are being maintained rather than to verify their correctness. Little time is devoted to field checking, and the respective roles of the B.D.O., the Extension Specialist and the Progress Assistant in this regard are not always clearly defined.

The figures are known to be inflated by Gram Sevak, sometimes at the instance of the Extension Specialist. The Progress Assistant does not seem to act as independently as he should in the matter of checking the records. He is often burdened with clerical work at the Block headquarter at the cost of his basic responsibility. He does not visit the field frequently enough nor instruct the Gram Sevak on the collection and maintenance of data.

## CHAPTER VI

### CONCLUSIONS

#### CURRENT EVALUATION

1. *The personnel and finances of a block should be proportionate to its size.*—Our study shows that the average block is 25% larger than the programme's norm in terms of population, and that large blocks do not have proportionately larger personnel and finance. This has led to dilution of the programme in these blocks. There are cogent reasons for making the blocks fit into the existing administrative units. This may, however, lead to the creation of blocks larger than the programme has prescribed. The block personnel and finance should be proportionately increased in such cases.

2. *The Blocks should be increased in number only as the supply of personnel increases.*—Our study shows that shortage of block personnel continues to be serious. For example, 40% of them had no B.D.Os. to look after them for varying lengths of time and 60% of the N.E.S. and C.D. blocks had no agricultural specialist for nearly a fourth of the periods during which the programme had been in operation in them.

3. *The programme and the staffing pattern of the Blocks should be in accordance with the special needs of the areas where they are located.*—There has been something like an attempt to make blocks with widely different conditions fit into the same straight-jacket in respect of staff and programme.

The staffing of different blocks does not seem to have been done with serious reference to their special needs and circumstances. In fact, the block programmes themselves do not seem to have been evolved in terms of their needs and circumstances. The result is that the effective service that the blocks receive is less than what the size of their staff would suggest. Moreover, in many instances, the programme does not touch some of the basic problems of the blocks and its impact on the block's economy and people is small. In particular the programme and the staff have not been adjusted to the requirements of the less developed, dry areas which cover the bulk of the country. The programme has been also ineffective in tribal and hilly areas. On the other hand, some of the relatively developed areas which can profitably use more specialised assistance do not get it.

4. *The status of the Block Development Officer and his qualifications should be higher than they are at present.*—With the move towards democratic decentralisation, the pooling together of block and departmental resources in men and money, the emphasis on area development and increase in the block staff and the number of the Gram Sevaks, the responsibilities of the B.D.O. would increase and he would occupy a key position in the whole scheme of development. These changes call for persons of higher calibre and higher status.\*

5. *Stress should be given to the development of extension work in all fields besides agriculture and specialists relieved as much as possible of administrative work.*—There is little extension work outside agriculture. But it is extension work which brings the Block specialist into contact with the B.D.O. and gives him the opportunity to participate in the planning for development of the block. This, of course, implies, as a prior condition, that there must be in these fields more specialists than are required for the running of the basic service units. Where, for example, the health experts are not enough in number to run the rural dispensaries, they cannot evidently take up extension work.

According to our findings, most of the problems with which the block level specialist is worried are administrative. Among the problems referred to by him to the district level specialist, the administrative and financial questions predominate.

6. *The contact between the Block specialist and the Gram Sevak should be developed. The role and the jurisdiction of the latter should be more clearly thought out.*—At present the contacts between the Block level specialist and the Gram Sevak in fields other than agriculture are few and far between; most of these specialists are engaged in

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\* Action in this direction is already being taken by the Ministry of Community Development, Govt. of India.

routine work in their fields while the Gram Sevak is pre-eminently an extension worker. Moreover, the Block level specialists feel that they can do without the Gram Sevak. He is, according to them, either not available or not qualified enough in their fields to act as a channel for the transmission of technical assistance to the villager. This situation hardly fits in with the concept of the role of the Gram Sevak as the multi-purpose extension worker. The latter should either be qualified in more fields than he is at present, but have a smaller area to look after, or alternatively he should be more qualified in a few fields and share with other village level specialists, the task of serving a bigger charge. More thinking should be devoted to this basic issue. The basic rôle of the Gram Sevak is that of the general purpose extension worker, which is buttressed by his specialised knowledge of the most important field, viz., agriculture. It is difficult to think of him as a multi-purpose specialist, and as the rural economy develops, the need for specialised services will grow and the number of specialised functionaries at the village level will have to be increased.

As it is, the Gram Sevak's charge is, on the average, 25 % larger than the norm laid down by the programme, which, according to our enquiry, approximates to what the Gram Sevaks, generally speaking, consider to be the optimum charge. However, the Gram Sevak's activities do not, at present, extend to all fields, and the service they render to villages which are not their headquarters is extremely limited. 45 % of these villages do not receive a visit by him even once a month.

7. *The procedure involved in making funds available to the block requires simplification.*—Block development has suffered from under-budgetting and under-spending of the budgetted amounts. The main reason for the latter has been procedural; funds have not been sanctioned and sanctioned amounts not made available to the blocks soon enough. Steps were taken during the first two years of the community projects to decentralise powers in this respect. But there seems to be still considerable room for improvement. Also there has not been enough of planning ahead. On the other hand, according to our enquiry most B.D.Os. feel that their block budgets are insufficient and they could usefully spend more money on the development of their charges.

8. *The issues involved in people's participation in the programme requires thorough study by all concerned.*—This issue has been discussed to some extent elsewhere. The Current Evaluation Study shows that the people's participation measured *per capita* and in terms of money value, was higher in the C.D. than the N.E.S. Blocks. But in both categories of blocks, the value of this contribution tended to decline as the block period drew to its close.

9. *For the under-privileged sections of the rural society to secure more benefit out of the programme, the latter must be reoriented considerably, in favour of non-agricultural or rather non-land holding classes.*—According to our enquiry, the Harijans and the backward classes have benefited along with others from the construction of village

roads, the digging of drinking water wells and the setting up of village schools. The drinking water wells and still more the schools have been open to them in the large majority of instances, while they have shared with others the convenience of better village roads. The instances in which they have been forced to give their labour or give more of it than others are few. But the programme's activity is, by and large, concentrated on cultivation, and in as much as Harijans and the backward classes are either landless labourers or rely upon other occupations, they have not participated in the benefits of the programme.

## ACCEPTANCE OF PRACTICES

### *Improved Seeds.*

1. *Greater extension effort is required, especially for non-cash crops, and among the smaller cultivators. The extension service should also be reoriented with emphasis on convincing the doubting farmer of the real superiority of the improved varieties and on better arrangement for supply rather than on the provision of finance.*—Our enquiry shows that quite a proportion of the cultivating households seem to have no knowledge of improved seeds; that cultivators have taken to the use of improved seeds much more in the case of cotton and sugarcane than of wheat, paddy, potato and jowar; and that among these adopting cultivators those with the larger holdings predominate. Appreciable percentages of the farmers who are dissatisfied with improved seeds or have given them up seem to be unconvinced of their alleged superiority. Very few of them complain about lack of finance, but an increasing number have experienced difficulty in securing the supply.

### *Fertilizers.*

2. *The extension service for fertilizers has to develop even more than for improved seeds, both quantitatively and qualitatively and more for fertilizers other than ammonium sulphate. It has to be linked with the extension work for improved seeds and adequate provision for the supply of finance to the farmer has to be made. More attention has to be given to the long term suitability of the fertilizers to the soils of the areas where they are recommended as also to their prices relatively to their yields on the average farm.*—Our data show that a much smaller percentage of the cultivating households have taken to the use of fertilizers than of improved seeds. Extension effort in this field, speaking generally, might have been, in some measure, inhibited by the difficulty of supply, actual or anticipated. But the argument would not apply to green manures; a fourth of the households which had not taken to them had "no knowledge" about them. Secondly, the use of fertilizers spread more slowly than that of improved seeds between the two enquiries. Lack of finance is given as the most important reason by the reverting households. Quite a good percentage of such households were not convinced of their value and another but smaller fraction had found ammonium sulphate and manure mixtures detrimental to the soil.

### *Improved methods*

3. *Improved methods should be propagated more extensively especially in the case of the Japanese method, but also more carefully and where possible, in combination with improved seeds and fertilizers. The cultivators should be instructed on the full implication of the Japanese method and all the processes involved should be undertaken. Efforts to spread crop rotation and transplantation should be accompanied by increased irrigation facilities. The labour difficulty that both Japanese method and line sowing have raised should be looked into.*—Our investigation reveals that only 15% of relevant households have taken to the Japanese method of paddy cultivation and that the households which have not taken to it mostly plead ignorance. Households which have not tried crop rotation and transplantation complain mostly of lack of irrigation facilities, while those which have not adopted transplantation and Japanese method give shortage of labour as the most important reason. The farmers who have tried the Japanese method but have given it up were not impressed by the results achieved. They feel it involved more labour for which they did not get adequate return. Our Records enquiry, however, shows that the method is applied in a slipshod manner in many areas. Households which have adopted improved seeds, fertilizers and improved methods are much smaller in number than those which have taken to anyone of these three ways of increasing output. This is probably in part the result of extension services being operated without reference to the individual farm as the unit for development.

### *People's participation.*

#### (a) Co-operatives.

4. *Every possible attempt should be made to bring in the poorer sections of the rural population within the fold of the cooperative movement. The policy of linking loans to credit-worthy purposes rather than to credit-worthy persons should be put into practice more effectively.*—Our enquiry shows that the benefits of the co-operative credit societies go mostly to the larger cultivators in the villages, who also play the dominant part in the panchayats.

#### (b) Voluntary Institutions

5. *The whole approach, content and technique of the programme in the field of social activity should be examined thoroughly.*—Our enquiry shows that only a small percentage of the villages as yet possess the social institutions like community centres which have been recommended and that most of these institutions are inactive or moribund. While rural households have participated in large numbers in the construction of village roads, school houses, and drinking water wells, they show little interest in the organisations which are intended for recreation and social intercourse. Probably the programme has not yet struck upon the right type of institutions or the proper technique of social education.

## THE PANCHAYAT

1. *The practice of the Panchayat president selecting his co-members should not be encouraged.*—Contested elections have brought out group rivalries and probably even aggravated them. But a unanimous panchayat does not necessarily reflect solidarity in the village. On the other hand, it tends further to reduce the interest of the village community in the institution.

2. *The experiment with the Panchayat having to report its achievement periodically to the Gram Sabha and secure approval of its budget needs to be watched longer.*—Our study does not show that the meetings of the Gram Sabhas for this purpose have been successful. They have failed to evoke popular enthusiasm and have, generally speaking, proved ineffective.

3. *Additional responsibility, especially for development work, should not be imposed on the Panchayats, at least, for some time to come. The functions of the panchayats and co-operative societies should be clearly distinguished from one another.*—Our study shows that Panchayats in many areas do not discharge even their elementary civic responsibilities adequately. The load placed on their shoulders should be increased only as they gain in experience and strength. The first concern should be to improve their efficiency as municipal bodies. Ways may, however, be thought out of bringing the panchayats into closer association with developmental work in the villages. Arrangement for supply of seed, development of cottage industries etc. are jobs for the co-operative societies and not the panchayats.

4. *Provision should be made for the systematic education of the members of the Panchayat on their duties and responsibilities.*—Our study shows that the standard of literacy among the members of the panchayats is very low. As a result, the running of the institution is left largely to the President or the Secretary. The first step in democracy should be to educate, at least, the representatives of the people, in their powers and responsibilities.

5. *The Panchayat Secretary should be a trained person and well paid. He should be under the control of the Panchayat and paid by it even if his salary is contributed by a higher body.*—The panchayat secretaries who are full time servants of the government and paid by it have been found to be of a higher calibre, generally speaking, than others directly engaged by the panchayats themselves. But where the panchayat members including the President are only half literate, the Secretary tends to run the institution for them rather than operate as its servant. Our long-run interest is in the effective functioning of the panchayat as a democratic institution rather than in its efficient operation as a bureaucracy.

6. *Official control of Panchayats should be reduced as much as possible.*—Panchayats in many States cannot, on their own, incur expenditure except of a minor character. Their power in other directions



is also circumscribed. Our study shows that this has dampened the enthusiasm and thwarted the initiative of the panchayat members and given to the villagers the impression that the panchayat is merely an instrument of the higher government. Democracy with too many safeguards tends to degenerate into bureaucracy.

7. *On the other hand, the inspection of the panchayats should be improved. The role of the panchayat inspector should be not merely inspection but guidance too.*—At present the Panchayat inspection officer has charge over a wide area and the inspection of the village panchayats he carries out tends to be mechanical and few and far between. The situation would improve with the Panchayat Inspector becoming a part of the Block Staff, but the role of the Inspector has to be widened into that of the friend, philosopher and guide of the panchayat. This weak institution at the base requires fostering as much as checking.

8. *As regards the resources of the Panchayats, the stress should be on measures designed to promote fuller exploitation of the sources of income at their disposal rather than on an expansion of the list of taxes they are, by law, required or permitted to impose. Systematic experiment should be tried with specific purpose grants from the government matched by contributions raised by the panchayats from the village people.*—Most panchayats have very low incomes, but in no instance does the actual income come near the potential. In general, the panchayats rely upon a very few taxes, but the actual collection is much poorer than the total dues. One way out of this situation may be found in the Bhoodan idea; the villagers may agree to part with some of their land to the panchayat once for all rather than pay taxes to it year in and year out. Panchayats which possess some property in land seem to be better off, other things being equal, than those which do not have it. A second solution is suggested by the experience of people's participation in projects of common benefit, roads, school houses and drinking water wells. The villagers have responded to the incentive which the matching grants from the community projects have offered by coming out with contributions in cash, labour and, sometimes, in land. Attempts should be made to exploit this technique more systematically, with the Panchayat as the channel or medium, for the collection and use of the funds raised. Both the solutions are in consonance with our tradition; our people seem to respond to the appeal for gifts more readily than to the demand for regular payment of taxes.

## BLOCK RECORDS

### I. Daily Diaries

*The daily diary and similar records which relate to the Gram Sevak's own activity should be uniform in pattern and content, and submitted regularly to the B.D.O.*—At present, they differ widely from block to block and in some blocks the Gram Sevaks do not even submit these records to the B.D.Os.

## II. Progress Records

### (a) Concepts & Standards

*The concepts and standards relevant to the progress indicators should be carefully defined and uniformly enforced.*—This is not done at present. The “improved seed” for example, may mean any one or more of the following: the nucleus seed, seeds obtained from registered growers, progressive farmers, private nurseries, and natural spread. The term “Japanese method” has been applied in one instance to paddy cultivation in which the only new technique is dibbling, while “compost pits” mean in some cases just cow dung piled up on level ground.

### (b) Maintenance and submission

*Progress reports prepared by the Gram Sevaks should be uniform in content and maintained at his headquarter village.*—At present they are even less uniform than the daily diaries. Sometimes the Gram Sevak reports on his own activity alone; in other instances his report covers all activities in his circle. In some blocks he does not maintain it at his headquarter village; the B.D.O. gets him to fill up the village improvement sheets at the fortnightly meeting and the sheets are filed at the B.D.O.’s Office.

*The Gram Sevak on transfer should hand over the records to his successor before leaving his circle.*—This is not done at present in some instances, and the consequent loss of old records considerably reduces the value of progress statistics.

### (c) Coverage

*The progress reports should in respect of their coverage, conform to the instructions of the Community Development Ministry; they should include both block and departmental activities. Both the target figures and the performance data should be shown village-wise as well as in relation to the Gram Sevak’s circle.*—Departmental performance is now often omitted from these reports, and with the emphasis on village planning, circlewise data are not enough.

### (d) Checking

*Progress reports should be checked on the spot, with a view to verify their correctness, and there should be clear directions to the B.D.O., the extension specialists and the Progress Assistant, on their respective roles. The Progress Assistant should regularly check the data in the field and advise the Gram Sevak on the collection and recording of data.*—At present most checking is done at the desk, rather than in the field, and where the checking is done in the field, it is carried out in a perfunctory manner. Some Progress Assistants have been found saddled with clerical work at the Block headquarters; they do not pay enough visits to the field and check for themselves the progress reports prepared by the Gram Sevaks.