

RURAL DEVELOPMENT AND EMPLOYMENT

Rural underemployment is a characteristic feature of most developing countries. There has been a growing recognition in these countries that it is an essential part of the solution of the problems of both underemployment and unemployment. It is also recognised that the urgent need is for integrated rural development, with the combined aims of increasing the incomes of rural workers, of absorbing widespread rural underemployment, and of providing productive employment for new entrants into the labour force.

Commenting on rural employment in less developed countries Scarlett Epstein of the Institute of Development Studies, University of Sussex, said "It is a much more intangible phenomenon than its urban counterpart. A large proportion of Third World rural dwellers still derives its livelihood from family subsistence farming. With an increasing rate of population growth set against strictly limited supplies of cultivable land, this in itself poses serious problems. Moreover, agricultural labour requirements are seasonally peaked which often results in labour-displacing mechanisation; last but by no means least, important agricultural extension services have so far largely ignored the female labour force".

She adds that these basic facts of rural life present a challenge not only in the design, but even more important, in the implementation of development programmes.

The ILO illustrates the breadth and depth of the problem when it defines rural development as "strategies, policies and programmes for the development of rural areas and the promotion of activities carried out in such areas (agriculture, forestry, fishing, rural crafts and industries, the building of the social and economic infrastructure), with the ultimate aim of achieving a fuller utilisation of available physical and human resources and thus higher incomes and better living conditions for the rural population as a whole, particularly the rural poor, and effective participation of the latter in the development process".

1. ANKER, D. K. W: *Rural Development Problems and Strategies*. *International Labour Review*, Vol. 108 No. 6, December 1975.

Although not stated directly this definition clearly implies that an integrated approach to rural development is seen as the best way to achieve a multi-pronged attack on rural poverty. And this is in line with most current thinking on the subject. A second and parallel consideration is how to integrate development in the rural sector into the national economy.

Certainly employment promotion in rural areas is of central concern and an ideal starting point from which consideration of the whole rural development issue can begin. Indeed it can be argued that a systematic frontal attack on rural unemployment, underemployment and poverty, is the only way that governments can hope to make an impact on these problems, provided, of course, that this is done as an integral part of a national development strategy. In other words, government commitment is of vital importance. But commitment alone is not enough. It also requires a clear definition of objectives, both quantitative and qualitative, with, at the same time, the support of streamlined administrative structures to ensure effective implementation of plans for the rural sector.

Taking up the theme of an integrated approach to rural development in the overall context of the economic development programme, one way to benefit the rural sector might be to assign a strategic role to rural public works schemes, especially if sufficient budgetary resources were allocated from the start. In such an approach, a vital concern would necessarily be the integration of the programme into the manpower planning process.

Experts also agree that integrated rural development requires detailed knowledge of the socio-economic structure and, particularly, the existing employment, unemployment and underemployment patterns. Only this way can the real dimensions of the problem be ascertained, and hidden problems exposed. For instance such studies might reveal that because rural youth migrated to the cities, the volume of open unemployment appeared **unrealistically** low. It might also emerge that there was a substantial seasonal unemployment or that there was a large amount of under-employment in the form of low productivity and incomes.

Particularly in the context of rural/urban migration, certain cases for research and investigation have proved significant, notably:

- (i) Causes of migration from rural to urban areas;
- (ii) What links, if any, the rural migrants (youth) leave behind in the rural sector;
- (iii) What kinds of jobs/trades, migrants pick up after arriving in towns and;
- (iv) What could be done in the rural areas to attract these young people back to the countryside.

Investigation into these questions, would probably show an urgent need for improvement in the working conditions in rural areas, an urgent need for provision of additional employment opportunities, and an urgent need to support financially and otherwise, an integrated approach to rural development. For instance, to improve working conditions in rural areas and to provide productive employment opportunity, some radical experimental rural development programmes have already been attempted. In particular, Tanzania's experience in the area of rural development seems to be unique.

Tanzania is led by one of the Commonwealth's most respected leaders - President Nyerere whose belief "development is of people not of things" has been translated into some of the most innovative approaches to rural development of any Commonwealth nation. "Ujamaa" rural development programme is of special interest. Iain Guest, a Director of the development journal, New Internationalist, reports on Tanzania's experiences.

A Case Study - The Tanzanian Experiment

Tanzania is one of the poorest countries in the Commonwealth. Life expectancy is under forty years, illiteracy effects almost half of all Tanzanians, and in the words of one visitor, ill health is "almost universal". Per capita income is only 110 dollars a year.

The crux of Tanzania's rural development strategy is Ujamaa - the Swahili for "familiarity". It is centred around villages which are striving to be both self-reliant and as independent as possible of the expensive technology and expertise that has led so many developing nations to disregard traditional agricultural sectors. Over 90 per cent of Tanzania's population lives and works in agriculture. Even before 1967, there was a small village development programme in Tanzania. But the ten or so villages involved failed because, in the view of one observer, "they too closely emulated the Israeli Kibbutz, and were too dependent upon outside expertise, capital and heavy equipment".

So the Ujamaa programme was initiated, and between 1967 and 1973 approximately 15 per cent of Tanzania's total population was absorbed into Ujamaa villages. The villages, were in effect an extension of the already strong Tanzanian family, although the second five year development plan (1969 - 1974) refers to them as a frontal attack upon the growing use of hired labour on farms. The programme grew quickly. In 1969 there were only 809 Ujamaa villages while by 1973 there were 5,628.

Some of the villages were local initiatives, some were created by the government, and some were built around a farm which had been expropriated from private owners. Membership was meant to be voluntary. As President Nyerere said "free men will work without supervision, and without strikes or incentives".

Views about the success of Ujamaa are divided. It has even been suggested that the scheme has suffered because of the reaction of the peasant farmers to the objectives of socialism and self-reliance, the feeling being that peasants were inherently conservative, and in order to change they needed to be pushed.

Taking food production, which is accepted as an important measure of success, it is claimed that it has failed to keep pace with the growing population, both in the country and in urban areas. Certainly according to the Economic Bulletin of the Bank of Tanzania (March 1974) food imports leapt from 83.9 million shillings in 1971 to 176 million in 1972 and 217 million in the first four months of 1974 alone, and perhaps not all of this can be put down to world wide inflation.

The aim of Ujamaa, of course, is to have several families pooling resources in order to jointly utilise facilities for irrigation and fertilizer. It seems, however, that moving families from traditional pasturage for this purpose has had unforeseen results. For instance, in some places people have continued farming in fertile and low-lying lands, despite having been moved into Ujamaa villages, because the soil in the new villages is poor. Similarly the separation of habitation from cultivation has also meant that land in certain areas is no longer protected, which has had disastrous consequences for some crops.

The concept of self-reliance as understood by some participants has also caused problems. A good deal of the surplus maize in the country used to come from large farms which were privately owned. But when they were taken over and run as Ujamaa villages, the ex-labourers while satisfied to continue to produce for themselves were not, however, providing other areas of the country with food, as before.

On the other hand, the Government has been criticised by some members of Parliament for giving too much aid to Ujamaa villages - not less than 500 million shillings between 1969 and 1974, as well as receiving most of the country's regional development funds. This has created a dependence upon central administration and the single party Tanzanian African National Union (TANU).

The Ujamaa approach has also shown up problems of leadership in the villages. Because the traditional role of leader in Tanzanian villages does not include supervising fellow villagers, leaders have been brought in from the central government. This has meant that most plans have been prepared in regional headquarters and simply presented to villagers.

The Government has been faced, finally, by the kind of dilemma facing most Third World exporters. Agricultural policy has continued to favour cash crops (like sisal and coffee) for export, at the expense of food for consumption within the country. But the Ujamaa villages have been allocated mainly in areas where food is grown. As a result, low prices have been paid to food producers in the villages which not surprisingly has led to a decline in food production.

On New Years Eve 1974 the Government took action to remedy some of these problems. It was announced that 3 million

families had moved since the beginning of a new villagisation policy. Non-Ujamaa villages have since been relabelled development or planned villages. The Government has directed that people must cultivate at least 1½ hectares each on a private basis, and there is no insistence, as before, on communal production. By-laws making it compulsory to grow food crops and weed farms have been enforced. Producer prices have been increased to stimulate output. This means an intensification, not a total change, in the Ujamaa policy, it is too early to say with what success.

Tanzania is a forerunner among Third World countries in its radical approaches to development. As such it cannot avoid the scrutiny levelled at Ujamaa and other experimental schemes. In particular comparisons between China (a country which President Nyerere admires) and Tanzania are inevitable. The comparisons suggest that more decisions must be taken by the peasant farmers themselves if the comprehensive rural developments envisaged by the Ujamaa villages is to succeed. For example, in China, commune managers have been brought up on farms not drafted in from the Central Government. Production plans are discussed between commune members and central province representatives on the basis of the previous year's performance, and the communes capacity and own requirements.

China's achievements certainly suggest that the Ujamaa programme could succeed, albeit with a great deal more assistance and emphasis on rural projects by aid donors. And if the maxim "initiation is the sincerest form of flattery" is at all valid, the fact that a number of developing countries are following Tanzania's experiment in the hope of benefitting from its experience, would seem to speak for itself.