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FIELD EDUCATION DEVELOPMENT

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**ACTION
PROPOSALS**

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CEMAS – what is it?

- CEMAS is a project within the International Co-operative Alliance working on the improvement of materials and methods for cooperative education and training in developing countries, with particular reference to the needs of members and committee members
- a clearing house for information and advice on education and training
- a production unit, producing prototype materials, manuals and reference booklets
- an ideas bank for the use of all cooperative educators and trainers

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Objective

The objective of this booklet is to enable the reader

- to organise the notes from the Situation Study and the Performance Problem Analysis in such a way that it facilitates a structured consideration of what remedial actions to take
- to draw up proposals for action plans
- to arrange for appropriate decisions to be taken on these proposals
- to draw up detailed action plans on the decided remedial actions

The objectives relate to Phase 3 of the work process for cooperative field work.

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Introduction

You, who are now starting to read this booklet, have already studied other elements in the CEMAS "Field Education Development" training pack. Therefore, you are by now very familiar with the basic recommendations made in the material you have read. These recommendations are, as you will recall:

● A cooperative Field Worker should apply a **methodical work process** when dealing with a cooperative.

In **PHASE 1** he should carry out a Situation Study;

In **PHASE 2** he should carry out Performance Problem Analysis of such problems as the Situation Study has indicated;

In **PHASE 3** he should

- (1) study the notes from the first two phases and organise them;
- (2) consider what remedial actions ought to be taken;
- (3) draw up proposals for action plans;
- (4) arrange so that the proposals will be discussed by the appropriate people, and decisions made regarding actions to take;
- (5) draw up the final detailed action plans, on the basis of the decisions taken;
- (6) sort out the actions which remain his responsibility and integrate them in his Annual Work Plan;

In **PHASE 4** he should
design appropriate strategies for the remedial actions;
start the implementation of those actions that were allocated to him;
check that actions allocated to others are also being implemented.

In **PHASE 5** he should monitor the progress of the **Action Plans** and evaluate to what extent it has made an impact on the problems they are supposed to remove or reduce;
if necessary the remedial actions should be adjusted or redesigned.

The aim of this booklet is, however, to provide you with advice related to Phase 3. That is why we have placed that phase in a box (see above). You will note that there are six different steps of actions listed in Phase 3.

The booklet is therefore organised in six similar parts, each part with comments and advice on the corresponding step of action.

Part 1

Organising the notes

Let us now assume that you are a Cooperative Field Worker who is supposed to look after a number of cooperative societies. You have realised that each cooperative has got its own individual set of problems. Some problems might be unique to one cooperative, because of some special circumstances, whereas other problems tend to exist in several or even in all of the cooperatives. Anyhow, you saw the need to carry out a **Situation Study** for each individual cooperative in order to deal with its problems more effectively.

The Situation Study disclosed, most likely, some **problems of performance** in each cooperative. Therefore you looked at the causes of these problems systematically, undertaking a **Performance Problem Analysis** of each one of them.

You are now back at your office, prepared to sit down and sort out your notes and consider what remedial actions to take, and to organise these into Action Plans. There must be one separate Action Plan for each cooperative, composed of the remedial actions that are needed in each case and one Work Plan for yourself.

What information do you have at this stage, which needs to be sorted out ?

You would have:

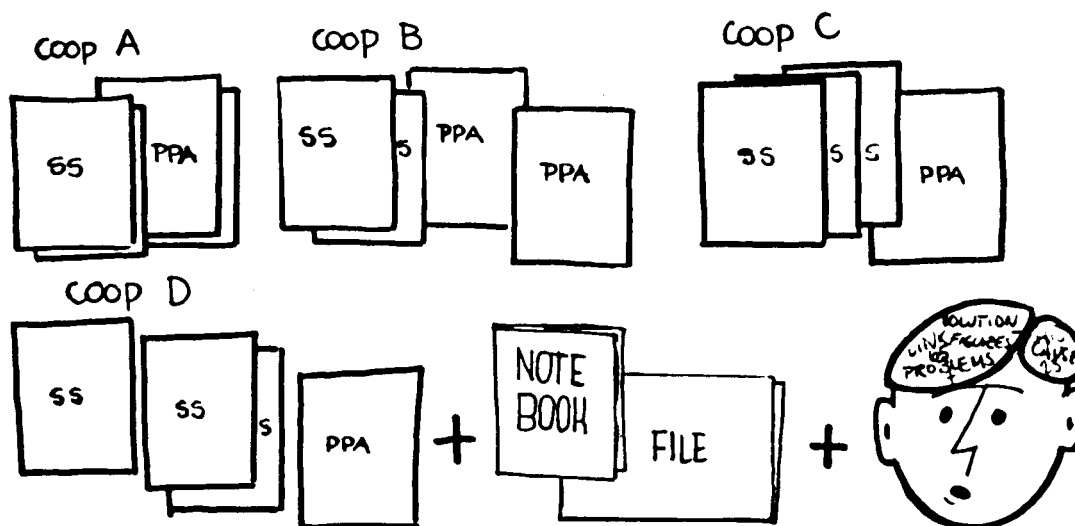
- A set of "Situation Study Reports" for each cooperative, provided you followed the recommendations in "The Situation Study" – the section "Use a standardised report form".
- The reports you made to your superiors in connection with the Situation Study.
- Perhaps one or two other reports, as a result of finding additional problems, when doing the Performance Problem Analysis.
- To add to each set, you would have your notes from the Performance Problem Analysis, i.e. the individual 'PPA Forms' that are described in the Green module in that particular training pack, and the 'Analysis Summary Form' described in the Blue module.

We have recommended that you should use standard forms at various stages of the work process. You could perhaps easily get the impression that we are trying to make Cooperative Field Workers into bureaucrats, spending most of their time on preparing forms, filling in forms and filing forms. But nothing could be more wrong !

A CFW using standard forms will in fact be writing **much less** than a colleague only using 'conventional' notes. He will save plenty of time in the long run. And he will moreover be systematically guided in his note-taking. He will get the most important information in a very concentrated form, easy to refer to and organise. That is the point with the reports and forms we are suggesting that you should use. They will help you to see quickly and clearly what you have to deal with, and enable you to proceed with confidence. So do not be afraid of forms !

In addition to this concentrated information, you will, of course, also have:

- Other written notes that you made as you carried out the studies, and perhaps also some other relevant documents.
- Information that you have stored in your head. We always carry an enormous amount of unwritten information with us. It would not be safe to rely solely upon this in the kind of job we are discussing here. That is why you should put the essence of such information in writing.



Now you have your material. But you want to organise it a bit more, because it is still in the form of bits and pieces of varying nature and significance. You would start by considering each problem in the light of the discussion in "The Work Process". (See section "Problems and causes of problems").

You will recall that it was pointed out there that there can be many aspects of any one problem. It would therefore be useful to be able to overview in one single "chart" not only all the problems a cooperative is experiencing, but also the various aspects of them. You can, in fact, do this quite easily. It is much less complicated than you would think. And again you will find, that you will actually be saving time and trouble, and gain in confidence !

Just take a sheet of paper and a ruler, and prepare a chart similar to the one we are using as an example here. (Well, you might find that you have to stick two sheets of paper together or use an extra large one, for there are quite a number of columns in the chart, as you will note). You will need one chart for each cooperative. So cutting a stencil and duplicating a standard chart form might not be a bad idea.

You are now ready to ask yourself a series of questions about each problem of each cooperative and enter the answers into the appropriate part of the chart. The answers should in most cases be already noted in the reports you are studying, otherwise you should consider them now. You may not have answers to some of the questions or you may feel that the questions are not really relevant in each case. That does not matter, but the rule is "The more, the better".

The Hillside case

Now, take a look at our example of a chart in respect of the Hillside Cooperative Society. The questions you should ask yourself are in the same order as seen in the headings of the columns:

1. "What are the problems." Note them down very briefly in order of priority. A few words are sufficient in most cases.
2. "What references do I have ?" For quick identification, make a note of the reports in which the problem is recorded. ("SS" means "Situation Study Report", "PPA" means "Performance Problem Analysis Report").
3. "What is the order of priority ?". See page 21 in "The Situation Study". Arrange the problems in order of priority on your chart. Then you know that your immediate interest should mainly be concentrated at the top of the chart.
4. "Is the cause internal ?". Tick this column if you have analysed that the cause of the problem is to be found within the cooperative itself.
5. "Is the cause external ?". Tick if the cause is rooted elsewhere. (Note: Sometimes, you will have reasons to tick both columns).
6. "Is the problem special to this cooperative ?". Tick if it is a matter of a problem only found in that cooperative.
7. "Is it a common problem ?". Tick if it is a problem which can be found in other cooperatives as well.
8. "Are people aware of the problem ?". Go back and read "Perception of Problems" in "The Work Process", page 9. If it is a matter of a problem which has not been recognised as such by the people in the cooperative for one reason or another, a tick in this column signals that there is a complicating factor, which must be dealt with.
9. "Is there a lack of know-how or skills ?". Tick if your Performance Problem Analysis has shown you that insufficient know-how or skills are some of the causes of a problem.
10. "Are people's attitudes a part of the problem ?". Tick if there is a problem of attitudes.
11. "Is it a technical problem ?". Tick if the problem appears to be of a purely technical nature, where know-how, skills or attitudes do not come into it.
12. Sometimes, remarks of only a few words can prove helpful.

As you can see, there are more columns in the chart. We will return to them when discussing remedial actions ! We will also comment on the example shown, so as to elucidate further the usefulness of this way of organizing your notes.

SURVEY OF THE PROBLEM SITUATION IN HILLSIDE COOP SOCIETY

AS AT 17/11/1981

PROPOSED REMEDIAL ACTIONS

1. PROBLEM	2. REF.	3. PRIORITY	4. INTERNAL CAUSE	5. EXTERNAL CAUSE	6. SPECIAL	7. COMMON	8. NOT PERCEIVED	9. KNOW-HOW/SKILL	10. ATTITUDE	11. TECHNICAL	12. REMARKS	13. INSTRUCTIONAL		14. NON-INSTRUCTIONAL	15. ACTION BY / REFERRED TO
												SKILL TRAINING	EDUCATION		
1. Grading of produce	SS1 PPA	1	✓		✓		✓	✓	✓			Demonstration Packets	Take free 1	Check central procedure	ZE + Committee
2. Longish bag deliveries	SS3	1		✓		✓				✓				Deal with Agrarade re with to Agrarade	Marketing Officer
3. Accounts late and in disorder	SS4 DPA	1	✓		✓*	✓		✓			* See problem 4	College course (Special course)		Employing assistant to S/P	ZE to discuss with Irpe College Union Manager and/or Dept. Ext. Office to approach the Hillside Committee to discuss the matter
4. Secretary/Manager not-traded with write	DPA	1	✓		✓		✓					Training course with Committee			ZE when the issue of complication is resolved
5. Straw application insecticide	SS5 PPA	2	✓			✓		✓						Employing letter procedure and files Working group	Chairman Union Credit Committee (see Agrarade primary meeting)
6. Credit procedure and forms	PPA	2		✓					✓					Dig ditch	Sec. Committee/Assistant Works Department
7. Striding of stones	SS2	2			✓					✓					
8. Long improvement	PPA	3	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓						ZE + Agricultural Ext. Department

Demonstrating
short courses of
from farm shows

Open to this in
all members
educational activities

Part 2

Considering remedial actions*

You have now a number of such "problem survey charts" in front of you on your desk. The main problems with their main characteristics are shown there.

Now you have to consider what to do about them. What actions should be taken in order to remove the problems or at least reduce them in size? Of course you have been thinking about remedial actions, and discussed them with various people, all along the preliminary research you have undertaken. Some actions are obvious, while other actions have just been suggested and noted in your various reports. But in order to work efficiently and effectively, when you have a number of cooperatives to look after, you need to see the whole picture, before drawing up your proposals.

Types of remedial actions

Just as it is very helpful to think – and discuss! – in terms of different **types of problems** (see "The Work Process"), so it is useful to think and discuss in terms of different **types of actions**. Clarifying the thinking by moving from the general to the specific is like sharpening a knife! You cut through the problem knots ever so much more easily.

Instructional and non-instructional actions

There is a most important and useful distinction to make. Get used to talking about "instructional actions" and "non-instructional actions" and "educate" other people you are dealing with to also get used to these terms.

Instructional	=	Training to provide know-how and skills, irrespective of what form the training takes. Education to provide knowledge and understanding.
Non-instructional	=	Any other remedial action that does not involve training and education.

In the Hillside case – see the chart! – problems 1, 3, 5, and 8 require instructional actions. Problems 2, 4, and 7 should be attended to by non-instructional actions. Problem 6 requires non-instructional action for a start, but instructional action in the form of training people in the new credit procedures will be needed in due course.

* In the booklet "The Work Process" the term "Remedial action" is defined as "Any action taken for the purpose of remedying a problem situation"; in other words to eliminate the problem or reduce its harmful effect. The term "solution" could also be used.

Why is this so very important ? If you have ever made a study of cooperative field work in general, you would soon discover the reason. You would find that a very common weakness is vagueness on this point. When deciding on "What should be done about this problem", it seems that it is often too hastily and uncritically assumed that some form of instructional actions will cure all the ills. When searching for remedial actions, "Education", in fact, is sometimes a sort of a trap into which it is very easy to fall. But it can also be the other way round: Some non-instructional action is decided upon and the necessary supporting instructional action is neglected !

Let us use the Hillside case again, to illustrate this point. Study the examples at the end of the booklet "The Situation Study" and you will recognise the 'Empty bags problem'. Note that one of the harmful effects of the problem was that members turned to other buyers, and relations with the society were soured. Without proper analysis of that situation, it could have been easy to say: "Well, we need to educate these people about loyalty ! ". An instructional action had been chosen, but it would not have changed the real cause of the problem. And we have already indicated that the non-instructional action proposed in the case of problem 6 in the 'Problem Survey Chart' will need a supporting instructional action.

Try instead the more specific approach and ask: "Do we need an instructional action in this case ? Will it help to remedy this particular problem ? ". If you make a clear distinction between instructional and non-instructional actions from the very beginning, you have removed a great deal of vagueness and thus you are better able to make the right choice.

Actions by whom?

There is another way of looking at a remedial action, when it has become clear through problem analysis what sort of action ought to be taken: "Should I, the Field Worker take this action ? Do I have the opportunity, the ability or the authority to take this particular action ? If not, who is the person who should deal with it ? ".

It is usually not much of a problem to determine what the Field Worker should do. His duties are usually known. Actions to be taken on the spot, within cooperatives themselves, are usually his responsibility, although not necessarily all of them. If he is a Field Education Officer, he would take care of the instructional actions, except those that are to be taken care of, say, by the Cooperative College. But you, as the Field Worker, have also got a duty to see to it that other possible remedial actions are properly considered and discussed, so that these actions are taken and are not overlooked or neglected. You fulfill your duty by **reporting** all identified problems, problems, and stating which remedial actions you deem to be within your responsibility and capacity and which actions you propose should be taken by other people. In other words, you provide the actual decision makers and executors with information, based on a certain amount of research. Whenever possible and appropriate, you also make direct proposals to them based on the same research. When considering remedial actions, you should therefore not push such other actions aside with the excuse that they are not really within your competence and that you should not interfere in other people's responsibilities. You are the one who now has an overview of the state of affairs within the cooperatives and from that platform, you should try to assist these other people as much as possible.

“Single-coop” actions and “Many-coop” actions

While sorting out various proposed actions into organised plans, it is also good to be clear in one’s own mind what actions concern only one cooperative – “single-coop actions” as they are called in the heading – and what actions need to be taken in several cooperatives – “many-coop actions”. The latter are either actions by which all the relevant cooperatives are being reached by one specific action (e.g. an instruction course attended by the appropriate persons from each of the cooperatives) or some specific action which is repeated in all the cooperatives (e.g. an especially designed “member information day”).

Also this aspect is very clearly seen in the Survey Chart. Ticks in the “Special” column indicate single-coop actions. Ticks in the “Common” column indicate many-coop actions.

The importance of linking

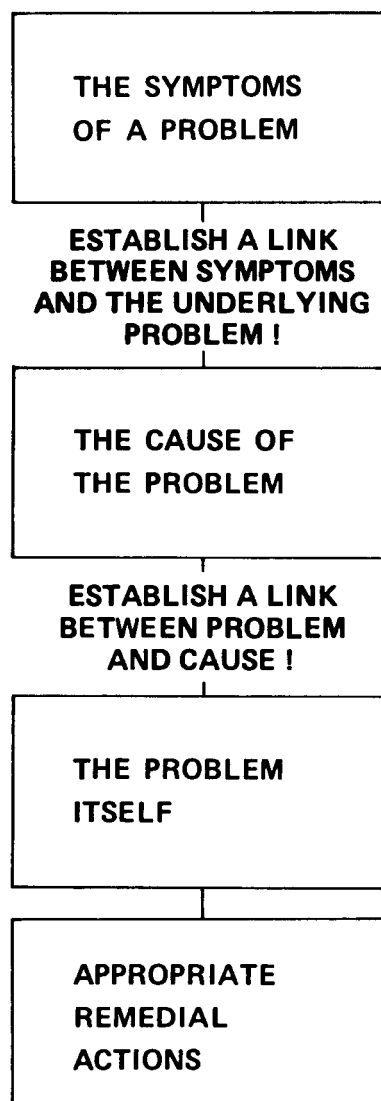
We cannot leave the subject of considering remedial actions without stressing again the importance of establishing the correct links between symptoms, problems, causes and remedial actions. Let us use a diagram to illustrate this point, which has been made over and over again in the material you have been reading:

Usually, you first meet with the symptoms of something being **wrong somewhere**.
(E.g. “Members do not deliver their produce to the cooperative”).

What is the reason behind the symptoms ? There must be **some problem**. Identify it !
(E.g. “Payments are delayed, because of shortage of cash”).

What is the cause of the problem ? Analyse and find out ! (E.g. “Produce Collection Reports are frequently submitted late, hence a delay in release of cash from the bank”).

The very important final link is that of selecting **appropriate** remedial actions, directed at the cause of the problem.
(E.g. “Improve procedure of submitting Produce Collection Reports”).



When you are reading about linking here, it probably seems so obvious to you, that you might wonder why we are repeatedly stressing this point. The reason for that is that the "linking rule" is far too often neglected in cooperative field work. So much of field work efforts are wasted again and again, just because of this. The real causes of a problem are very often not properly identified, and therefore, something else is often believed to be the cause. If the cause of a problem is wrongly identified, a remedial action which might be well selected for that, will fail to produce results.

Once again, here is our strongest advice to you : **"Always try to make sure that you have linked symptoms, problems, causes and appropriate remedial actions together correctly, for only then will your action plans achieve their objectives ! "**

The " Problem Survey Chart " again

Now back to the "Problem Survey Chart" and the remaining columns on it. They are quite self-explanatory, in the light of the foregoing comments, as you can see. The problem survey on the left-hand half of the chart points towards appropriate remedial actions. Note, for example, how the ticks in the "Know-how/Skills" and "Attitude" columns almost automatically demand a response in one of the "Instructional" columns. (Remember the question: "Do we need instructional action here ? ").

Let us now quickly run through the example with a few remarks:

You have probably already recognised the five problems in the Hillside Cooperative Society which were used to illustrate how to write Situation Study Reports in "The Situation Study". Refresh your memory by looking them up ! They are problems 1, 2, 3, 5 and 7 on the chart. When the Field Education Officer, Z. Ecksman, did the Performance Problem Analysis as a follow-up of the Situation Study, he identified three other major problems, i.e. 4, 6 and 8 which ought to be considered when the Hillside case is up for discussion.

Problem

1. Grading of produce

<p><i>Practice your skill in writing Performance Objectives on this case !</i></p>
--

Remarks

Classed as priority 1. The cause is internal and, as it happens, special to the Hillside Co-op in Ecksman's area. It is not perceived as a problem by the members. The immediate cause is the inability to do the grading properly. It is a skill problem, but the PPA also disclosed something else: the members know about different grades as such, but they do not like grading. They believe that they will be losing money if they accept the idea that there is anything else but the highest paid quality. It is therefore also an attitude problem. So Ecksman proposes to arrange a demonstration of grading techniques in Hillside and to put up posters issued by the Marketing Board for guidance. But he has also to deal with the attitude problem. Members must be made to understand that the real fact is that they will lose money if they go on mixing the grades, and they must understand why that is so. Ecksman thinks that this could best be done through a small "task force" of committee members talking to members at various occasions, rather than somebody coming in from outside to do this job. He intends to have a session with the task force, to discuss arguments and decide on examples to use. Finally, the problem also indicates that the control of grading is not as it should be, when produce is received from the members. Ecksman takes a note that he must check on this, and talk to the Secretary/Manager.

2. **Empty bag deliveries** Also a high priority. Cause is definitely external. It is common to other cooperatives as well. A technical problem, with remedial action noted.
3. **Accounts** The PPA shows that the Secretary/Manager is uncertain about some accounting procedures. He needs re-training. The problem is a common one and Ecksman considers to discuss whether the Cooperative College could help, by organizing a special intensive training course for "his secretaries", with emphasis on some identified weaknesses in their book-keeping skills. But it is also a special problem in Hillside, listed as problem 4. Priority 1.
4. **Secretary overloaded with work** The PPA identifies what is probably the main cause. The Secretary/Manager is overloaded with work. He simply has not got the time to sit down and concentrate on book-keeping. He definitely needs an assistant to help him. The situation is really not fully understood by the committee, and Ecksman thinks that somebody in a more authoritative position should meet the committee and discuss the position with them.
5. **Loan applications** The PPA identifies two causes: one, as is to be expected, is a skill problem.

Write a Performance Objective !

Neither the members nor the committee fully understand the procedure. So training sessions with the committees of the societies having this problem are necessary. But Ecksman realised that there is another cause at the bottom of it all.
6. **Credit procedures and forms** The procedures and the forms used are unnecessarily complicated. They could easily be much simplified and would serve their purpose even better if that was done. If so, the training need would be greatly reduced. Ecksman's proposal is that a special working group should deal with this matter.
7. **Flooding of stores** A straightforward problem with a given solution.
8. **Crop improvement** While studying the "grading problem", it became clear that the quality of the crop could be much improved. This problem was highlighted in that context. It is a basic problem requiring long-term solutions of an instructional nature: both skill training (how to produce better crops) and education to bring about motivation.

Write Performance Objectives !

Now please observe in the Hillside case an important message to you. You will agree that our remarks are as brief as they can reasonably be, and yet there is more than a full page of text.

But Ecksman has produced an overview of the situation in Hillside, to facilitate planning considerations and reporting, using only 123 words and 27 ticks in the columns ! 15 words on average for each problem !

Think seriously about the advantage of this ! If you as a Field Worker, have got ten or perhaps even twenty or even more cooperatives in your area of responsibility, as we believe many readers of this booklet have, would it not be good to be able to go to the "Problem Surveys" file and instantly see the situation in each of these cooperatives ? It would help you to plan your job better and hence help you to do a better job. It is a simple as that. Try it out and see for yourself ! You may find it useful to follow our model or adapt it for your specific purposes.

Part 3

Proposing action plans

Having laid out the problem analysis nicely, as described in Part 2, with ideas about remedial actions, the time has come to report to the decisionmakers, “the bosses”, and to present action proposals to them. But why proposals ? Why not prepare ready-made action plans and just ask for approval of them ? Of course, there need not be much difference in the end between the proposals and the action plans, but there are some good reasons for starting with proposals:

- 1. Authority and responsibility**

As a Cooperative Field Worker you may have a certain amount of authority delegated to you, but when it comes to remedial actions you will almost invariably find that some of those actions you have identified are outside that field of authority. You should never overstep your boundaries and be seen as if you were trying to assume responsibilities that you have actually not got. That would not make for good working relationships. Some people would of course be downright offended.

Proposing actions is another thing. You would indeed be expected to do so. As we said in the last sentence of the sub-section on “Actions by whom ! ” on page 9: “You are the one who now has the overview of the state of affairs in the cooperatives and from that platform you should try to assist as much as possible”.
- 2. Resource management**

Many proposed actions require input of resources, – money, manpower, etc. – for their implementation. You should work out estimates, using common sense when doing so. These estimates, however, must be considered by those who are responsible for the overall resource management.
- 3. Testing the ideas**

The proposals are **your** proposals (although they are likely to be the result of discussions at earlier stages), and are not necessarily the only or the best alternatives. As proposals they will be tested in proper discussions and then perhaps amended and improved.
- 4. New ideas**

Discussions of **proposals** keep the door wide open for new ideas for remedial actions. The door is left invitingly open. Proposals act as a stimulant for discussion, whereas a cut-and-dried plan asking for approval tends to arouse a sort of negative reaction. Criticism of the plan becomes more important than the search for possible alternatives and additions. (Do you recognise the situation ?).
- 5. Involvement**

Last but not least, constructive discussions of proposals where people feel that they are being asked for their opinions, create a feeling of involvement and joint responsibility for the finally agreed upon plans. Much more so when they are not merely discussing, but taking part in the decisionmaking.

Reporting and proposing

Please note : Conditions differ from place to place, from country to country, and the status and role and the actual tasks of the Cooperative Field Workers vary so greatly, that it would not be possible to assume a standard situation in an advisory manual of this kind, distributed worldwide. The following remarks on reporting and proposing should therefore be seen as general advice and hints, which may or may not match your individual situation.

Whoever your “bosses”, colleagues and other people are, who should receive your report for further discussion, there are two questions facing you here and now:

- “What information should be included in the report ? ”
- “In what form should I present the information ? ”.

Let us have a look at these points.

What information?

For each cooperative you are reporting on you should state:

- The problems you have identified;
- The causes of these problems, as identified by you;
- Your proposals regarding appropriate remedial actions;
- Your estimates of what resources – manpower and money – would be needed for the implementation of the proposed actions.

You have already considered problems, causes and proposals and noted them in your “Problem Survey Charts”. It will be easy for you to transfer that information into a formal report. What still needs to be done is to estimate the resource requirements: How much of your own time and the time of other people will be needed ? What will it cost in terms of money, and from what financial sources do you propose that it should come ? You need to make such estimates for each problem in your Survey Charts, and then add up the totals.

The answers you arrive at may very well present a dilemma to you and also to the people you are going to discuss them with. You may find that both time and money requirements estimated by you have gone beyond reasonable limits. The totals could be seen as unrealistic. If your own effective working time is, say, 250 days per year and you find that you have estimated a total requirement of 300 days, then some serious considerations have to be made. The sum total of financial requirements could also turn out to be far too high. What can be done ?

Well, first of all, you could make a further check in order to see whether you have overestimated somewhere. Maybe some less resource-demanding action could be considered in some cases. But if the totals are persistently high, **stick to the estimates you have made !** Do not try to present more acceptable proposals by removing problems and proposed actions from your lists, thereby reducing the estimates. The real problems remain. It is your duty to report: "These are the problems. If we want to do something about them, this is the cost in time and money". That is the fact the "bosses" will have to face up to. Nothing is gained by trying to escape from reality. There will then have to be discussion about priorities, and that is in any case a very healthy exercise. The necessity to allocate more resources to certain problem solving actions, e.g. to increase the education/training budget, might also come out very clearly from your reporting.

In what form?

If you have followed our recommendations, you have Situation Study Reports, PPA Reports, other notes and finally a "Problem Survey Chart" for each cooperative. Either exactly as our models or some modified versions of them. You could of course distribute copies of some of these reports, but they are mainly meant for your own reference. They are reference material for your own files, as support to your memory and as facilitators for further onward reporting.

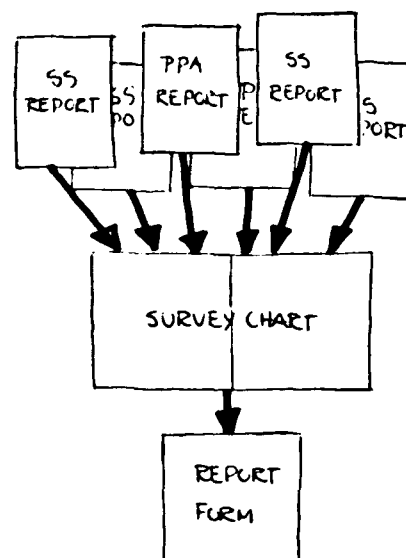
Our recommendation is that you should transfer the necessary information from the "Problem Survey Chart" to another report form, adding the estimates. Your immediate reaction to this recommendation might be: "Oh, no ! Not another form !". But do not rush to hasty conclusions.

A form or report that serves its purpose and serves it well, is a help and not a hindrance ! The little extra time it takes to fill it in, is very soon recovered many times over by savings of time later on, and by bringing about greater efficiency.

Your basic information is contained in the basic reports – themselves very brief and concentrated.

The information is summarised in a "Survey Chart" – easy to study. And easy to prepare !

For reporting and discussion purposes you transfer the information to a report form. You have it all in a nutshell in the end !



On the opposite page, you will see such a report form. Have a look at it and consider whether this is the type of model you could use as it is, or in some modified form. You will certainly agree that it is not a complicated construction which is difficult to understand.

Cooperative: HILLSIDE Date of report: 10/1/1984

Prepared by: Z. ECKSMANN

PROBLEM:	PRIORITY:	CAUSE:	PROPOSED ACTION:	ACTION BY:	RESOURCE ESTIMATES			
					TIME (=DAYS)		MONEY	
					OWN	OTHERS	AMOUNT	FROM
Grading of produce unsatisfactory	1	(a) Lack of know-how (b) Negative attitude to idea of grading	Demonstration. Posters "Task force" to discuss with members	Ecksmann Marketing Board Ecksmann Committee	2 x 1/2 day 1 day for meeting with committee	M. B. Officer 2 x 1/2 day	100.- (100.-) 300.-	Travelling vote Mark. Board Hillside Committee Allowance
Empty bag deliveries	1	Supplier fails to deliver in time	Final talk with supplier Change supplier ;	Marketing Officer				
Accounts late and in disorder	1	Secretary uncertain on some points, but mainly as below	Re-training on identified weaknesses, together with secretaries from other coops	Ecksmann Coop College	1 day for discussion with College		200.- 400.- 400.-	Travelling vote Hillside Educ. Fund Union training Fund
As above, plus administrative weaknesses	1	The work-load is too much for one person	Employ assistant	Union manager + DCO discuss with Hillside committee	Manager DCO 1/2 day each		50.-	Petrol vote
Too many loan applications rejected	2	(a) Members do not apply correctly (b) Committee taking bureaucratic attitude; not knowing the correct procedures themselves	Training sessions with committee, on new revised forms	Ecksmann	2 x 1 day		100.- 200.-	Train. vote Comm. Allowance
Credit procedure and forms too complicated	2		Working group to simplify	Chairman, Union Cred. Committee				
Flooding of stores	2	Small river overflowing	Dig ditch	Committee members Works Dept. expert	Voluntary ; 1 day		600.- (for tools) (100.-)	Union Service Dpt. Work Dept.
Coop improvement is required	3	Lack of know-how and motivation	Demonstrations. Short courses at Farm Training Centers	Ecksmann Agric. Ext. Dept.	3 days spread over the year	Ag. Ext. Off same	300.- 1200.- (course fees)	Travelling vote Hillside Educ. Fund

You recognise the standard chain of “problem – cause – action”. In most cases, you should be able to state these in a few words only, just as in the example. It looks very brief by any standards. If the usual report you know is of several tightly typed pages, you are certainly going to wonder how people will be able to understand this report that has not got a mass of detailed information. But you should not forget :
not forget :

- (a) That those who will receive your report are experienced persons, very familiar with all aspects within cooperatives. You all “speak the same technical language”. They will understand the main facts of what you are reporting in this brief fashion, without spending valuable time on reading a lot of details about every problem in every cooperative.
- (b) That you will be there, equipped with your files, when the reports are being discussed, ready to supply whatever information people might wish to ask for. And as you are around, they can approach you any time for further details.

Nothing prevents you from sending detailed reports in addition, as a sort of appendices to the briefer report. But we believe that the brief businesslike reporting style will make way for more businesslike, constructive and effective discussions and decision-making !

The only new element in the report is the “Resource Estimates” section. Resources of interest in this context are **time** and **money**. “Time” means the working time of various personnel, and that is, very obviously, a limited resource. A year has only a fixed number of effective working days – you cannot add to a year ! As a Cooperative Field Worker, you usually have endless lists of work tasks and you are constantly overloaded with jobs. Therefore, you need to apply very strict and efficient resource management with regard to your time. The column “Own” under “Time” is therefore important. When you have prepared reports for all “your” cooperatives, the sum total of days noted in that column in all of the reports will tell you how many days of your own working time within a certain period you have committed to the various actions. You need to know that when you sit down to prepare your own work programme for that period. Indeed, time is such a valuable and limited resource that you have to use it with the utmost care ! And therefore you should also state in your report how much time you estimate that other people would have to put in, if your proposals are accepted. That will help them in their own planning.

“Money” is a scarce resource to be similarly managed with care and consideration. You are facilitating management of money by estimating the cost of actions, and by suggesting from where the money should come. The example with the now so familiar Hillside Cooperative Society problems illustrates the point.

A consolidated report?

We have recommended that you should prepare a separate brief report for each cooperative, following our model – and why not ? – or in some other form. Should you then take a further step and try to summarise all these reports into one single consolidated report ? We do not think so. Not at this stage when you are mainly preparing material for constructive discussions of the problem situation in the area. It is much better to discuss each cooperative as an individual case. The whole idea on which the “Work Process Concept”, is built up, is that of individual treatment for individual illnesses. However, there will also be actions proposed which are “common” to some or all, (remember the comment on the “Survey Chart”), and these you should discuss the first time they appear in one of the reports. When the same problem occurs again, you need only say: “We have already discussed this problem and agreed on action”.

But what you **must** do is to sum up your estimates of the money required which is to be drawn from a central source, such as the Education Budget of a District Cooperative Union or from one budget or another. A summary of that is very simple to prepare. If that summary is then considered as the first point in the discussions and accepted as reasonable, you will avoid the constant questioning: "Can we afford this particular action ?".

If the summary estimate has been accepted, the answer is "yes" without further discussion. If it cannot be accepted because it is too costly, there must be an agreement on a lesser amount. You must therefore also establish guidance for decisions about priorities.

Example:

<u>Summary estimates for action plans</u>		
The total estimated cost of actions proposed in my reports on the situation in the cooperative is as follows:		
Education Budget		38,500
Service Department		12,000
General Budget :		
Travelling	11,700	
Petrol	2,000	
Equipment	<u>3,800</u>	<u>17,500</u>
	Total	68,000
	=====	
Costs to be taken by the individual cooperatives are shown on the respective reports. The Committees are prepared to approve the expenditure.		
20/1/1984		
<i>Z. Echoman</i>		
Field Education Officer		

If your proposals are such that certain persons would be rather extensively involved, say at the rate of ten days or more, you ought to make them aware of that right from the beginning.

Having prepared your reports, you are now ready to suggest a meeting for consideration of them.

Part 4

Discussing proposals and taking decisions

All your efforts up till now – situation studies and problem analysis in the field, followed by organisation of notes in the office – have been leading up to this very important step: – constructive and effective discussions of your findings and proposals, ending with decisions. The taking of decisions is, indeed, the real intention. The discussions are a means to arrive at the best possible decisions. Always assure that clear unambiguous decisions are taken on all the points discussed. Likewise assure that the decisions are recorded in writing, whether in some formal minutes of the meeting or otherwise.

Who should participate?

Who are the people that should take part in these discussions and decision-making? It is again necessary to point out that conditions and situations differ so much that we can only make some remarks in general terms. You certainly know well who the people are in your own case. They would be a fairly small group of people with special interest and responsibilities, and also with decision-making powers. The five points listed in the beginning of Part 3 give some indication. You will be reporting to this group. They will consider your proposals. You will probably not be the chairman of the meeting, but you can nevertheless promote effective and methodic discussions just by your effective and methodical way of reporting.

The members?

One major point of principle requires attention in this context. What about the members? The whole work process is after all supposed to serve the members at the local level. The aim of it is to help the cooperative serve its members better. What, then, about the participation and involvement of the people at the local level – the members, the committees, the employed personnel? We would now like to refer you to the advice in the booklet "The Situation Study" about how to carry out a study, and to the Performance Problem Analysis Techniques material. You will recall that there is great emphasis placed on participation and involvement at the local level. If you have taken the analytical work seriously, the reports you are submitting now are actually based on an extensive participatory process. The local people should have had their say. You are the liaison officer between them and the decision-making group. You must indeed live up to that responsibility, and bring the views and opinions of the local people into the meeting.

Summoning representatives from the local cooperatives to take part in the discussions would therefore not be necessary. If the meeting concerns only one cooperative, so should of course be done, but the sort of meeting we have in mind here is that when you are reporting on your findings from a number of cooperatives, for the sound reason of being able to point out, discuss and decide on common problems – 'many-coop actions' as they were named on page 11. It would not be practical, either, for several reasons to bring in too many people into the meeting. If there is time to do so, send copies of your reports to the respective cooperatives, asking the committee for their comments. The important thing is, however, that the local people should be heavily involved at the first two phases of the work process.

Part 5

The action plan

You have analysed the problems and made proposals for remedial actions. Your proposals have been discussed and decisions have been taken. Now is the time when you sum it all up in Action Plans. You have arrived at the goal you were aiming at all along !

What then is an Action Plan ? The answer is simple. An Action Plan is a listing of the various actions that were decided in the meeting where you made your reporting. It is only after that meeting you will know for certain what actions the meeting agreed on, and what time various people could commit themselves for the actions they have to take.

You should prepare an Action Plan for each cooperative. What you have to consider carefully when doing so is:

- (a) The **proper order** of the actions to be taken;
- (b) The **exact time** when they should be taken.

It is a kind of editing process you will undertake. You must arrange the actions logically in the Action Plan.

Proper order

On page 6 in "The Work Process", under the heading "A logical work process", you could read the following:

"In any job the best results are achieved if the job is approached in a systematic and logical way. One action following another step by step, each step in its right order. Not too early, before other preparatory steps have been taken. Not too late either, in case the support some particular action would have given to other actions is lost, because it did not come at the right time.

If you are building a house, you must begin with the foundation. Then you raise the walls and finally you construct the roof on top of it. You cannot mess about with the logical steps of house-building. As in many jobs, the logical order of actions to take is obvious. But unfortunately this is not always the case. For example, the job of dealing with problems in cooperatives belongs to those where various actions might be taken, with a considerable input of effort, time and money, but with a poor result because the actions are not taken in a systematic order. And it may be that some fundamental actions are not taken at all. Sometimes one may find that cooperative field work attempts to build a roof, long before the walls are in place, and quite often it is done on very weak or non-existing foundations".

Always keep this in mind when you are drawing up Action Plans for cooperatives. See to it that the various actions are not just put in the plan in a random fashion. And try to ensure that you get maximum supportive effect out of them. If one action might create a better, more favourable climate for the implementation of another action, then place the former action first. Remember all the time that attitudes are very often a cause of problems, and that cooperative field work nearly always **must** achieve attitude changes if it is to be successful. Skillful arrangement of the items in an Action Plan can be a very valuable help in the difficult task of changing people's attitudes over a period of time.

The Hillside Cooperative case (see page 12-13) provides examples of this:

- Two actions were proposed with regard to the problem of grading of produce. The Committee should form a "Task Force" and then go out and talk to the members and try to make them understand why produce has to be graded, and why they will actually lose money if they do not grade properly – they will not get a higher price by pretending that all the produce is of Grade 1 quality. The other action to be taken is to provide instruction in proper grading. In what order would you arrange these actions in an Action Plan? You will probably agree that the members would be more motivated and attend the grading technique demonstrations with a keener interest, if they are beginning to understand that grading really matters. So the "Task Force" action should be taken first.
- It would of course be good to sort out the question about an assistant to the Secretary/Manager first, before taking steps to send the latter for training. It could turn out that the assistant will be responsible for the accounts and, if need be, be trained instead.
- It is very obvious that the credit procedure and forms problem should be solved first, and the task of instructing the Committee be looked into thereafter. What would be the use of training them in the old procedures, if they are to be changed anyhow?

Exact time

The Action Plan must state **when** – on which dates or at least within which weeks – particular actions should be taken. You would have agreed them tentatively in the discussions, and now you are confirming them by stating the times in the plan.

An essential, indeed an indispensable, tool is a diary when you are deciding on dates involving yourself. You must ensure that the dates do not collide with other commitments and parts of your work schedule for the particular period. These dates will have to be integrated in your overall individual work programme, which usually would be your Annual Work Plan.

Another "must" is that you should write to all the other people who are going to be involved in one action or another and confirm their commitments in writing. State what they are supposed to do and also state the date, time and places where their services are required. They also have to keep diaries and work according to some sort of plan! It would in many cases be sufficient if you distribute copies of the Action Plan, with the relevant action marked for each person. And, last but not least: – **send copies to the cooperatives.**

The Hillside Coop action plan

On page 23, you will see the Action Plan for the Hillside Cooperative.

From the initial field analysis and reports, via the "Survey Chart" and the report with proposed actions, Z. Ecksman has now a real development instrument in his hand. He and any other people who will receive copies of the Action Plan, know what must be done, by whom and when.

And they know that the actions in the plan are appropriate actions which should respond to well identified and analysed problems.

Whether the situation will improve in all the problem areas remains to be seen, but the people concerned know that they are now approaching the Hillside case in a far more systematic and efficient way. The phrase "remains to be seen" brings us, finally, to another very important advantage of the working procedures we have suggested : – it remains to be seen whether problems are removed or reduced, **but that can easily be noticed with the Action Plan, the Performance Objectives and other statements as yardsticks !**

Observe that the objectives are observable and measurable. Monitoring and evaluation will be possible with quite a high degree of exactness. This aspect is further developed, with advice and comments in the CEMAS booklet "Monitoring & Evaluation". Read it !

12/1/1984

ACTION PLAN – HILLSIDE COOPERATIVE SOCIETY
(As decided in meeting 11/1/1982)

TIME	ACTION	ACTION BY
Latest 15/1	Talk to Agripak about empty bag deliveries. If necessary change to Greentown.	Marketing Officer
15/1 – 10/2	Discussions with members about importance of grading	Society Committee
28/1	(Ordinary Committee Meeting) Proposal/decision on Working Group to simplify credit procedures/forms	Chairman, Union Credit Committee
14/2	Demonstration of grading	Ecksman Rep. of Marketing Board
20/2	Visit Farm Training Centre to discuss crop improvement actions and agree on training	Ecksman
25/2	Meeting with Hillside Committee to discuss need of Asst. Secretary/Manager	Union Manager District Coop. Officer
9/3	Visit Coop. College for discussions about special training of accountants in the area	Ecksman
10/6	Digging of ditch to be started. Works Department present for advice.	Society Chairman Volunteers Rep. of Works Dept.
11-20/6	Digging continued and completed	
15/8	Training session with Committee on new credit procedures (Provided deadline of accepted new procedures by 15/7 is met)	Ecksman
16/8	Crop improvement scheme. Demonstrations. Discussions with farmers.	Ecksman Agric. Ext. Officer
18/9	Crop improvement scheme continued	Ecksman Agric. Ext. Officer
Oct-Nov	Short courses at Farm Training Centre. Arrangements to be made for transport.	Secretary/Manager
28-29/11	Crop improvement scheme continued. Demonstration of grading.	Ecksman Agric. Ext. Officer

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Part 6

Preparing the annual work programme

What you, the Cooperative Field Worker, should now do is to draw up your own work programme, incorporating all the actions allocated to you on the individual Action Plans. Ecksman has to deal with seven items in the Hillside Action Plan as you can see. But he has two further actions to take, which were proposed in the report. These are not mentioned in the Plan, as they are of the kind we discussed on pages 4 and 11. They are "common" actions, covering all the cooperatives. These actions are:

- to talk to the Cooperative College about assistance in organising special book-keeping training;
- to discuss with the Union Credit Committee the need for procedures and forms to be simplified.

Remember to include both special and common actions in your own programme !

What can you do for CEMAS?

One of the main tasks of CEMAS is to stimulate and facilitate the exchange of ideas and experience among cooperative educators throughout the world.

That can only be achieved through real cooperation among cooperators.

You will make a vital contribution by sending us specimen copies or details of education and training materials that you have seen or successfully used yourself: books, manuals, exercises, handouts, posters, leaflets, brochures, materials for general member education, for committee members or for staff training at different levels.

Please send us a copy of any new production of yours. It will help us to build up and further develop the world-wide reference library, which is a basis for our information service.

You will find CEMAS address on the back cover.



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