

PSC paper 23

"Integrated Rural Extension Services in  
the Machakos District of Kenya"

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INTEGRATED RURAL EXTENSION SERVICES  
IN MACHAKOS DISTRICT

by Dr. S.M. Barghouti

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Communication and education in rural development is a complicated process. There are many problems to tackle during this process. There are inadequate channels to reach the rural communities. Rural people may not afford a radio. Most of them are illiterate. Thus, radio, newspapers, and magazines will reach a limited audience.

However, there are many local channels that function in a given rural community. There are schools, adult education and literacy classes. There are also the government and non-government extension agents who attempt to reach rural families with relevant information and instruction.

Based on this situation, any programme in development support communication should take in consideration the limitation of the use of the mass media and at the same time attempt to utilize the local channels and resources of the intended community. One of the examples which is described here is FAO's project in Machakos District which is part of a bigger project called "Programmes for Better Family Living" in Kenya.

Operationally, FAO is introducing relevant concepts of population education into existing rural programmes through its planning for Better Family Living (PBFL) Project in Kenya. PBFL works through existing rural programmes, agricultural institutions, and services which provide excellent channels of communication with farmers and their families. These channels include agricultural extension, home economics, nutrition and food education, rural cooperatives and social services, and other rural extension programmes aimed at the general improvement of rural life.

One of the PBFL field activities which introduces population education within the general context of rural development is "Integrated Functional Education" in Machakos District of Kenya.

The project is based on the premise that informal education groups such as adult education and literacy classes, Women's groups and harambee committees, farmers training centres, and community training centres can play crucial role in strengthening the delivery of educational services to rural families.

In this project, extension field workers from various ministries and departments are working as a team to reach the informal groups with information related to agriculture, health, nutrition, family planning, maternal and child health, home economics and community development. By working as a team, these field extension workers

develop a holistic approach to the problems of rural families that ensures better understanding of the interrelationships of these problems. The relationships between agricultural production and nutrition needs, Kwashiorkor and child spacing, family budgeting and number of children, mother's health and frequency of pregnancies and other topics are discussed with the families to explain the complexities of their problems.

It is hoped that rural families, as a result of this holistic teaching approach will propose better solutions to their problems based on their understanding of their total situation. Farmers will see that changes in agricultural productions is highly related to the nutrition situation of their families and family size has a lot to do with their resources, land allocations, savings and investments. Thus, a solution to an agricultural problem may after all start at home rather than in the field.

Here we briefly describe the first phase of the "Machakos Integrated Functional Education Project". The first phase is composed of several steps. These steps were followed in order to achieve a high level of participation and involvement of the various rural extension field workers in planning and implementing the project.

It is assumed that the field worker's commitment and involvement in the planning of field projects will determine how rural people will participate in these projects. Thus, the first phase of the Machakos project attempted to achieve:

1. To establish a coordinated policy for planning rural extension activities in the district.
2. To develop an integrated strategy for implementing the proposed activities.
3. To define the short range and long range activities of the project.
4. To select locations in the district for initial implementation of the project.
5. To develop educational programmes and produce needed locally relevant educational materials for use both: by field workers and by rural families.
6. To develop realistic and practical strategy to expand this educational approach to all localities in the district through existing and new established adult education and literacy classes, courses at the farmers training centres and women's group in this district.

### Objectives of the Project

1. To improve the delivery of extension services in the district through the establishment of practical extension strategies which can reach rural families regularly. These strategies call on the field workers from various departments (health, agriculture, nutrition, home economics, family planning, community development, social services and adult education) to coordinate their field programmes and to integrate their field activities to reach rural people as families in social groups. Thus, rural families in the district should be reached through group-extension methods. These methods require that extension field workers regularly reach adult education and literacy classes, women's groups, farmers training courses and other non-formal functions.
2. Extension field workers should develop family life educational materials and visual aids which they can use in their extension activities. This material will be based on local problems and needs as identified by the field workers. Rural families will use these educational materials to improve their understanding of their problems and their solutions on one hand, and to improve their reading and literacy skills on the other.
3. This educational materials should become part of the teaching texts and handbooks in the curricula of adult education and literacy classes, and other training functions.

### How was it done?

#### a. Preliminary Preparations:

1. In early 1973, the health, family planning and nutrition field workers started the group extension education methods with rural families who attended the mobile clinic in two locations in Machakos district. As a result of the increasing interest and participation of rural families in this educational exercise, the three field workers requested that other field workers from other departments be involved, in order to assist families in all aspects of their daily problems.
2. An orientation meeting was held in February 1973, for all extension field workers from all departments in the district. The meeting resulted in the selection of a committee which become responsible for planning an educational programme which includes all rural extension activities. The committee was chaired by the district adult education officer. The members represented agriculture, home economics, health, nutrition, family planning, social welfare, community development and information.

3. The Committee was assigned to search for other locations where the integrated rural educational services will be extended. The committee selected two more locations: Kalama and Ithiani.
4. The committee introduced and explained this project of integrated educational services to the people in the locations through a baraza which was held in April 1973. The people were asked to identify the problems about which they want information and education. As a result of this meeting, the mobile clinic, literacy classes, and the adult education classes in the location were selected as the best way to reach people with needed information. During the baraza, the people were told that a survey will be needed to collect information about the community, the families, and the social, educational, and economic situation in the location.

b. Survey of the Communities

In May and June the extension field workers prepared a questionnaire and collected information about the families in one community. More communities will be surveyed as the project progresses. The questionnaire provided information about economic, social and educational status of the families and their problems in agriculture, health, housing, family planning and nutrition. (A summary of these findings appears in Appendix II).

c. Development of Local Educational Materials

1. The results of the survey assisted in clarifying the content areas of the educational and extension activities of the project. The field workers emphasized the need for their involvement in the development of educational material. Thus, they will improve their own understanding of the problems of the area and will ensure that solutions to these problems are based on local conditions and resources. Therefore, through this process, the field workers are improving their function from being merely a linkage between sources of information and rural families to becoming generators and producers of information. Their function gives more dynamism and can always be refreshed by the new materials which these field workers want to develop.
2. It became clear that if the field workers are to become effective educators, they need some training in education and in preparation of educational materials. It was generally agreed that adult education and literacy classes, farmers training courses, clinic visitors, and women's groups will be the audience of the educational materials which are developed by the field workers. In order to reach these targets

effectively, a training workshop on the development of family life educational materials was held in October - November 1973 for the rural field workers who are involved in this project.

3. During the writing exercises, the field workers prepared lesson outlines, lesson notes, and leaflets which will be used in their training and educational activities with rural people. (Family Life Educational Materials).
4. The development of educational materials was accomplished according to the following steps:
  - a. The first step saw the definition of the problems of rural families in the various fields of family life.
  - b. Problems were rated according to their priorities on the list.
  - c. These problems cover areas in health and hygiene, agriculture, home economics, nutrition, family planning and community development.
  - d. Problems with high priorities were selected as topics for lesson notes, lesson outlines, and leaflets.
  - e. The field workers prepared their lessons notes in consultation with resource personnel and material. The resource personnel were specialists in various family life subject matters and were assigned to help the director of the workshop who is a literacy specialist and aided the development of simplified leaflets and handouts which could be given to rural families who participate in extension groups.
  - f. The lessons are to be distributed after being edited and checked for language, style, and content accuracy. A manual of these educational materials will be prepared and made available for the field workers in the district. The leaflets and handouts will be made available to rural families. (See Appendix III for detailed description of the process of curricula development and preparation of educational materials).
  - g. 48 lessons were compiled and 15 leaflets were prepared. In addition, 17 lessons and 7 leaflets were outlined to be prepared in the field.

#### The Project links with the mass media

The mass media in this project are seen as enforcing agents for this educational efforts. At the national level, copies of the

educational material are made available for the Voice of Kenya to be used by the educational programmes. To adopt the media channels to local conditions, the project will soon be using the portable cassette tape recorder as means for facilitating group discussions and groups actions in rural communities. So far, the project has been utilizing film strips and slides, in addition to two films on "integration" and "communication skills" that illustrate the main concepts of communication in rural education.

Intensive utilization of national mass media institutions will progress once the project's model is adopted by more districts in the country.

It is hoped that once the model proves its effectiveness, the team of the rural extension workers in Machakos will present the model to other districts in order to spread this approach in other rural areas of Kenya.

The problems faced by such an approach are many. The continuous transfer of personnel, the logistic problems in reaching rural families in groups, and lack of resource educational material may affect the progress of such a project. Also, rural extension field workers need extensive training in planning and implementing simple field surveys and in identifying local problems and needs. Further training is also needed for improving their skills in developing simple and clear educational materials that could be used by literates and semi-literates in the community. The continuity of such a project depends largely on the commitment of the field workers to improve their educational services and on their conviction that problems of development are not merely located in their individual fields of specialization, but that every discipline be it agriculture or family planning has its significant contribution to make to the development process.

#### Future activities

Future activities will concentrate on:

1. Testing and evaluating the educational materials.
2. Reaching more adult education and literacy classes and other extension groups in order to provide this educational service to all localities in the district.
3. Adapting the present educational materials to fit the reading skills of new literates and beginners in literacy classes.
4. And developing further educational materials relevant to problems as needed. A timetable for implementing these activities will be discussed by district officers who represent the various departments in Machakos District.



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