

Chapter 4

GROUP REPORT - NATIONAL SERVICE PROGRAMMES

1. The Philosophies Underlying the Various National Service Programmes in Commonwealth Countries

An examination of the philosophies and objectives underlying National Service Programmes in Commonwealth countries indicates that:

- (i) The inspiration of National Service Schemes stems from one or more of the following considerations:
 - (a) National defence, security or emergency as in Zambia, Sierra Leone and Malaysia respectively.
 - (b) National integration - an important principle in the Ghanaian, Indian, Jamaican, Kenyan and Nigerian National Service Schemes.
 - (c) National development (economic and social) - all the National Service Schemes are national development-oriented.
 - (d) A corrective to deficient education and training systems through integration between course curricula and studies - an objective which is central to National Service in India.
 - (e) A means of inculcating discipline and national consciousness.
- (ii) With the exception of three countries - Ghana, Jamaica and Nigeria - the others represented at the Workshop operate National Service on a voluntary basis. Zambia and Tanzania have a programme which involves both compulsory and voluntary sections, and Sierra Leone contemplates operating a compulsory National Service Scheme. Botswana, Gambia and Swaziland do not operate National Service Schemes.
- (iii) Other variants of National Service Programmes include those in which the participants, namely:
 - (a) Disadvantaged youngsters - the uneducated and unemployed, mainly *receive* service. They train for and acquire skills while in the Service. The products of National Service Programmes in Kenya and Zambia are skilled vocational artisans.
 - (b) Advantaged youngsters - secondary school and university graduates, mainly *give* service, as in Ghana, Jamaica, Malaysia and Nigeria. In these countries the scheme embraces youth in the upper age bracket.

(iv) In some countries, National Service is regarded as part of or taken into account in the planning of National Development Programmes, e.g. Ghana, India, Jamaica, Kenya, Nigeria, Malawi and Zambia.

2. The Relationship Between National Youth Service Programmes and the General National Youth Programmes

The two approaches provide arms of the programming for youth. There should, therefore, be a definite link as well as integration and better co-ordination at national level to avoid the lowering of general involvement and effectiveness.

Since Youth Service begins at a point of definition of *need* by a Government, there should be a *definite* national policy on the relationship between National Service and National Development Plans.

3. Structure and Mechanics of the Various Systems of National Service

Broadly, there are two divergent approaches, voluntary and compulsory National Service Schemes. Generally the schemes are operated through a Directorate or Secretariat under a Ministry (not necessarily the Ministry of Youth Affairs). In Ghana and India, National Service Schemes function under the Ministry of Education. The Zambian and Tanzanian National Service Schemes operate under the Ministry of Defence, the Kenya National Service Scheme under a Directorate in the Ministry of Labour, while in Malaysia, National Service comes under the umbrella of the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports. In Nigeria it is under the Cabinet Office .

There is a correlation between a country's system of government and the approach adopted for its National Service Scheme, on the one hand, and between the attendant operational problems and the strategies for solving the problems. Some countries rely on military drills, the use of codes of conduct with rules, regulations and penalties for breaches, pledges and confidential reports for the inculcation and maintenance of discipline, e.g. Zambia and Nigeria. In Kenya serious offenders may be dismissed.

In addition, publicity for national ideologies and Youth Programmes through the mass media helps instil a sense of pride of contribution to national objectives in the youth.

4. National Service and Existing Education Systems

The point was made that there should be links between National Service and educational systems at the policy, administrative and operational levels. There should be a system in which there is an inter-relation of values generated by both the educational system and the Youth Programme. The education system should be restructured to support Youth Programmes while Youth Programmes reinforce the educational system.

5. How Can National Service Programmes be Structured to Get the Required Response from the Participants?

It was suggested that strategies for inducing the required response from the participants in National Service Schemes should include:

- (i) *Motivation* - through the creation of a sense of dedication and loyalty, so that young people want to identify themselves with the community.
- (ii) *Linkage between National Service and the National Development Plan* - through embodiment of National Service Programmes and their objectives within the general National Development Plan.
- (iii) *Creation of challenges* - which will be constantly kept in sight of or in the minds of participants. Achievements or results should be easily recognisable. Adherence to routine projects cause loss of interest, and this should be avoided as much as possible.
- (iv) *Discipline* - problems of discipline arise because supervisors in National Service Schemes are not themselves disciplined. Where and when necessary therefore, appropriate orientation course(s) should be organised as re-enforcement for both the affected personnel and participants.
- (v) *Full involvement of participants at the organisational and execution levels, and where possible at the planning level* - by informing them of the need in areas where their services are required.
- (vi) *The Community* - to get the required response from the community on National Service Programmes the following approaches were suggested:
 - (a) Identification of needs - It is necessary to ascertain from the local community what its needs and priorities are. National Service Programmes should be geared to such needs.
 - (b) There should be visible signs of achievement in relevant projects to act as incentives.
- (vii) *Publicity* - it may be necessary to educate the community on the role of the National Servicemen. This could be effected
 - (a) by inviting the local community to watch National Service graduation activities;
 - (b) by using the mass media - radio, television, newspapers, posters, etc., to publicise National Service Programmes among the community.
- (viii) *Utilisation of available facilities in the operation of National Service projects, for example by:*
 - (a) involving local expertise in the National Service projects through the utilisation of their input;
 - (b) liaison with chiefs, local leaders and organisations,

community and rural development officers, for proper information to the community, particularly in areas where National Service Programmes evoke negative response or conflict with established institutions. In the latter situation, such projects should be suspended until the community is ready to accept them. Servicemen should also be made aware of and briefed on such possibilities to enable them to deal with the attendant problems.

6. Assessment of Realisation of Objectives

It was felt that there is need for an assessment of whatever scheme is being operated. It was, therefore, advocated that procedures be adopted for evaluation and the following modes of assessment were suggested:

- (i) Wind-up exercises at the end of National Service as done in Nigeria.
- (ii) Questionnaires.
- (iii) Assessment while on the job.
- (iv) Feed-back from the community.
- (v) Need for outside evaluation. This can be from outside the National Service organisation as well as from an institution or institutions outside the country.
- (vi) Exchange of National Service participants between countries.
- (vii) It was felt that in order to make evaluation less cumbersome and at the same time yield the desired results, an evaluation mechanism should be built into the system even at the planning stage.
- (viii) Three types of evaluation were suggested: *continual, periodical and cost assessment.*

7. Projects of Interest

During the group discussions it was realised that there are isolated but interesting National Service projects which merit close examination. These are the Farm Youth Project of Malaysia, the Kenyan National Youth Project, and the Youth Against Famine Campaign of India.

7.1 The farm youth project of Malaysia is mainly a youth programme geared towards inducing attitudinal change in farming. It encourages modern methods of agriculture, yields economic returns and, because it works, it convinces the rural community to adopt modern methods of agriculture. Emphasis is on quick return cash crops including vegetables, animal husbandry, poultry and agro-based industries. The programme generates more opportunities for self-improvement and employment for the rural youth. Agriculture is

commercialised and a new breed of young entrepreneurs is developed. In addition, there is an increase in food production and in the supply of raw materials for agro-based industries. It operates through Farm Youth Committees which exist at all levels - National, State and District. Service for youth includes various aspects of training in agriculture, provision of financial and material subsidies, credit facilities, bank account and project planning. These services are given on an integrated approach basis, i.e., on co-operation between the various officers that deal with rural development. About 3,000 are self-employed within the project.

7.2 The Kenyan National Youth Project, through National Service, accepts approved Government projects on contract. Various projects are involved, namely, the construction of roads, air-strips and houses, farm development, bush clearing and afforestation. Training activities are generated on the job. For example, the construction of a road would require drivers for lorries and tractors, mechanics for the operation and maintenance of machinery, carpenters and masons for bridge encasements and construction, and welders. These are trained as they work.

To keep the schemes financially independent, there is a funding scheme. Construction capital is made available by the Government. The equipment is used on hire, and the money accruing from its use is deducted from the capital. Part of the money realised by using the equipment on hire is either deposited with the Treasury for the purchase of new machinery or it is invested in Treasury Bills which yield interest. The other part is used for repairs of equipment.

Participants who have completed training go into employment in the country. Some volunteer for re-enlistment, which provides opportunities for up-grading skills.

Several benefits are realised from the Kenyan Schemes:

- (i) Construction costs of projects are cheaper and because they are cheaper, government revenue is saved and channelled to new ventures.
- (ii) Training on the projects produces technicians needed for development projects in other fields in the country.
- (iii) The completed road, or developed farm itself opens up remote rural areas and generates further development.
- (iv) The experiment underscores the point that voluntary service, channelled through a disciplined organisation, namely, National Service, is capable of carrying out economic development projects.

The Ghana experience whereby University graduates in National Service are used to provide training in needed fields, is a case in point. Also in Malaysia, students and the educated form voluntary organisations and carry out tuition classes all over the country.

7.3 The "Youth Against Famine" campaign of India is another interesting special project. Universities, government development departments and voluntary agencies in co-operative effort planned and implemented relief and development programmes throughout the country. Projects were identified by community development officers. Students and non-student rural youth assisted in executing schemes which created community assets e.g. the deepening of wells in drought affected areas, the construction of banks to stem the flooding of farmlands, and the construction of irrigation channels. Over 65,000 youth participated in about 750 units or camps.

The group is of the opinion that the use of organised groups of National Servicemen in Malaysia, Kenya and India indicate approaches that could be applied to National Service in some African countries.

8. Proposals

National Service Schemes in different countries will be conditioned by the political systems, as well as the aspirations of the people. Hence the following proposals:

- (a) Youth in a developing society should be regarded as an asset, which should be developed so that it can contribute more effectively towards the realisation of the national objectives. Youth programmes should, therefore, not be treated as of marginal importance.
- (b) In each sector of national development attempts should be made to identify specific programmes in which youth would participate.
- (c) It must be ensured that there is close co-ordination and collaboration between the educational system and youth activity.
- (d) There must be a mechanism for inculcating or ensuring discipline.
- (e) As much as possible, the youth must be involved in the planning and execution of projects.
- (f) The organisational structure must provide the necessary expertise, support, guidance and supervision.
- (g) Follow-up is necessary to assess the impact of the scheme. Evaluation mechanism must be built into the system.
- (h) National Service Schemes should be subjected to periodic evaluation by a competent agency.
- (i) Involving National Service Scheme participants in community schemes. Community participation should be ensured through communication and interpretation.
- (j) In developing society, National Service Schemes should be used for preparing youth for performing functions useful for national development.