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STATEMENT ON
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
IN
THE SUDAN

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT IN THE SUDAN
PLANS AND PROGRAMMES

I. Introduction

Community development service has not yet been started on a national basis in the Sudan. During the last two years the Government has been considering the matter with a view to initiating such programmes. It has acquired the services of a United Nations Community Development expert to render advice on planning and administration of a national programme. Proposals for such a programme have been formulated, discussed at lower level and are now under consideration by the Government. These proposals include :-

- (a) The starting of four pilot projects and considering the Gezira Scheme social development activities - which will be discussed later - as a pilot Scheme of a special nature.
- (b) The setting up of a central organisation consisting of representatives of all service departments which will be called the National Community Development Committee.
- (c) The appointment of a national Community Development Officer.
- (d) The setting up of similar organisation at the province level.
- (e) The training of supervisory officers by the Ministry of Education.
- (f) The appointment of 50 village level workers to be given training by the Ministry of Education most likely in their proposed Fundamental Education Training Centre.

II. The Role so far played by various Government Service
Departments and Ministries.

So far various ministries and departments have, each in its own sphere, been carrying out that can be termed as community development e.g. the Ministry of Agriculture has made a start in agricultural extension service, the Ministry of Health has started the establishment of rural health centres, and the Cooperative Department has made efforts to establish Cooperative Societies in various parts of the Country. But the leading role in this respect has been played by the Ministry of Education which has as far back as 1944 started four schemes closely connected, viz :-

1. Village Improvement Scheme (1944)
2. Boys Clubs (1944)
3. Publications Bureau (1946)
4. Literacy Campaigns (1949)

Boys Clubs :-

These are primarily for ex-elementary schoolboys to encourage them to continue their education informally and to meet together in an organisation which seeks to develop sound qualities of character.

The organisation of these clubs is the joint responsibility of the Ministry of Education which provides the clubs with leaders (usually elementary schoolmasters, who are given a short training course for the purpose) and with games equipment and library books, and the local government councils which provide adequate premises and furniture for the club. They also pay for the maintenance and current expenditure. Boys who become

members are also required to pay nominal subscription.

There are at present 15 such clubs in the Country.

Publications Bureau :-

This organisation was established in order to meet the great need for suitable reading material for those boys and girls whose education ends at an early stage. Amongst its other functions it edits and publishes a youth magazine El Sibyan, which now has a fortnightly sale of about 18,000 copies and a monthly magazine, El Kubar, mainly for the benefit of adults who learn reading and writing in literacy classes. It is also responsible for the production of all literacy and follow-up booklets.

Literacy Work :-

The first experimental literacy campaign was conducted in 1949 by the authorities of the Institute of Education in Bakht er-Ruda. Later on a literacy officer was appointed by the Ministry of Education for each of the six provinces of the Country where Arabic is the mother tongue, to be responsible for conducting literacy campaigns in cooperation with the local government councils. Many local government councils, after having cooperated with the literacy officers in launching the initial campaign in their area, subsequently appointed their own officers to carry on the work.

The movement has not yet become a national one and the voluntary element in its organisation is very small. The lack of an adequate number of volunteers to teach illiterates particularly in the rural areas where

the percentage of illiteracy is greater, is a problem that faces workers in the field.

III. The Gezira Scheme :-

(a) Background :-

The Gezira Scheme is an irrigated area in the Republic of the Sudan. It covers about one million and a half acres and lies from 30 to 130 miles South of Khartoum, along the Blue Nile river. The scheme was started more than 30 years ago as a cotton production project to produce a cash crop for export to support the Country's budget. It has since become the back-bone of the finances of the Country as it provide about half the Country's revenue. To start with, the scheme was run on a tripartite partnership basis. The partners were : the State, which provided the capital and running costs of the dam and canal system and compulsorily rented the land from its owners; two British commercial companies, which provided capital for housing, factories, a light railway, land levelling and clearance, paid the supervisory staff and acted as commercial managers; and the tenant farmers who were responsible for the agricultural work.

Processing after harvest, transport and marketing were a joint charge on all partners and the profits were divided into the proportions: 40 per cent to the State, 40 per cent to the tenants and 20 per cent to the companies. The tenants, in addition to their share in the cotton profit, had free land and water to grow food and fodder crops which remained their own private property.

The population of the Gezira is about three quarters of a million living in over a thousand villages varying in size from a few score to 5000 and easily connected with each other except during the three to four months period of the rainy season.

(b) Nationalisation of the Scheme and the start of Social Development.

On the nationalisation of the Gezira Scheme, nine years ago, it was specified in the Gezira Scheme Ordinance (1950) that one of the duties to be discharged by the new Board would be, the promotion of the Social Development by any means having as a main object the benefit of the tenants and other persons living within the Scheme area, the assistance of Local Government authorities and other bodies, in providing such services, and where it thinks fit, the provision of such services by the Board. By so doing, it is hoped to help the Gezira people to meet newly-created social needs of an economically progressive area, and to find solutions to various social problems, which are a direct result of the large scale growing of cotton in a concentrated area. It is noteworthy that the Social Development Department's activities do not offer the Gezira people spoon to mouth feeding, but aim at putting them on the right track of self help. The Board's annual allocation to social development services is, as laid down in the Gezira Scheme Ordinance, 2% of the net cotton proceeds (about a third of a million Sudanese pounds).

For the discharge of the wide duties of the Social Development Department a Gezira Local Committee has been constituted as a link between the Board and local interests. It consists of 26 members, 10 of whom

represent the tenants, 5 ministries of Irrigation, Education, Agriculture, Animal Resources and Health, 6 Local Government Councils, and 2 Sudan Gezira Board and 2 other interests in the area - The Governor of the Province, who is an ex-officio Director of the Board is also the Chairman of the Committee.

The main function of the Gezira Local Committee is to make recommendations for the allocation of Social Development funds, as well as to give advice on matters relating to the wellbeing of the people of the irrigated area. All such recommendations are submitted to another body, the Social Development Committee, consisting of 3 members of the Board of Directors, which after scrutiny passes them, for policy and budget allocations, as resolutions, for approval by the Board of Directors. It is this latter Committee that supervises the execution of the approved programme, by the Social Development Officer.

Since its creation in 1950, the Social Development Department started rendering to the Gezira people Social Services, within the broad line of frame-work set in the Gezira Scheme Ordinance and referred to above.

Health :-

In order to meet a most urgent social need of the tenants and the other inhabitants of the Gezira for an adequate supply of pure water for domestic purposes instead of their dependence on the impure water from irrigation canals, the Board is undertaking a programme of digging deep-bores out of social development funds. The programme is executed with the

•••operation of the Government's Drilling Section who do the drilling against payment and the Board's construction and installations unit finishes the job.

Up to the end of June 1959, over a hundred and forty water installations were functioning in villages. Once completed, these wells are handed over to the local government councils to be responsible for their operation and maintenance.

The Board gave financial assistance from its social development funds for the residual spraying of villages against malaria which has almost been eradicated from the Gezira and also built two tuberculosis wards and a clinic. Other grants for various health projects such as bedded dispensaries, dressing stations and anti-bilharzia measures were made.

Education :-

The Ministry of Education adult education male and female teams working in the Gezira receive assistance in the form of provision of housing and transport. There are 13 men and 33 women working in the Gezira. The men try to stimulate the villagers to take the initiative in improving their villages. They attend meetings of village councils, give evening talks sometimes illustrated by film-~~strips~~ shows and encourage sports for the youth. Each man is responsible for a group of villages varying from 10 to fifteen. They hold civics courses for prominent villages in which they give lectures on the history and set up of the Scheme, outline history and geography of the Sudan, Local Government in the Sudan, endemic-diseases in the area and the country. They also lead discussions on topics

such as cooperation, old customs and traditions with a view to effecting the desired change of attitude and outlook.

In order to meet a felt need of the inhabitants of the Gezira, the Ministry of Education and the Social Development Department started six artisan classes in various parts of the Scheme area in cooperation with the Rural Councils so as to train some of the sons of tenants in masonry and carpentry and thus provide the Gezira villages with the required number of trained artisans.

The success of the International Work Camp held in one of the villages of the Gezira during 1957, and sponsored by the Ministry of Education, the Sudan Gezira Board Social Development Department, A Swedish organisation and one of the Rural Councils resulted in the revival of the old tradition of group work known locally as "Nafeer". A number of village social and sports clubs have been built by their own members, thus contributing both money and manual work.

A team of women welfare workers has equally been engaged in health education, house keeping and mother and child welfare. They hold classes in villages for selected women, each class comprising 30 women. Tangible results could be seen in Gezira village homes as a result of the work of the female team and the Gezira people are very appreciative of this work and cooperate well with those responsible for it.

Two training farms which give practical training to sons of tenants with a view to equipping them to become competent future tenants are run

by the Social Development Department. The duration of the course is one year and the annual intake is 80.

A Recreation section encourages sports particularly football which is very popular. The officer in charge holds classes for training of referees and sells football equipment to teams at cost price. He also helps in the arrangement of competitions and the organisation of sports clubs. Two mobile cinemas give film-shows in villages, both educational and recreational.

The Board finances out of social development funds a weekly agricultural and cultural newspaper which has a wide measure of independence.

Agriculture :-

The Horticultural Section assists village councils and individuals in establishing fruit and vegetable gardens. The assistance takes the form of advice, provision against payment of fruit trees and vegetable seedlings. Three large nurseries are maintained for the purpose. Up to the end of June 1959, 160 permanent fruit gardens have been established, the area of each being on the average three acres. General supervision is given to 5,000 acres of rotational vegetable gardens which are maintained for nine months of the year.

In order to encourage the tenant-farmers to improve both the quality and quantity of their vegetables, competitions in vegetable growing are being held annually and prizes, both in cash and silver cups, are being given to the first three winners in each of the ten agricultural Groups into

which the area of the Scheme is divided. Furthermore, a horticultural show in which the tenants participate by displaying their vegetables, has been held annually by the Horticultural Section. Encouraging prizes, mostly agricultural tools, are also being given to the winners at these shows.

A ten year plan starting in 1951/52 is in operation for production of firewood and building timber badly needed by the Gezira inhabitants. Twenty eight forest plots covering 2,749 acres were planted up to June 1959.

Research and Experiments :-

These projects have a special purpose and are not connected with technical and agricultural research and experiments carried out by the Board for the purpose of improving cotton yield. A farming experiment is carried out in one of the villages to determine whether over a period of years, an agricultural system can be derived which broadens the basis of farming to enable a tenant's family to maintain an acceptable standard of living without having to rely so extensively on cotton. Unorthodox crops are grown and unorthodox rotations are tried out. Experiments are conducted with new farming machinery, e.g., tractors, threshers and balers to cheapen costs, prevent waste, and conserve fodder for animals.

A Building Research section was set up during 1951 for experimenting with local and imported building materials on Gezira soil and weather with a view to finding out the cheapest way of building decent houses. The aim behind establishing the section was to raise the standard of houses

in Gezira villages. For this reason an improved housing scheme was contemplated and a sum set aside from social development funds for giving out housing loans to tenants. The scheme's implementation is still subject to the settlement of matters connected with village planning, land settlement, refund of loans, etc. The section was suppressed at the end of 1956 after investigations with materials and structural methods in connection with the building of better houses for inhabitants have been made.

Special staff for conducting social research are also employed against social development funds as it is essential to keep social changes and trends under constant observation and to have the social development plans based on proper study. A report on diet in the Gezira was prepared and another on village social survey. Several other pamphlets were also published.

Conclusion :-

Grants are also paid out of social development funds for various stages of education and for visits by tenants to other parts of the country and abroad.

It is appropriate to mention that the main aim behind rendering these services is to stimulate the people in the area to take more interest and make greater efforts in the social development of their own villages. The guiding principle has been to offer help to those who take the initiative and who are ready to help themselves. The response of the people in the Gezira has, on the whole, been encouraging. They have contributed generously in money towards building of schools, mosques, and social clubs. They have also made some progress in improving their houses and villages as a whole.

Date :-

7/9/1959.

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