

EXPERIMENT IN INTERNATIONAL ENGAGEMENT

Harvard University  
and  
The Institute of Cultural Affairs

## I

Context

1. The following is an exploratory brief describing how the Institute of Cultural Affairs may be of some practical service to Harvard University. This possibility grew out of a conversation in May, 1976, among Dr. Derek Bok, Mr. T.J. Coolidge and Mr. J.W. Mathews, Chairman of ICA. The conversation revolved around the issue of how an institution of higher learning can deal practically with the arena of moral integrity and responsibility in developing the future leadership of our society. Out of this exchange emerged the idea of directly exposing a select number of Harvard students to the local people of developing nations through short term involvement in the socio-economic development projects of the Institute of Cultural Affairs in India, the Orient, Africa, Europe and the Americas.

Intent

2. The "studies abroad" programs of many universities which expose students to other cultures is a step in this direction. This proposal is yet a further step. Here the exposure is to the 85% of the inhabitants of the globe who live in an entirely different universe than the remaining 15% of us who have and control the health, the education, the technical know-how, the resources, the wealth, the means of production, and the general essentials for the good life. If it be true that every moment of history has its paramount moral issue, it could be, as Dr. Bok suggested in the conversation, that the 85/15% situation is the moral issue of our time as perhaps slavery was the issue in our nation 100 years ago. The basic presupposition in this proposal is that great leadership for tomorrow is forged out of first hand exposure to the crucial human issues of the day.

ICA

3. The Institute of Cultural Affairs is an intra-global research and development, training and demonstration group concerned with the human factor in world development. Originally incorporated in the State of Illinois as a not-for-profit corporation, the Institute presently has headquarters in Brussels, Bombay, Chicago, Canberra, Hong Kong and Nairobi and is registered in some 20 nations. The ICA is supported by private foundations, corporations, concerned individuals, and by government departments and agencies on the federal, state and municipal levels.

Projects

4. Along with several other major programs, the ICA is engaged in comprehensive socio-economic development on the local level. Practically, this means initiating demonstration projects with a plan for replication built into them in rural villages. Currently, the Institute has 36 such projects in 19 different nations. The overall intent of the projects is to enable the villages to become self-sustaining and self-dependent and to nurture the self-confidence necessary for both. Toward this end a staff of both nationals and extra-nationals live and work with the local people for two years, actuating the locally designed programs which cover such arenas as nutrition, sanitation, immunization, functional education, family development, community organization, intensified agriculture, light industry and local commerce.

India

5. A major focus in the global demonstration projects is in the state of Maharashtra in India where there are 50,000,000 people and 35,000 rural villages. The ICA is experimenting with mass replication by setting up projects in each of the 25 districts of the state in 1977 and in each of the 232 counties by the following year. Twelve of these projects are already underway. A crucial component of the replication plan is a training school located in the first development project, the village of Maliwada in the Aurangabad district. Several thousand local people must be trained in the school over the next few years to serve as catalytic forces in the new projects. Over 300 trainees will have attended the eight week school by June 1st of this year. The school is highly functional, dealing with practical know-how through seminars, workshops, laboratories, site visits, work days, practical excursions and the like. Special emphasis is placed on methods of actuating plans, motivating people, and corporate action toward occasioning rapid social change. The school itself is an experiment in a new kind of education for developing people.

### III

Format

6. The practical proposal of the ICA relative to the above contextual statements is that the University and the Institute jointly experiment in providing direct creative contact between western students and third world local people. After the evaluation of the program by both parties, further discussion can take place relative to the future. Hopefully the experiment can begin in the current year of 1977. This first effort should be relatively small with 12 to 24 students. It should, no doubt, be limited to India because of the location of the Training School and because it is simpler to orchestrate such a venture within one country. Though the ICA is open to other time arrangements, the original thinking calls for one semester or 91 days in the field followed by a semester of weekly interdepartmental seminars on the university campus.

Field

7. The proposed 91 days in the field will be broken down as follows: 49 days with the local villagers in the Social Methods Training School in Maliwada; 21 days as an auxiliary assistant in one of the Maharashtra projects, living and working with the rural people; 14 days spent visiting other parts of Maharashtra and India; and finally, the remaining seven days will be spent in orientation, debriefing and travel. The ICA feels the time in the training school is most important relative to the inclusive intents of the experiment. The School will provide a supportive setting in which the Harvard students can adjust to a different culture, be trained in human development methods and be of direct service to the village people. The three weeks spent working in teams of two with villagers in other projects will be a dramatic impact upon both students and local people. The two weeks spent traveling in India will include excursions in Maharashtra and visits to the states of Andhra Pradesh, West Bengal and Uttar Pradesh. The one day of orientation and two days of evaluation will be held either in Bombay or at Harvard.

Seminar

8. The weekly seminar to be held on the campus during the following semester is essential to the whole experiment. It provides the corporate rational reflection on the personal experiences and insights without which the impact not only fades from the individual's operating memory but also leaves no objective residue for society at large. The seminar is the means of directly relating the students' encounters to all their other studies and activities at the University. It is recommended that each participant do background reading before the trip, keep a daily log while in the field and, at the conclusion of the field semester, write a brief paper that describes the experience and organizes the reactions and insights of the student.

9. The Robert F. Kennedy Memorial Foundation, long interested in the objectives of the experiment, has participated initially by sending two students, Mr. David Whelan and Mr. Mark Devins, from Massachusetts and Maryland respectively, to the Human Development Project in Maliwada, India. The two men related easily to the local people. The long hours they worked at tedious tasks made an incredible impact upon the villagers who went out of their way to care for the young men. The students were of significant assistance to the people of the village through their labor and its motivating effects and by their almost unconscious savoir-faire. At the same time, they were able to teach a variety of functional skills to the people. The most important contribution, however, was simply their objective presence. They were a sign that someone cared and that there is assistance available for the local level. This elicited a strange new confidence in the village people. As for the impact on the young men, their correspondence to the RFK Foundation indicates almost unbridled enthusiasm and deep appreciation for the experience. They specifically stress the expansion of their understanding of the actual world and the redefinition of their sense of responsibility for the future of the globe. A full report is in process by the young men in the form of a term paper for which they will receive credit from their respective schools.

Illustration

10. Beyond, yet closely related to the primary intent of the experiment and the anticipated impact on the personal history of the participating students, the experiment has other potential values of foundational significance. First, the experiment will be of direct and practical assistance to the deprived people of the world. It is one way for the 15% to share with the 85%. Second, the experiment provides needed outside personnel for the actuation of the Human Development Projects. Third, the experiment can be of assistance in furthering the image and communicating the concern of our nation. Obviously the approach of the experiment has to do with what the Peace Corps, USAID and other national efforts originally intended to accomplish. Fourth, the experiment may have to do with futuristic education. Perhaps it will enhance the image of Harvard University relative to the Humanities' concern with the whole world in the same manner in which the image of the technical schools has been enhanced. Also, it may contribute to a new approach to education wherein the academic and practical in the humanities are held together as they are in the sciences. Fifth, it may add a new dimension to the ongoing student movement of the last quarter of Century Twenty by providing for the 70's a focus of student concern that the protest movement provided in the 60's. This new dimension is one which provides practical ways of demonstrating the possibilities of the future as opposed to protesting the inadequacies of the past.

Results

Cost

11. The essential costs of the pilot experiment need to be kept at a minimum for the sake of possible future developments. The three months of field work in India is projected to cost \$1600 per student. This covers the round trip fare to India, estimated at \$1,000, plus \$600 for room and board during the 91 days, insurance fees, transportation costs within India and related operational expenses of the ICA. Other travel and personal expenses will be born by the individual student. If 12 students participate in the experiment, the overall cost is estimated at \$20,000 for the three months. Relative to the source of these funds, the ICA recommends that it is appropriate to the intent of the experiment for the students to assume at least one-fifth of the total cost, or \$4,000. Second, it is recommended that the remaining four-fifths, or \$16,000 be solicited from funding agencies through a proposal submitted by Harvard University together with the Institute of Cultural Affairs.