AGRICULTURAL TRAINING FOR
AFGHANISTAN

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Agriculture Training for Afghanistan

The April Coupdetat of 1978 which enabled the local communists in Afghanistan to seize power and the occupation of Afghanistan by the Russians in 1979 under the pretext of international solidarity and brotherhood with a newly born neighbouring state, were coolly reacted to by the west and the free world at the beginning. The free world thought that Afghanistan had fallen to Russian orbit for ever and every attempt in releasing it seemed to them futile. Except for banning the sales of wheat to the Soviets by the United States and verbal condemnation, they did not take any constructive measures to stop the Russians.

The Russians themselves and their puppet government in Kabul also thought that they were able to rule the country easily. Gradually the people's resistance took momentum and the Mujahideen with empty hands stood firmly against the local communists and Russian occupation. Russians' indifferent killing, bombardment, destruction could not subdue the resistance movement. Realizing the determination of the Mujahideen to fight until the last drops of their blood, the free world started moving in, to provide assistance including humanitarian helps.

There are now many None Governmental Organisztions (NGO) in Peshawar that extend assistance to the Afghan refugees in Pakistan as well as to the people still living inside. Some of these organizations are engaged in promoting agriculture in Afghanistan. They establish from time to time short training courses for Plant Protection and Veterinary Services. Each organization has its own policy and standard in choosing the trainees, duration of the course, curriculum, area covered inside, payment, hostel and classroom facilities, class work, practical work and field trips.

Working separately and organizing training courses in isolation without knowing what the similar relief organizations are doing in this regard, have the following shortcomings:

1. Concentration of the trainees in one geographical area leaving the rest of Afghanistan without necessary agricultural services. It seems easier to the relief organizations to work in the provinces bordering Pakistan while the southwestern, western, northern and northeastern provinces have more animals and
extensive agriculture. Plant diseases and insects especially locust is a big problem in Herat, Jozjan, Balkh and Samangan.

2- Each relief organization working in isolation and establishing training courses may not have the time, resources and expertise to study thoroughly the present situation and existing problems in order to develop a comprehensive curriculum accordingly.

3- There are several Afghan parties in Pakistan, one relief organization may favour accepting more trainees from one party while neglecting the others. This may create jealousy and mistrust among the parties as well among the parties and the relief organizations.

4- The relief organizations in organizing the training courses individually may not have the necessary resources to provide the trainees with the best trainers, ample hostel, classroom, field trips (practical work) and out of class facilities. They may not have the necessary resources to equip the trainees in the field sufficiently.

The above shortcomings make it imperative to pool the resources of the concerned relief organizations together and coordinate their efforts in this regard. In doing so the two following options are suggested:

1- A committee should be set up from the concerned organizations in order to coordinate the training programmes of these organizations. The committee in close contacts and consultation with the experts of the fields, study and identify the present problems and draw up comprehensive curriculums to fight the problems. The committee, based on the importance of agriculture and animal husbandry, suggests the number of trainees from each province. The committee suggests the duration of the course, level of education and age of the trainees. The committee draws up job description for the trainees while working in the field, suggests a balance between the class work, field trips and practical work, proposes facilities to be provided in class, during practical work and in the field. The organization proposes protection measures for the trainees in the field while dealing with equipments and chemicals. It suggests ways of dealing with the farmers and rural people, proposes the types and amounts of chemicals needed for one campaign per trainee in the field, suggests further (follow up) training to the trainees.

Each relief agency in establishing and conducting training courses can benefit from suggestions and apply the recommendations of the committee.
2- Setting up a Joint Organization. All the relief agencies dealing with agricultural training, can establish a joint organization. The organization is financed by the agencies and is responsible for the planning, implementing, evaluating the training programmes of the concerned agencies. The organization is accountable to the financing agencies and provides them with financial statements as well as periodical reports on its educational activities.

The organization sets its educational policy on the basis of the policies of the concerned agencies and the problems exist in the country. In planning, implementing, and evaluating the training programmes, the organization follows the items, discussed in (1). The training programmes should be geared to solve the problems and enable the trainees to train the farmers and locals to do the job. Except for the veterinary and vaccination which is more scientific and should be performed by the trainees themselves, the trainees should be trained in such a way to be able to train farmers. In other words, the training programmes should be more extensional in nature.

Advantages of a joint organization
1- It prevents the duplication of training programmes by different relief agencies.
2- Adapts a more unified and comprehensive curriculums based on the existing problems.
3- The same building (hostel + classrooms) and facilities could be used for a longer period of time, and the budget will not be wasted for the rents of many buildings and purchases of many facilities by different agencies.
4- More experienced management and teachers will be evolved and the training programmes will be handled in a more systematic and efficient way.
5- Based on the importance of agriculture and the existing problems inside Afghanistan, the organization choose the trainees for the training programmes through the parties.
6- It will develop unified standards, procedures and approaches in choosing trainees for the different training programmes.
Agriculture training can be expanded with the establishing of a joint training organization, the agriculture training can be expanded to cover a larger area of agriculture activities. The following fields can be included in training programme.
1- Plant protection.
2- Veterinary services including vaccination.
3- Agriculture extension.
4- Horticulture.
5- Operation and maintenance of tractors, thrashers and water pumps.

The importance of plant protection, veterinary services, vaccination and their role in the development of agriculture are already realized and some training courses were established in Peshawar. It is not needed to discuss them here again and reveal their role and importance in the development of agriculture. But the other three topics are briefly discussed as follows:

1- Agriculture Extension.
In pre-communist coup (1978) era, almost all districts and villages were covered with the agriculture extension services. The trained agents, through demonstration, personal contacts, farm visits, mass media led the farmers to apply seeds, chemical fertilizers, agri-chemicals and farm tools in proper way. They showed the farmers the right rate, time, depth and irrigation of seeds. The agents demonstrated to the farmers the proper application of chemical fertilizers and agri-chemicals.

Now, since new wheat seed (Pairsabak 85 + Pak 81) varieties are going to be introduced to the low lands (lower than 1000 m) and other new varieties may be introduced later for the upper elevations and the farmers are totally unfamiliar with them, it makes it imperative to have somebody to help them. In this case it is advisable to include agriculture extension education in the training programmes.
2- Horticulture.

Afghanistan was very famous for it's fruits. Farmers grow grapes, apples, pears, cherries, almond, walnuts, peaches, apricot, pomegranate, melon and watermelon. Every year a sizable amount of fresh and dried fruits are exported to the world markets especially to Pakistan, India and the Soviet Union.

Russians' destructions did not leave out orchards, vineyards and fruit trees' nurseries. For example there was around 10 to 12 million vines only in Kohdaman (area from Karez Mir to Charikar) in the north of Kabul.

The average production per vine in 1975 was 15kg. Their total annual productions were 150,000 - 190,000 tons. Now the verbal reports estimate the level of destruction of the vines in Kohdaman more than 60 percent. One can imagine the level of destruction to the fruit trees.

There is a felt need for reviving and rehabilitating all the destroyed orchards and vineyards. People will start the restoration of their lost property but surely they need economical help and professional guidance.

It makes it necessary to train some people to do the job.

3- Farm power.

Except for the Helmand Valley where there were more than 1300 tractors and few tractors in different provinces, almost all the agricultural activities were done with animals before the coup of 1978 in Afghanistan.

Russians deliberately attacked and destroyed animals especially bullocks to stop agriculture activities.

The Russians were able to kill and destroy most of the oxens used in agriculture and inflicted a severe blow to farm power. A rough estimate puts the number of loss up to 50% which are 150,000 pairs.
In solving the problems of farm power, in addition to the bullocks, we have to think of supplying of tractors, thrashers and rotary cultivators, because it seems rather impossible to find a sufficient number of bullocks to replace all the oxens destroyed in a short period of time. So it is imperative to have trained people to handle these farm machineries and guide the farmers to operate and maintain them properly.

Topics covered in the Plant Protection course held from April 9/88 to May 26, 1988 by SCA.

Plant Diseases
A. Diseases of the fruit trees.

B. Vine disease
   1. Fungal disease

C. Cereal diseases

D. Vegetable diseases

2. The possibilities of different treatments in present Afghanistan.
3. Insects.
   1. Insects of the fruit trees.
   2. Cereal insects.
   3. Insects of the vegetables.

4. Rats and mice
5. Precaution measures in using chemicals.
1. Precaution measures for whom who does the handling, spraying and dusting.
2. Precaution measures to be observed in storing the chemicals.
3. How to treat an intoxicated person.

5. Time of spraying.
   1. Suitable time for spraying.
   2. Times which spraying is not recommended.
   3. Amount of chemicals recommended for fruit trees, cereals and vegetables.

Topics covered in the Veterinary and Vaccination course held from July 10, 1988 to August 10, 1988 by SCA.

1. A short information about animals infective disease.
2. Body reflection against patogen.
3. Immunity
4. Vital symptoms of different animals.
5. Foot and mouth disease.
6. Anthrax
8. Contagious caprine pleuropneumonia.
10. Lung Worm
11. Gastro parasites
12. Bloat or tympany.
13. Casual wounds and their treatments.
15. Castration.
17. Colics.
18. Liver fluke (Sheep)
Topics to be covered in Agriculture Extension Course. (tentative)

1. The role of agriculture in Afghanistan economy.
2. General picture of agriculture prior to the coup of 1978 in comparison with the situation of agriculture in 1988.
3. Traditional society.
4. Change and the need for change in regard to agriculture development.
5. How change occurs.
6. Early adopters, the majority and late adopters.
7. Short discussions and comparison between improved culture practices and traditional one in regard to improved seeds, chemical fertilizers, agricultural chemicals, tools, and preparation of land and etc.
8. Extension activities before and after the coup in 1978.
10. Local leaders (commanders, Mollah, village elders, Maliks, school teachers and progressive farmers.)
11. Mass contacts (radio, TV, brochure, pamphlet).
12. Group contacts (meeting, seminar)
13. Individual contact (farm visit)
15. Motivation and incentive.
16. Reporting.