

TRAINING IN RURAL LEADERSHIP, KADUWELA

INTRODUCTION

The Kaduwela Training Centre case history presents a model of an integrated training programme imparted to village women who have been selected by inhabitants of different villages. The Lanka Mahila Samiti, a voluntary organisation in Sri Lanka, provides the training, after which the trainees return to their villages and involve themselves in upgrading village life and training groups of village women.

The case history has been chosen especially with a view to its relevance to developing agrarian countries where it is difficult to reach far-off villages. The "snowball" technique adopted in a training programme of this kind has a further value as the trained workers, coming from the village itself, are readily accepted by the villagers.

Although the Lanka Mahila Samiti runs several rural training centres, the Kaduwela Training Centre has become a model centre with training programmes covering the theory and practice of various skills.

Labour Force in Sri Lanka

The population of Sri Lanka as reported in the 1971 census was about 14 million, with the female population comprising 48.5 per cent. The bulk of the population (80.9 per cent) was to be found in the rural areas. The labour force totalled approximately 4.5 million.* Over the years, the number of women employed has increased.

Employment in Rural Areas

Women in rural areas who have had access to secondary and university education tend to seek employment in offices, industries and activities which have an element of modernity. It is generally the older women or women with little education who remain in the village or plantation performing the traditional agricultural tasks.

Despite the various other advantages accruing from free education and industrial development, unemployment among women in the rural sector continues to be high (30 per cent), and highest among those in the age group 17-34 years.

The role of women in peasant agriculture differs according to geographical area, type of cultivation, and extent of land owned. By and large, they work on the traditional jobs of weeding, transplanting and harvesting paddy rice. During the lean periods, women engage in cottage industries, e.g. lace making, weaving, basket making, coir making, pottery and beedi-wrapping.

*In determining the labour force, housewives occupied only with domestic duties have been included.

Those in the plantation sector are exclusively casual labourers, predominantly on tea and rubber estates. Employed on a daily basis, they do not have a regular income and have no economic security. The only fringe social benefit these women enjoy is provision of creches for their children.

Prior to 1930, nothing much was done to improve the living conditions of women in the rural areas. Since then, even though programmes and policies of the Government have resulted in a steep rise in their life expectancy and literacy levels, their living conditions have continued to be much the same. Even today, this section of the population lacks its due attention. It still constitutes the deprived section of the community, having no assured employment, receiving low wages and not having the social benefits enjoyed by the urban areas. Since large sections of this population are widely scattered, they miss the impact of most government development programmes. It is here that non-governmental organisations can assist by direct contact with these people.

THE LANKA MAHILA SAMITI

In Sri Lanka, or Ceylon as it was then called, the years 1928-31 witnessed discussions and debates on women's rights to the franchise, the legal status of women, and equal rights to election to the legislature. Out of these discussions there evolved the creation of "Women's Institutes" in the rural areas whose objective was to bring about the emancipation of rural women. As a result, the Lanka Mahila Samiti was established in 1930, and the first *samitiya* or "association" was formed in 1931 at a village at Pannipitiva. It is a national organisation - the first non-governmental organisation to enter the area of rural development. Although leadership at the national level, even today, is provided by urban, western-educated, elitist women, there is wider representation at the district and village levels. Groups of women coming from all walks of life meet in villages at monthly intervals to exchange ideas and discuss subjects of interest. Such discussions provide a very useful means whereby women can gain confidence and experience. The forum also discusses and organises village development schemes such as the building of roads and wells, *shramadana* or the donation of free labour.

By the end of 1980 there were approximately 2476 registered Branch Samitis spread throughout the eighteen districts in the country, of which about half are presently active. The membership is approximately 200,000. Each year an average of 20 new Samitis are registered with the parent organisation. The request for the organisation of a village Samiti is made by a signed application of at least ten women of that village. The parent organisation then sends its trained personnel to explain its objectives and organise the village Samiti. Once the mutual goals are agreed upon, the village Samiti is organised. It is generally confined to women in the age group 15-50 years, with a predominance of young married and unmarried persons in the age group 15-25 years. This group of women then prepares a programme of work covering as many items as possible.

Once the village Samiti has been organised, a request is made to the parent organisation, signed by at least 20 members of the Samiti, for a nominee of theirs to undergo a course of training at the Training Institute. This training generally lasts for three and a half months, after which the trainee goes back to her village to function as a *Sweacha Sevika* (voluntary worker). Details of the training will be described later.

On her return to the village, the Sweacha Sevika organises training programmes for village workers (Grama Sevikas) in rural development work. Besides training the Sweacha Sevikas from different villages, the Lanka Mahila Samiti

undertakes the establishment and running of nursery schools, the provision of instruction in family planning (funded by UNFPA), the establishment of production centres (46 at present functioning) specialising in handicrafts with local raw materials, the organisation of soup kitchens for undernourished children, and basic training in cottage industries and agriculture for low-income mothers. These activities are achieved through its trained Sevika who is a member of the Mahila Samitis in the village and seeks the parent organisation's assistance from time to time.

At the village level, the Samiti functions on democratic lines with office bearers elected annually. It plans and implements a programme of education, training and village development under the guidance of the trained Sevikas (paid workers) and trained Sweacha Sevikas. The village Samiti meets regularly for discussion of its activities, problems etc. and records of the proceedings are maintained. The field staff of government departments - such as Health, Agriculture, Education, Rural Development, and Small Industries - are invited to participate at its meetings in order to make the village women aware of activities which could be organised to benefit them and the village as a whole. This contact at regular intervals between village women on the one hand, and the trained workers of the Lanka Mahila Samiti and the government officials on the other, serves as a means of informal education and training for village women in order to make them better and more efficient mothers and housewives, and thereby obtain a balanced development of the family and the village. These programmes also help young persons to secure gainful employment.

As a consequence of the awareness of the need for change through the new knowledge and guidance provided by these contacts, women in several villages have organised a wide range of activities for their own betterment.

The Lanka Mahila Samiti maintains 24 training centres throughout the island at present. At each of these centres various activities are organised - needlework and sewing, agriculture, and food preservation and canning. A creche is provided for the children of the trainees. Approximately 120 village women are trained each year in three batches. Their knowledge is widened in the sphere of family health, agricultural production, food preparation and preservation, cottage industries and community development and leadership. By the end of 1980 over 3000 females of the age group 18-30 had completed the general course. Once these trainees return to the village they are expected in turn to train village workers.

Funding

Besides receiving a grant of Rs.50,000* a year from the Ministry of Rural Development, and Rs.15,000 from the Department of Health Services, the Sri Lanka Samiti receives funds from such external aid agencies as DANIDA, World Vision International, Family Planning International Assistance, Asia Fund for Human Development, Ve'st Agder Krnets and Finland Svenska. In addition, the interest accumulating from three Memorial Scholarships is used to help needy trainees to train at Kaduwela. With the opening of a sales centre in Colombo, sales of items made by the girls at the Training Centre provide an income of over a hundred thousand rupees per year. The interest in the profits from the sales centre is also used for the work of the Samiti.

* Sri Lanka currency

KADUWELA TRAINING CENTRE

Established in 1948 in a small room given by the villagers of Kaduwela, this is now a fully fledged training centre on a ten-acre site with a large hall, a lecture room, two dormitories with 35 beds, kitchen, pantry, staff living quarters and simple guest accommodation, a creche, a nursery and spacious grounds for home gardening. It forms a major link between the Samiti and the people, since thousands of field workers, nursery school teachers and village leaders, after receiving training under the supervision and guidance of the Kaduwela Committee, go back to the rural areas.

The work at the Training Centre is supervised by a Committee at the national level. This Committee comprises a Chairman and members of the Executive (of whom one is the Executive Secretary). All are honorary workers. Although residents of Colombo, where the parent organisation is located, the members and the Chairman make frequent visits to the Centre and attend the village meetings organised by the Training Centre.

The nominees for training usually have GCE O-level qualifications. In more remote parts of the country, where educational levels are lower, several 5th-graders are also accepted for training. All the nominees, however, need to be unmarried and in the age bracket 18-30 years.

Training Programme

At the training centre, there is a resident warden and four women handicraft instructors and junior staff. With assistance from outside experts, the personnel employed by the organisation as well as the nominees of village Samitis are trained. On an average, 30-35 persons are accommodated at each course, so that annually approximately 120 women become trained village workers.

During the first three months, theoretical and practical aspects are dealt with in respect of agriculture, handicrafts, embroidery and tailoring. The theoretical part of the programme includes lectures by government officials on health, nutrition, environmental health, mother care and child health, family health and population, agriculture and the cooperative movement. Practical experience of working in health clinics is also provided as the public health nurses assist the girls under training when they visit the houses in the village.

Practical training aims at developing vocational skills in the production of household requirements such as ekel brooms, coir brooms, winnowing fans, coconut milk strainers, lace, bags, mats, tea cosies, etc. The specimen articles made by the trainees are taken back to illustrate the type of articles which Samiti members in the village can produce themselves for their use. There is systematic training in development of home gardens through practical cultivation of cash crops by the trainees on the land within the premises of the Training Centre. In addition, training in public speaking forms an important part of the programme.

During the last two weeks, the trainees practice role-play on organising a village Samiti, conducting Samiti meetings, programming etc.

Generally the core course comprises basic training by means of classroom instruction as well as practical work in the following main areas:

1. *Health* - application of health rules including sanitation, nutrition, maternity and child care, first aid, and simple home remedies.

2. *Home Management* - simple cookery: food preservation including bottling of fruit and cordial making, house cleaning, washing and ironing, budgeting, thrift and savings.
3. *Rural Development* - participation in schemes of the Rural Development Department, rural development societies, cooperative societies, community projects and rural projects at the village level.
4. *Agriculture* - land clearing and soil preparation, plant food, manure and the making of compost, the growing of ginger, turmeric, chillies, onions, tomatoes and other vegetables in home gardens, cultivation of coffee and pepper, and paddy cultivation.
5. *Education* - implementation of education schemes, e.g. nursery, and providing general education in citizenship responsibility and oratory.
6. *Handicrafts* - sewing and embroidery, lace making, the conversion of raw materials found plentifully in the village such as *wetakeiya* or screw pine, *henna* or hemp, *pung* or reeds.

Needlework being a compulsory subject, which is followed by all the trainees, affords the opportunity to learn crochet, lace making and pillow lace making. Besides, soft toy making, flower making, hair styling and the making of rugs and brooms (ekel brooms) and coir ropes are also a part of the handicraft training programme.

At times special emphasis is given to one of the core subjects, e.g. handicrafts or agriculture, by holding exhibitions or contests. When in the 1979-80 period a new cattle shed was built at a cost of Rs.28,232 (through DANIDA assistance) the poultry yard at the Training Centre was expanded. The eggs from the poultry yard today are purchased by the Centre and also sold in the market. The trainees are given every opportunity to participate in budgeting and home management, and are sent to view the model homes. The officials from the Farm Women's Agricultural Extension Project, Paradeniya, at times conduct lectures on food and nutrition as well as giving cookery demonstrations, using rice substitutes such as soya beans and manioc. The washing and starching of clothes is also included in the syllabus. The training course concludes with an educational tour of the village.

The cultural side is developed with simple drama, folk dancing and drumming on the traditional *ravana*. Government officials supplement the resident staff in giving lectures and demonstrations in their own subjects. The training is based on the Mahila Samiti ideals of self help, citizenship responsibility and the joy of service, and brings out the latent capacity for leadership. At the end of the course trainees sit tests in all subjects and records are maintained of the results. Certificates are awarded at the end of term where, at the "Lamp Lighting Ceremony", each trainee pledges to carry the light of knowledge to her village to dispel the darkness of poverty and ignorance. Thus the training given at this Centre has continuous and far-reaching results in raising social, economic and health standards in villages throughout the country.

In addition to these voluntary workers or Sweecha Sevikas, the Movement depends largely on the services of paid field workers who are selected from voluntary workers who have been given advanced training at the Centre. Grama Sevikas, or paid village workers, are resident in a village for three months at a time during which they carry out a full programme of work. They rise eventually to the grade of *Parikshena Sevika* or supervisory workers who assist in the work of branch Samitis in an entire district. "Creche Sevikas"

are given special nursery school training and appointed to work in the creches (numbering nearly eighty) maintained by the Association. All categories of workers are given brief refresher courses at the Centre, depending upon availability of accommodation and funds.

From time to time, the training course has been modified to suit the needs of the trainees, for example, in the period 1979-80 only two courses of five and a half months each were conducted. During this period 47 Sweacha Sevikas from eight districts were trained. Again, six Grama Sevikas followed a one and a half months refresher course; two trainees followed a one month refresher course in needlework, while six trainees from the Department of Agriculture followed a three week course in handicraft making. The first course for the year was a specialised course in handicrafts and the second one was a specialised course in Agriculture.

Other Activities

Creche

The creche at the Training Centre is under the charge of a Sevika - a paid employee of the organisation. She also has a voluntary assistant to prepare the midday meal. The furniture and toys are made out of local raw materials such as rubber seeds and coconut shells, waste cloth, reels, etc.

The infants stay in the creche from 8 a.m. to about 2 p.m., and are provided with biscuits and milk at about 10 a.m. and a midday meal. After lunch they sleep for a few hours or until their mothers fetch them.

The Department of Social Services pays a grant of Rs. 10 per infant (0-6 years) per month to provide for the meals of the infants. The average daily attendance at a creche is about 30 infants.

Nursery School

With the aid of the Department of Probation and Child Care the Kaduwela Centre runs a nursery school for 40 children of working mothers. Health, sanitation, nutrition and sports are some of the services provided.

The children who stay at the nursery school for periods of one to five years are trained to be methodical and taught good habits. All facilities are provided for their mental and creative development. The nursery school provides the trainees with practical training in child education services and administration of nursery schools.

Besides the participation of trainees in the creche and nursery schools, at times the trainees are sent to participate in social programmes, e.g. participation in the Shrimadana Campaign organised by the Awissawella Probation Unit for the cleaning of the Awissawella hospital. They give a helping hand in the Family and Child Welfare Centre. They also organise programmes on nutrition for mothers, e.g. helping in distribution of milk powder at Thripasa.

On return to their villages after training, the Sweacha Sevikas translate the skills they have acquired into activities benefiting the women of the village. Because the trainees belong to the village and have been nominated for training by the representatives of the village itself, they have little or no difficulty in establishing a rapport with the village women. Any changes or innovations suggested by them are not looked upon with suspicion - in fact the villagers feel happy that modern ideas and technology are brought to their doors without their having to move out of their homes.

EVALUATION

Although no specific evaluation (internal or external) of the Kaduwela Training Centre has been conducted, in 1969 an evaluation of 125 villages where Samitis were functioning was undertaken by Ms Natsuya Tamamote, FAO Consultant. The findings of the survey provided pointers to the improvement of training at the Kaduwela Training Centre.

Several issues were highlighted by the survey in respect of the needs and problems of the rural families. It was found that the food intake of the majority of rural families was not adequate in respect of protective and body-building foods. This was mainly due to the amount of expenditure incurred on food (40 per cent of families spending less than Rs. 1 per person per day).

As a consequence, it was suggested that trainees at the Kaduwela Centre should be provided with an improved syllabus in nutrition as well as being given a more practical training, e.g. teaching them how to achieve a balanced diet with wise selection of foods at minimum cost. Another suggestion by the consultants was that

"...considering most women in rural areas were spending their maximum time and energy in the kitchen under conditions which were unhygienic and tiring, it would be desirable to introduce a subject like (a) proper kitchen maintenance and, (b) study of the various types of kitchen plans to suit the needs and financial allowance of individual families."

The survey also found that the rural women even today lacked the desired health habits. The Sevikas had not been successful in adequately motivating them. Motivation for change therefore needed to be emphasised during the training programme.

Because more than 50 per cent of village women were involved in more than one kind of handicraft which they were unable to sell, it was suggested that training should not be in too many types of handicraft production (as at present) but in a few crafts that had a ready market, and the emphasis should be on quality rather than variety or quantity. Teaching of crafts at the Centre also needed improvement.

Most rural women had mentioned money (lack of it) to be their major problem, and yet only a few maintained household accounts. This should be one thing for which training should be provided. Considering the large average family size amongst villagers, training in family planning was essential.

Improvements in Programming and Teaching

The study of the teaching programme revealed that the subject teaching had not been properly phased. It was suggested that the modern methodology of programme phasing be developed, which would not only make the existing teaching effective but also enable the organisers to expand the syllabus.

Subsequent to the evaluation report, several aspects of the training programme have been modified.

Impact of the Programme

Observation of certain villages where the Sevikas from the Kaduwela Training Centre had returned after a three and a half month course reveals that the community at large seems to have benefited largely in the sphere of social

uplift and a consciousness for a better quality of life. However, there still appears to be a crying need for income-generating activities for women. The home gardens programme failed to achieve its objective while the handicrafts produced are not of marketable quality. Although the parent organisation, the Lanka Mahila Samiti, helps in several ways to replenish the dwindling raw material, yet adequate raw material fails to reach the rural women. Besides, there is no organised marketing infrastructure to lead to a continuous flow and sale of products produced.

Other major constraints to higher quantitative and qualitative productivity appear to be the poor financial resources of the craft workers, arising from their very low levels of income and lack of credit facilities and poor management skills.

One way in which rural women can ensure a better price for their products is by forming themselves into cooperatives, or other associations with bargaining power. Since it is unlikely that, left to themselves, they will be able to do this, the intervention of the Mahila Samiti may be necessary in the first instance.

Even with improved incomes, the craftworkers will need capital for tools and raw materials. A programme which could assist the handicraft worker to obtain credit is the organising of cooperative credit unions among the producers of handicrafts. These unions will enable the producers to obtain credit, raw materials, and technological and marketing advice.

The management skills of the craftworker should also be upgraded to cope with the new situation. For instance, in costing an article the village craftworker does not take adequately into account labour expended on the article. Thus an entrepreneur needs to have a knowledge of costing and simple accounts. This should be part of the Sevika's training, so that she could act as a resource person for small entrepreneurs.

CONCLUSION AND OBSERVATIONS

The training of village leaders from within the village community is undoubtedly an extremely useful method of reaching out to the women at the grass-root levels. Of special importance is this approach in a developing, predominantly rural country where distance and expense make it difficult for any organisation to conduct an integrated programme of development.

Considering the level of education (both of the trainee and the village women) as well as the short duration of the course, it is not possible for a training centre to provide a very high level of training in all aspects. It would therefore be highly desirable to extend the course and concentrate on training in a specialised sphere, and also to enlist more actively the co-operation of government and non-governmental agencies operating at the village level for the welfare of the community.

Understandably, financial constraints prevent the expansion of the existing centre or the opening of a new training centre. Efforts need to be made to obtain financial assistance. The sales centre should also be developed; at present the quality of goods displayed scarcely competes with goods in the market, or for that matter with the quality expected of export products.

The Sevikas trained at the Kaduwela Centre should be given the necessary assistance to set up a "model home" in the village itself.

*Analysis and Summary of the Study on 125 Samitis*Demographic Data*Age-group of those who responded*

Age below 30 years	-	72 per cent
Age between 30-60 years	-	24 per cent
Age above 60 years	-	4 per cent

Family Members per Family Unit (Villages)

Up to 5 members' families	-	31 per cent
Between 6-10 members' families	-	56 per cent
Between 11-14 members' families	-	13 per cent
Average number of members per family	-	7

Pattern of Food Consumption in the Families*(a) Frequency of meals per day*

Thrice	-	12 per cent
Twice	-	74 per cent
Once	-	7 per cent
Not at all / no responses	-	7 per cent

(b) Vegetable intake

2 kinds every day	-	46 per cent
3 kinds every day	-	34 per cent
4 kinds every day	-	10 per cent
Seldom/no response	-	10 per cent

(c) Fruit intake

One or more every day	-	11 per cent
Two or three a week	-	41 per cent
One or less a week	-	11 per cent
Seldom	-	29 per cent

(d) *Fish intake (dried/fresh)*

Three times a day	-	28 per cent
Twice a day	-	30 per cent
Once a day	-	21 per cent
Seldom/never	-	20 per cent

(e) *Meat intake*

Once a day	-	1 per cent
2-3 times a week	-	10 per cent
1-2 times a fortnight	-	11 per cent
Seldom/never	-	68 per cent

Money spent on food per person per day

20-50 cents	-	10 per cent
50 cents to Rs.1.00	-	30 per cent
Rs.1/- to Rs.1/50	-	34 per cent
Between Rs.1/50 to Rs.3/50	-	26 per cent

Whereas most families consume rice, vegetables and coconuts grown on their lands, fruit, eggs and milk which have to be purchased are not a frequent item of consumption.

Type of kitchen utensils used/possessed by families

All clay pots	-	50 per cent
All saucepans	-	3 per cent
More clay pots and few saucepans	-	34 per cent
No response	-	34 per cent

(The majority of families cook in clay pots on open fires on the ground).

Health and Sanitation*Drinking water supply*

From a deep well in own/another's garden	-	54 per cent
From a shallow well in own/another's garden	-	8 per cent
From a river, spout, lap	-	5 per cent
No response	-	33 per cent

Type of latrines used

Pit latrines	-	51 per cent
Water-sealed latrines	-	29 per cent
No response	-	20 per cent

House Plans for Families

The house plans of the families are quite varied - 39 types. Mainly the large families live in one or at most two bedrooms, a verandah, a living/diningroom and a kitchen/store. Small families generally live in better houses with two or three bedrooms, a verandah, a livingroom, a kitchen, and a separate store.

Work Done by Women (Besides Housekeeping and Care of Children)*(a) Agriculture*

Every day - half or more of day	-	10 per cent
Every day - a few hours only	-	28 per cent
About 2-3 hours a week	-	26 per cent
Seasonal	-	24 per cent
None	-	12 per cent

(b) Handicrafts

Embroidery	-	26 per cent
<i>henna, wetakeiya</i>	-	30 per cent
Cloth weaving	-	11 per cent
Lace making	-	40 per cent
Needlework	-	59 per cent (Besides embroidery)

(More than half of the women do more than one handicraft.)

Utilisation of Handicraft Produced

For home use only	-	32 per cent
For home use and sale	-	34 per cent
Mostly for sale	-	5 per cent
No response	-	31 per cent

The quality of the handicraft produced is important if it is for sale; possibly that is why most of it is used at home.

Difficulties Faced by the Families

- (a) Insufficient income
- (b) Unemployment
- (c) No development in agriculture
- (d) No land
- (e) Poor housing
- (f) Difficulty of communication and transport
- (g) Ill-health.