

## THE INTERNATIONAL EXPOSITION OF RURAL DEVELOPMENT

OPENING ADDRESS OF SIR JAMES LINDSAY AT VIGYAN BHAVAN, 5 FEBRUARY 1984

It is a real privilege for me to be able to address you all at this great event. It is a great event because 55 nations are assembled; because uniquely 70% of the 500 delegates are local people or field workers who do not usually come to international conferences or have the opportunity of conferring with UN or government officials or with other local people from other cultures. It is great because its location is in India which has the second largest population in the world (700,000,000) and where so much development activity is happening. Giving birth to this event in India has involved a two year global pregnancy taking place in all continents of the world. The actual birth is now at last happening. As an aside, it is sobering to reflect that in India 40,000 human births are happening every day.

### The Three Year Programme

What is being born as far as we are concerned is the 11-day central international event of a three year programme aimed at enabling those involved in rural development in 55 countries, to exchange workable solutions to the challenges facing them, in achieving accelerated and sustainable growth. Its focus is on bottom-up grassroots methods following the finding of the FAO's 1979 World Conference on Agrarian Reform which identified comprehensive integrated development and grassroots approaches as the keys to sustainable growth. This three year programme started with two years of intensive activity sharing approaches that work in each nation. During this time 168 Rural Development Symposia, and many times that number of Project Description Labs, led to about 300 projects being represented in India today. In the lead-up activities many hundreds of projects have been involved. So there has already been a tremendous building up of networks and truly significant interchanges at a national level.

### The Central International Event in India

We now meet to share approaches across the cultures here today. We have 52 nations here, represented by 550 delegates and team leaders. There are people from Africa, Latin America, North America, South-East Asia, Oceania, West and East Europe, West Asia and the Subcontinent.

Let me describe these ten days in India: First, there are the exhibits which explain the different approaches in the 300 projects. These will bring about a cross-fertilization of ideas. Second, a two day symposium in which 30 teams draw together the conclusions of the world-wide Rural Development Symposia and identify the major trends and key elements of sustainable development. Then four days of field visits to test these conclusions in a practical setting. The 30 teams visit 30 projects, each of which is an illustration of effective development in India. Finally, a three day documentation assembly to digest information and formulate conclusions.

### Implementation Workshops to follow

The output of all this will be publications documenting the factors making for sustainable growth. These are backed up by a computerized data base in the process of formation with special technical support from Control Data Corporation, and by

Rural Development Symposia documents and a video record of the India Event. These products of the Assembly bring us to the beginning of the real work of the three year programme namely

- getting implementation achieved during the ensuing 12 months
- getting the products disseminated
- reassembling and expanding the Rural Development Symposia with national delegates present at Implementation Workshops
- reassessing policies, priorities and methods for the next ten years.

#### Key Issues to be Addressed

Let me mention some of the key issues that will be addressed. For example, there are the processes whereby self-reliant growth is promoted at the local level. These include:

- human development to motivate villagers and their leaders
- participative planning involving local people
- organization for implementing the village plan
- in-village training in the skills required to implement the village plan
- integrating local efforts with the resources which government, voluntary organisations and the private sector may provide
- achieving rapid replication. Rural development does not consist of doing nice things for a single lucky village. There has to be replication strategy capable of implementation within a credible time span.

Another issue is the impact of women on development and vice versa:

- more than 50% of the rural population is female
- so is most of the manual labour
- bearing this in mind, the UN Decade for Women has put a high priority on improving women's status and quality of life. Four of the 30 projects to be visited have this as their prime aim.

Next, how to improve borrowing facilities and repayment in rural credit. If you renege on your loan you may never borrow again for the rest of your life. But if there is an on-going cycle of borrowing and repayment, local people have behind them a regular development resource. 23% of the projects to be visited pay great attention to this.

#### The Vital Importance of Economic Diversification

Let me mention the issue of non-farm employment. A serious concern of our times is the gravitational pull of the big cities. The population drift towards them from the rural areas is world-wide. It happens because agricultural income grows more slowly than industrial income; and because the agricultural cycle has workers idle and not earning during the down time between sowing, weeding and

and harvesting. The problem affects northern countries where villages, denuded of population, may have so few people left that they cannot support such services as shops, banks and transport. The need then arises for community action; even the application of appropriate technology. In practice the circumstances may resemble quite remarkably a bootstrap operation in the third world.

If the present trends continue, by 2000 AD in India there will be 70% of the population in the rural areas compared with the present 80%. The Planning Commission says there is no way agriculture will support the full-employment of the 700,000,000 people living in the rural areas. What is called for is not merely the diversification of agriculture, but the diversification of village economies everywhere. Some 55% of the projects to be visited by the delegates are engaged in promoting non-farm activities which include village industry and the development of local entrepreneurship. Bearing in mind the difficulty village industry has in finding worthwhile markets for its products, an important issue for discussion is the extent to which there can be a greater symbiosis between the established and the village sectors of industry. Such cooperation could secure much greater non-farm employment in the rural areas, so that villagers may earn money throughout the year; and so that their life could be both viable and of such quality that even the more vigorous souls are reasonably contented with it.

#### Village as good places to live

- The Japanese find villages to be good places to live in, though more than 90% of the villagers work in industry.
- In the Punjab where the green revolution's effects in India are most obvious, there is no great drift to the towns. Local people are investing their money, made out of farming, into village industry.
- In Venezuela and elsewhere in India we do have the occasional evidence of reverse flow - back to the village - because the village, by community effort, has been made worth living in.

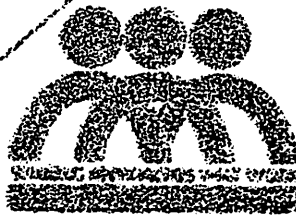
This really is what rural development is all about.

#### CONCLUSION

In conclusion, a word about why successful rural development is so important to the world. The majority of the world's population lives in the rural areas; in many countries of the South 70-80 % live there. Even in the USA 25% of the population live in rural towns even if only 2 % of the population are concerned with agriculture. Development means the mobilization of a country's human and material resources. When it comes to what you can do about it at the grassroots level, most countries' stock of capital available for improving physical resources is decidedly limited. So by far the biggest possibilities for ready achievement lie in the rural areas where most of the people on our planet live and where there is such tremendous potential for human resource development.

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**PRESS RELEASE**



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**TO: CITY EDITOR  
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**600 APPROACHES ARE WORKING IN LOCAL DEVELOPMENT TODAY**

By the end of the day, the delegates at the International Exposition of Rural Development had discerned 600 approaches that are working in local communities today.

To do this, 500 participants, working in 30 teams, looked at the current trends that grassroots people had indicated in 168 regional interchange meetings, held in 55 nations. These trends included 1) an increased "networking" across the various sectors of a community; 2) greater local participation in decision-making; and 3) an inclination toward locally implemented technological and industrial development.

Continuing their study of regional findings, the participants then looked at common keys to effective projects in rural development, such as 1) having the same set of people doing the planning and implementation, and 2) taking a structural approach to deal effectively with the diversity of problems and people in a project.

The delegates tested the validity of these trends and keys by interviewing other delegates, visiting the exhibits in the Toshakana Hall, and by examining the one page reports on each project represented at the Exposition.

The delegates then wrote a short description of the approaches they saw working today in rural development, and discovered that the total number from all the teams was 600. By using a computer during the night, these approaches will be grouped into similar types for work in Tuesday's session.