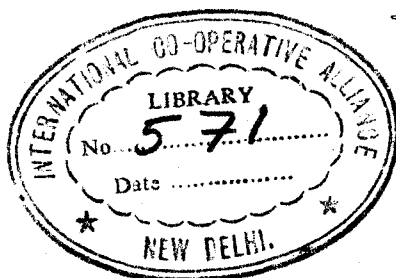


I. C. A.  
STATE DEVELOPMENT OFFICERS' CONFERENCE

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REPORT ON  
THE STATE COOPERATIVE DEVELOPMENT OFFICER'S CONFERENCE

(28th & 29th March, 1961)



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INTERNATIONAL CO-OPERATIVE ALLIANCE

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Report on  
The State Cooperative Development Officers' Conference  
(28th & 29th March, 1961)

The ICA Education Centre organised a two-day Conference of the State Cooperative Development Officers who are in charge of cooperative education work in different States of India. The Conference was held on the 28th and 29th of March, 1961, and was attended by 35 participants among whom were 13 Cooperative Development Officers, 5 Officers in charge of Cooperative Education in the All India Cooperative Union, officials of the Ministry of Community Development and Cooperation, two Cooperative Instructors working at the District Level and two Secretaries of State Cooperative Unions.

Conference Programme:

The purpose and scope of the Conference could be described in the following terms.

The CDO is the key man in the field of Cooperative Education at the State level. Under him function a number of District Instructors who are responsible for the dissemination of education at the lower level; in addition, the CDO also provides a link with the National Union viz., the All India Cooperative Union. The effectiveness of the education work within the movement, therefore, depends upon the efficiency and depth of contacts which the CDOs are able to develop with the District Instructors, and also upon the application of those educational techniques which promise the maximum results by creating an enlightened core of membership of Cooperative Societies. Apart from a brief introduction of ICA activities in the South-East Asian

was, therefore, given to ascertaining the factual situation, such as the frequency of CDO's contacts with District Instructors, their training etc. In addition, lectures and group discussions were organised around modern teaching techniques and aids. Thus, the Conference included two demonstration lectures by Mr. Dutta, Secretary of the Indian Adult Education Association and Mr. Blake of the T.C.M. on Teaching Aids and Techniques and Audio-Visual Aids respectively. This was followed by a discussion which included questions and answers and a Panel Discussion on the agencies for the supply of educational material.

#### ICA Activities:

The first two hours were devoted to a presentation by Mr. B. Mathsson of ICA activities which dealt with a short historical background of the technical assistance work of the Alliance in the developing countries, the setting up of the ICA Education Centre and its activities, and the contribution made by the Swedish Movement to the Centre. U Nyi Nyi's presentation dealt at greater length with ICA activities in the developing countries, particularly in South-East Asia; he outlined the Five-Point Programme of Long-Term Technical Assistance and the activities of the Regional Office. The discussion which followed was mainly directed to getting additional information by the participants about the ICA and conditions of eligibility for its membership. It was explained that membership to the ICA was open to any Cooperative institution mainly at the National Level, if it subscribed to the Cooperative creed, i.e., the organisation concerned adhered to the fundamental Principles of Cooperation.

Fact-Finding Session:

Information was elicited from the CDOs on the following three subjects:

- i) work load and the nature of tasks performed by the Cooperative Development Officers;
- ii) frequency and depth of contacts with the Instructors; and
- iii) some practical problems.

The fact-finding session revealed a considerable diversity of functions which are performed by the CDOs. Although, technically, the CDO's main work is to help in the organisation and spread of Cooperative education, his tasks are interpreted in a fairly flexible manner in different States. The diversity of the CDO's functions is caused by a number of local and sometimes ad hoc factors. In the main, however, the following are the most common duties of a CDO: Performance of certain administrative tasks related to Cooperative education; supervision of the education programme; coordination between education work and the work of Cooperative Departments. Among the more remote tasks, although by no means less time-consuming, may be mentioned the following: looking after trading activities in Assam in the context of the scheme of State Trading in food-grains, acting as Secretary of the State Cooperative Union as, for instance, in Himachal Pradesh and Jammu & Kashmir and, therefore, being responsible in the administrative sense for the entire functioning of the State Union. The functional responsibilities of the CDOs in the various States could, therefore, be broadly classified into two categories: the first are those States in which the CDO devotes his time mainly to the execution and implementation of the education programme; and, secondly, those parts of the country where the CDO also performs tasks which could hardly be considered as falling strictly within the range of his education work.

At this stage a number of questions arise. Is a CDO able to devote as much time to the promotion of education work as is either needed or desirable? Is the work load of the CDO so heavy or distracting as to impair the efficiency he can bring to bear on Cooperative education work in the States? In short, is there a need for defining the functions and competence of the CDO in a more strict manner?

A second point on which information was obtained from the CDOs was the nature of their training. Only 5 out of the 13 CDOs present had received training at a course organised by the AICU, while 6 were on deputation from the Cooperative Departments.

Two major ways in which the CDOs exercise supervision over the education work of the District Instructors are: (i) correspondence; and (ii) visits to the training units. In some parts, as for example in Gujrat, 15 days' Refresher Courses are organised for Instructors at the Junior Officers' Cooperative Training Centre. Among the difficulties mentioned in regard to supervision work, the large physical area which the CDO has to cover and the meagreness of travelling allowance for the CDOs were two outstanding ones.

#### Working Groups of the Conference:

Two Working Groups were formed comprising of 11 and 12 members respectively. While forming the Working Groups, it was emphasized that the technique of conducting group discussions itself was an educational process. Chairmen and Secretaries of the groups were selected from among the participants themselves. The groups discussed the following question:

"Consider in the light of your own experiences and the discussions at the morning session:

- a) The duties of the CDO, and list them in order of their importance.

- b) The extent and forms of contact between the CDOs and the District Instructors. How, for instance, is supervision exercised? How does the CDO ensure that continued training and guidance is given to the Instructors? Can the group suggest a systematic pattern which may be adopted?"

The group findings were discussed at a joint session later. The following were the main findings:

Duties of the CDO:

In many cases, the State Cooperative Unions are in the formative stages and do not have adequate resources or personnel. In a few Unions the CDO is the only staff member. In view of this, the CDO has to perform such work of the State Cooperative Union as organisation of conferences, editing publications, arranging Cooperative Week Celebrations, etc. As regards education work, it was felt that it would be difficult to make an exclusive classification of the duties performed by the CDO. The duties which the CDO should perform were listed as follows:-

- (i) Planning the programme of cooperative education work for each year well in advance;
- (ii) Supervision of the educational courses conducted by the Instructor and giving guidance to him.
- (iii) Coordination of cooperative activities with other cooperative agencies, such as cooperative departments, Community Development Organisation, the Package Programme and other voluntary agencies.
- (iv) Arrangement for production and distribution of educational material.
- (v) Promotional and developmental activities such as organisation of District Unions.

Contacts with District Instructors.

In regard to the extent and forms of contact between the CDO and the District Instructor, it was suggested that

the following methods would be useful:

- i) Correspondence, issue of circulars etc.
- ii) Visits to the Training Units at least once quarterly. Visist to a district.
- iii) Holding group meetings with Instructors when the CDO undertakes field visits.
- iv) Organisation of annual conferences of Instructors.
- v) Organisation of Refresher Courses.
- vi) Periodic issue of mimeographed lines in the form of small pamphlets.

#### Study Group Technique

Mr. Mathsson gave an expose of the Cooperative Study Group technique as it is employed in Sweden and other Western countries. The Study Group Technique is widely used as a method of Member Education in Scandinavia, Canada, USA and some other Western countries. The method is found very useful for reaching a large number of persons in an intensive way without incurring heavy financial expenditure. In the General Body Meetings and other meetings of the Cooperative Society, statutory matters become very important and not much time is available for the education of members. The Study Group provides for multiplication of such regular contacts among cooperative members and, through them, for an intensive education of a nucleus of members. These members generally take an active interest in their Cooperative Societies; they form an enlightened core of members who participate actively in the functioning of the Cooperative Society. This core also provides the pool from which leaders generally emerge.

The Study Group method is not a replacement or a substitute for other methods of reaching members. Publicity and other mass-media such as film strips and simple folders will have to be utilised.



The Study Group method affects the thinking, attitudes and relationship of the members to each other and brings about the change in these through direct involvement of the members in the study process. The Study Group also creates an active body of members who become opinion-forming Groups and the carriers of knowledge to other members.

The Study Groups must have carefully prepared study material. In Sweden they are provided with a general text book and a Study Guide. The Study Guide is designed to interpret the text-book material in a critical way and helps in ensuring fruitful discussion. The material offered in the text-book is divided into separate sections in the study guide. Each section of the study guide contains a number of questions for discussion, and, at the end, poses main questions to which the group formulates its replies.

In the Cooperative Union of Sweden, K.F., a Group Study Division prepares the study material for the Study Groups. A two way flow of ideas between the Study Groups and the Group Study Division is maintained. The group findings are sent to this division to whom questions may be addressed and who then send their replies and comments on the group findings. The role of the teaching staff in this division is to function as resource persons who are themselves to be looked upon as members of the groups.

The Study Group allows for a flexible set-up. It concentrates mainly on the subjects that are of interest to the members as consumers and as members of the Cooperative Societies. The main subjects are Economics, Cooperation and various Consumer problems and Home Economics. One important achievement of this method has been a demonstrably higher rate of purchasing loyalty among those who take part in the Study Groups.

In order to ensure that discussions take place in a proper way, efficient group leaders are very essential. For this, reliance is placed on voluntary leaders who need not be specialists in the subject but should know how to conduct discussions. Great attention is given to the training of the leaders in Sweden which is done through week-end Institutes.

In conclusion, Mr. Mathsson mentioned that the total cost of the programme has been rather small. The entire programme is operated by a staff of only about 10 persons in the Group Study Division in the K.F. They had 40,000 members in Study Groups during the last year.

#### Group Discussions.

The two Groups considered the problem of applying the Study Group technique in the context of the Indian Cooperative Movement. The discussions may be conveniently divided under the following three heads:

- i) Need;
- ii) obstacles; and
- iii) suggested approaches.

#### Need:

The need for the application of the Study Group method arises out of the fact that a very large percentage of members of cooperative societies are unaware of the technique of organising and running successfully a cooperative society. It is stating the obvious that a sound Cooperative Movement cannot be built up without core of enlightened members. A cooperative society is not an institution which can deliver the goods overnight. Its success must inevitably be preceded by a long period of slow and steady work, of considering objectively the difficulties which arise on

the way and of sticking to the cooperative society both in adverse and prosperous times. In other words, members must be made to realise the long-term benefits which accrue out of their cooperative society and to which there is no short-cut. Widespread and actively functioning Study Groups are likely to create a consciousness among the members and in view of the inexpensiveness of the method combined with its wide impact on members, the Study Group technique can go a long way towards ensuring the success of the Cooperative Movement.

Obstacles:

Although the experience of the advanced Cooperative Movements in the West in the successful application of the Study Group technique are no doubt of immense value to the movement in India, it must be recognised that the transplantation of the idea has to be done in a well-thought out manner. The difficulties arising in the local environment have to be carefully considered and the scheme has to be given a shape that responds to the needs of the situation in the village. Among the major obstacles mentioned were the following:

High percentage of illiteracy of members which restricts the usefulness of the printed material; the problem of spotting out talent in the village so that dynamic group leaders could give the Study Groups the initial momentum; the required finances which, in view of the slender resources of the State Cooperative Unions, are hard to come by; and finally, the fact that a large number of cooperative societies are in a languishing condition.

Suggested Approaches:

Several approaches were suggested by the Groups in order to overcome the above-mentioned obstacles. First

of all, it was mentioned that one of the members of the Managing Committee should be charged with the responsibility for the education of members within a society. These members incharge could be given a short training in the subject at the office Bearers' and the Managing Committee Members' Courses. Although illiteracy is no doubt a serious obstacle, the distribution of this phenomenon is uneven over the country as a whole. If the Study Group method could be introduced in areas where there is a relatively higher percentage of literate people, the application in restricted areas would yield useful results which could then be multiplied on a wider scale. The major problem consists in arousing and maintaining sustained interest of members in Study Groups. The basic pre-condition for achieving this is the fact that the Study Group should discuss problems which are of direct interest to the members as a whole. In fact, the initial topics of discussion may not necessarily deal with cooperative subjects at all. A common platform for discussion could be provided by selecting problems in which the member feels interested and then, in course of time, the idea of Cooperation could be introduced in order to bring out the vital role which the cooperative society can play in the solution of some problems. Experience suggests that where the Study Group either indulges in rambling and vague discussions or where it imposes upon itself very narrow limits, the interest of the members generally dwindles with the passage of time. A happy medium has, therefore, to be struck so that discussions are neither too vague or general nor are they limited rigidly to Cooperation which may repel those potential members who, at least in the initial stages, look upon the cooperative society with

suspicion and mistrust. Much would depend upon the leader of the Study Group, the openness with which he carries on and regulates discussions and the extent to which, through his general amiability, he is able to involve the members in discussions.

### Teaching Aids and Techniques

#### Mr. Dutta.

Mr. Dutta of the Indian Adult Education Association gave a demonstration of the discussion technique as a method of education by directly involving the conference participants in the process of exchange of thought and experience. He did this by making an initial statement about literacy, which, he said, was essential for Cooperative Education, and then soliciting the views of the participants. He aroused interest and heat in the discussions by placing himself directly in opposition to some of the views expressed by the participants. The other techniques which were mentioned as useful by Mr. Dutta and Mr. Dharma Vir, his colleague, were the use of creative dramatics, simple puppets which could be manipulated easily, and group activities such as picnics, games, exhibitions, group competitions, etc.

#### Mr. Blake.

Mr. Blake of the Technical Cooperation Mission also gave a talk on the different types of Teaching Aids and demonstrated some of the aids devised by the Communication Media Division of the TCM. Mr. Blake emphasised that for solving problems faced by India, it was essential that the knowledge acquired through research was passed on to those who could use such knowledge in solving their problems. The teaching aids - which Mr. Blake thought could be properly termed communication aids - have a great role to play here. He said that inexpensive visuals could be utilised for the purpose.

Limitations:

1. The effectiveness of the communication aid could not be judged by the number of people who have seen a visual aid. The proper measurement is the extent to which aids influence peoples' subsequent actions.
2. The programme about which information is to be disseminated should not be faulty. It should be well-designed and useful.

He also mentioned some of the barriers involved in Communication viz., the emotionally loaded character of certain words, the difficulties involved in the decoding process of the message and the large number of languages in a country like India.

Methods:

The following factors are necessary in effective Communication Media:-

- 1) The visual aid should be striking so as to get immediate attention.
- 2) The language should be simple.
- 3) The message should be appropriate to the standard of the group to which it is directed.

The different types of materials used as Communication Media are the Flannelgraph which could tell a progressive story, posters, Bolten Board, Chalk Board, etc. The other mass media are films, film strips, etc.

The standard aids produced at a central place generally do not meet the needs in the field. It is necessary to use local symbols and local illustrations in the production of aids. This can best be done by the people who are to use these aids in the field. A number of visual aids could be locally prepared by the Instructors through imaginative



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use of locally available material. This brings up the problem of supply of teaching aids and this was discussed by a panel.

Panel Discussion.

A panel discussion was organised on the agencies for supply of educational material. The members of the Panel were:

1. Mr. Natarajan,  
C.D.O., Madras.
2. Mr. Amba Prasad,  
Secretary, Delhi State Cooperative Union,  
C.D.O., Delhi.
3. Mr. M.R. Kaushal,  
Principal Cooperative Training Centre,  
AICU.
4. Mr. J.M. Rana,  
ICA Education Centre.
5. Mr. B. Mathsson,  
ICA Education Centre.

The following main points emerged out of the discussion:-

- 1) The material at present available for Cooperative Education work is not adequate and should be increased both in volume and variety.
- 2) Some of the visual-aids could be produced without much expense at the local level. It was suggested that the production of visual aids should be taken up at the different levels and need not necessarily be centralised.
- 3) The finances required and lack of knowledge of production methods on the part of Instructors and C.D.Os etc., were some of the obstacles.
- 4) There are a number of agencies such as the Adult Education Association, Literacy House, etc., which are devising new methods of communication aids and also

producing them. At the State Level also certain agencies are producing teaching aids. A proper coordination of the work of these agencies by the AICU at the Central level was considered essential in order to derive maximum benefit from the teaching material available in the country.

5). For the purpose of ensuring production of useful teaching aids, a constant and two-way flow of ideas and information between the Instructors, the CDOs and the AICU education staff was considered necessary.