



MATCOM

training for the management of cooperatives

TRAINER'S MANUAL

WORK PLANNING

material for management training in agricultural co-operatives

international labour office geneva



MATCOM

material and techniques for cooperative management training

The MATCOM Project was launched in 1978 by the International Labour Office, with the financial support of the Swedish International Development Authority (SIDA)

In collaboration with cooperative organisations and training institutes in all regions of the world, MATCOM designs and produces material for the training of managers of cooperatives and assists in the preparation of adapted versions for use in various countries. MATCOM also provides support for improving the methodology of cooperative training and for the training of trainers.

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topic

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why plan ?

Session 1.1 Introduction

Session 1.2 The Need for Planning

SESSION 1.1INTRODUCTION

Objective: To demonstrate the importance of careful planning of a co-operative society's operations, and to identify sources of expertise within the group of participants.

Time: One to two hours.

Material: Completed pre-course questionnaire.

Timetable.

List of participants.

Session Guide:

- 1) If a prominent visitor is to open the programme, he or she should be asked to give examples of problems or wastage that have arisen because the managers failed to plan. He or she should stress that for people in the trainees' position it is essential to master a practical and efficient planning technique.
- 2) See that any administrative problems are dealt with now, such as matters of accommodation, payment of expenses, transport, room for private study, etc.
- 3) Point out that a training course such as this is an investment. Attempt to estimate its total cost (including trainees' salaries while in training). Point out that unless the value of the benefit to the co-operative from this course exceeds the cost of the course, the money would be better spent elsewhere. Hence, trainees should continually relate what they are learning to their own jobs. If the material appears irrelevant or mistaken, or if they do not understand how to use it, they must say so. The course will be changed accordingly.
- 4) Go briefly through the timetable. Stress that the trainees will be required to contribute and not merely to listen. People learn not by passively listening but by actively participating.
- 5) Ask each trainee to summarize his prior training and experience and to state what he hopes to gain from the course. Refer to the

pre-course questionnaire if necessary. Stress that everyone brings something to the course and that the total experience in the group as a whole is substantial. While the trainers and material will provide ideas about techniques and a structure for the course, a major input must come from the trainees themselves.

- 6) Tell trainees that at the end of the course each of them will be expected to demonstrate what he has learned by preparing a detailed plan for some project or operation to be implemented upon his return to his society. The plan will include a list of all activities required to complete the total task, a chart to show the sequencing and the relationship between the activities, and a time plan. All this will be based upon the special planning techniques which trainees will learn during the course.
- 7) Tell trainees that the instructor intends to contact them after the course to assess how successful they have been in implementing their plans. The course, rather than they themselves, will be evaluated by their success.

SESSION 1.2THE NEED FOR PLANNING

Objective: To enable trainees to recognize the need for planning as well as its requirements and limitations.

Time: One and a half to two hours.

Material: Micro Case-Studies "Co-operatives with Problems" and "Two Different Managers".

Session Guide:

- 1) Distribute copies of the micro cases to all trainees. Allow trainees up to fifteen minutes to read the cases and to complete the assignment.
- 2) Ask trainees whether they themselves ever experienced such problems, or have heard of them in other societies. Ask individual trainees for their answers to the assignment as related to the first story.

Alpha Society:

The answers in this case seem simple enough:

- Transport was lacking.
- Somebody forgot to order it or it did not come as ordered.
- Whoever was responsible should have remembered to order the transport and should have made sure that it did, in fact, arrive.

Elicit similar answers from other trainees for the other situations.

Beta Society:

- Finance was lacking.
- The Bank never issued a loan.
- The Society should have requested the loan earlier, or the Bank should have dealt with the application more quickly.

Gamma Society

- The necessary skills were lacking.
- The Society failed either to appoint an experienced drier operator or to train one of its existing staff.
- The responsible manager should have appointed someone qualified or sent someone for training.

Delta Society:

- Most of the necessary resources were lacking.
- The Co-operative Department and the members whose real responsibility it was had failed to consider what resources were needed and, in particular, to appoint a manager who might overcome at least some of the problems.
- The manager should have seen to it that any expectations roused were reasonable and based on a realistic assessment of what could be done in the time and with the money available.

- 3) Ask trainees why it is that problems of this type are still common in co-operatives and elsewhere when it is perfectly obvious why the problems occur and what should have been done to prevent them.

Trainees may refer to the basic shortage of three fundamental resources:

- physical: materials or equipment such as vehicles, chemicals or spare parts;
- financial: loans, cash or foreign exchange;
- human: manpower (numbers), or, more importantly, particular attitudes and skills (quality).

If fundamental resources such as these are not available, how can planning remedy the situation? Explain that the remainder of this session will be used to show that proper planning is, in fact, the best way to overcome difficulties of this type.

- 4) Refer back to the case-studies. Given that the necessary resources in each case were scarce, what could the manager of the society

have done to minimise, if not altogether eliminate, the kind of problem described? Elicit suggestions such as the following:

- Assessing the society's needs well in advance, he could increase the chances of obtaining the resource by arranging for it as early as possible.
- Anticipating the difficulty of supply, he could make individual staff members responsible for obtaining the necessary resource.
- Realizing that the supplier might not deliver on time, he could order supplies from two or more suppliers with the intent to cancel one order when it became clear which would deliver first.
- Determining the resources needed and the time available, the manager could select and pursue those objectives most likely to be achieved.
- He could make alternative arrangements in case a resource might not be available.

Ask trainees to suggest what alternatives might have been made in each of the four case-studies. For example:

- a) Animal transport or bullock carts might have been able to move the maize.
 - b) Customers might have been willing to make advances or immediate payment, if necessary, in return for a discount.
 - c) The supplier of the drier might be persuaded to send a technician even at some cost to operate the drier the first time it was used.
 - d) The co-operative officer should have been more realistic in his raising of members' expectations.
- 5) Ask trainees what the manager might have done in each case, if he were fairly certain that the necessary resource could not be available at all. Answers might include the following:
- a) The eventual customers might have been paid to collect the maize.
 - b) The society could have managed its cash so that at least part payment could have been given to members on delivery. The

- situation could have been explained so that they would accept some delay between delivery and final payment.
- c) The drier might never have been bought, since one essential component - a trained operator - was not available. A skilled operator is as necessary as the engine or the fuel. Equipment purchase should be delayed in the absence of any of these.
 - d) The members should have been involved in the planning. Problems and pre-requisites for their solution should have been anticipated. Solutions might have been forthcoming and disappointment minimized through properly guided member participation.
- 6) Stress that all these possibilities require certain management activities:
- identification of the task to be performed;
 - identification of activities needed to perform the task;
 - identification of resources necessary to carry out the activities;
 - anticipation of the time required to obtain these resources and of any problems likely to be experienced in their supply;
 - identification of ways in which the resources are most likely to be obtained, or of alternative resources if the most desirable ones are unlikely to be available in spite of management effort.

This is fundamentally what planning involves. The best planners can never ensure that everything will happen as planned, but they can minimise the chances of failure.

- 7) Many people feel that planning is only appropriate in an economy where the supply of physical, financial and human resources is adequate, or at least predictable. What is the point of planning, they ask, if shortages or total breakdown of supply are unpredictable because of weather, political factors, poor communications, etc.?

To promote discussion on this point, distribute copies of the

case-study "Two Different Managers". Allow trainees up to fifteen minutes to complete the assignment.

Ask individual trainees to give their answers. They should appreciate that good planning identifies exactly how much of each critical resource will be required for what purpose and at what time. Manager Scott can study his plan and quite quickly decide how he should modify it because of the reduced transport, but manager Wilson will be forced to start planning from the very beginning. He may use the transport facilities unwisely because he has taken no time to plan.

Planning is just as necessary where resources are unreliable as where they are predictable. Planning for uncertainty is even more likely to be useful than planning for a predictable future.

- 8) Ask trainees if they have any experience with projects which have been carefully and expertly planned, but which have nevertheless not been successfully implemented. Ask them to describe examples which occur to them.

Stress that planning alone achieves nothing. The implementation of a plan requires adequate administration. Managers must not make the mistake of believing that plans, no matter how elegant, are a substitute for effective management.

Ask trainees to attempt to recall projects of two different types:

- those that were well-planned but poorly implemented, and
- those that were poorly planned, or perhaps not planned at all, but effectively managed.

Ask trainees which type is more likely to succeed. Stress that good field management can often compensate for the lack of planning, but that even the best plans cannot succeed without well-managed implementation. Planning is important, but it tends to be done in the office and on paper rather than in the field and "in reality". Co-operative managers must not lose sight of the real world, producing beautiful plans impossible to implement.