

NSS REGULAR ACTIVITIES IN ADOPTED VILLAGES, SLUMS

NSS volunteers generally work with villages, slums and voluntary agencies to complete 120 hours of regular activities during an academic year. The aim of NSS volunteers in these areas has already been discussed in the previous chapter. As per the fundamental principles of National Service Scheme, a volunteer is expected to remain in constant touch with the community. Hence, it is of vital importance that a particular village/slum is selected for implementation of NSS programmes. As the NSS volunteer is to live with the members of the community and learn from their experience during his/her tenure in NSS, the village/slum should be carefully selected for adoption by NSS unit.

1. Adoption of Villages: Adoption of a village and area is a very meaningful programme in NSS. It is far better to concentrate attention on one village and take up the task for development perspective, than to fritter away energy in many locations involving too many activities which may not be completed at all or where the follow up action may not be possible. From this point of view, village adoption programme should ensure continuity of work vis-a-vis sustained action, evaluation and follow up work.

Contacting Village/Area Leaders: As a first step in this programme, it is necessary to establish contact with more than one village which would help to select a village where 'Leadership' is well-established. In other words, selecting a village with proper leadership is very important as the sustained follow-up action and evaluation is ensured in such places. To start with, the NSS unit can take the help of the Block Authorities, District Panchayat Officer, District Tribal Welfare Officer, District Medical Officer, Extension Officer of Agriculture, Irrigation and Education Departments for the selection of the village. It is to be noted that the selected villages should be within a short distance from the college so that constant contact can easily be made.

Survey of the Village/Area: Before drawing up the plan of action, it is absolutely necessary to conduct a comprehensive survey of few villages situated at a short distance from the college. The assistance from the teachers and students of agriculture, economics, commerce, geography, statistics, home science, social work, medicine, psychology and education etc. have to be sought for the purpose. Conducting socio-economic survey can be an interesting field activity which has direct bearing on the curriculum of economics, commerce, statistics, psychology, health education etc. The report of such a survey will provide up-to-

date information about the problems and potentials of the village and help in programme planning for village development. The applied field work will help the students to increase their analytical ability and deepen their thinking. Further, this will help them to identify the problems which have been left unnoticed. The survey work can also be accomplished with the help of PRA exercises (Participatory Rural Appraisal).

Identification of problems(s) : It is one the basis of this need assessment that projects/programmes are to be formulated. The Programme Officers should use their discretion and should identify the projects which can be completed by seeking assistance from the communities/other agencies. As the aim of adoption of village or area is to give new ideas of development to the villagers which would improve their living conditions. Once the trust of the communities is won, they start cooperating with the NSS volunteers and approach them for solution of their problems. One of the important service that can be rendered by NSS volunteers is disseminating information about the latest developments in agriculture, watershed management, wastelands development, non-conventional energy, low-cost housing, sanitation, nutrition and personal hygiene, schemes for skill development, income generation, government schemes, legal-aid, consumer protection and allied field. A liaison between Government and other development agencies like Banks, IRDP, ICDS, NREP, DWACRA, JRY etc. can also be made. The Programme Officer (P.O.) should motivate the communities in involve themselves with NSS for the community development work undertaken by the NSS Unit. Further he or she will have to seek the help of various government departments and agencies for technical advice and financial assistance. Therefore, he/she must establish the good rapport with the Government officials and development agencies. For this, it is better if the administration is taken into confidence by prior consultations.

Completion of Projects: As already stated, the Programme Officer must select the projects very carefully as the image of NSS depends upon the successful completion of such projects. Successful completion of the projects can win appreciation and credit of the community.

Evaluation of Project: Every project should be evaluated after its completion by involving members of the community, Govt. officials and Panchayat officials. The NSS Unit should learn from the lapses in the execution of the project and plan for the next project keeping in view the bottlenecks and constraints faced by the during the earlier project.

2. Adoption of Slums: Most of the colleges and universities are usually located in the urban areas. Due to long distance between the college campuses and the villages, the visits to the adopted villages by the NSS volunteers may become

expensive and time consuming. In view of this, it is desirable to adopt slum especially by colleges located in urban areas.

Survey of the Slum: For adoption of a slum, there should be composite survey team consisting of students drawn from faculties like, Arts, Science, Engineering, Medicine, Home Science and Social Work etc. The selected area should be compact and should be easily accessible for students. Areas with acute political conflicts may be avoided. The issues pertaining to the identification of problems, project planning, interaction and coordination with the various departmental agencies, execution and completion of projects shall be undertaken on the same basis/lines as discussed earlier in the part 'Adoption of Villages'. The progress of projects should also be reviewed frequently.

Services in Slum: The slum, tenements, jhuggis and jhoupris can be adopted by the NSS units with the aim of slum improvement and check its spread. Under this, activities like providing water, water logging, sanitation, electricity, drainage, health and welfare services, life and living conditions, can be undertaken.

NSS volunteers for Slum work: Taking into account the living conditions & status of slum dwellers of the slums, only highly motivated, adaptable, mature & skilled students should be selected for slum development.

Following are the tasks which the students can undertake in slum areas:

(a) As community Investigators: They can prepare brief community profile on various slums in the city or town covering different amenities, services, and living conditions; etc,

(b) As community Workers: They can identify local leaders and in cooperation with them discuss local problems on which cooperative action can be initiated.

(c) As Programme Aides: Students can help the local communities in launching a number of programmes like setting up a free milk distribution centre, sanitation drive, recreation, adult and primary education, health projects like immunization, first aid centre, child care, nutrition classes, and free legal aid centres etc. They can also help in forming youth clubs, children's groups, mahila mandals etc.,

(d) As Community Organisers: NSS students, after establishing rapport with the slum dwellers, can form community association to tackle local problems on a group basis with reliance on local resources, self help and mutual aid and with some minimum external assistance.

Some suggestions for Selection of slums

(I) There should be a socio-economic survey of the slum by a team of volunteers drawn from different faculties.

(ii) The selected area should be compact. There should not be more than 300 residents in an adopted slum.

(iii) The community people should be receptive to the ideas of improving their living standard. They should also be ready to coordinate and involve in the projects undertaken by the NSS for their upliftment.

(iv) The areas where political conflicts are likely to arise should be avoided by the NSS units.

(v) The area should be easily accessible to the NSS volunteers to undertake frequent visits to slums.

(vi) The working in the slum needs commitment & hard work. Only sensitive and highly motivated NSS volunteers can find easy to serve in slum areas.

The NSS Programme Officers should plan activities in the adopted village or slum in such a way that the leisure time of the NSS volunteers can be utilized in the service of adopted village or slum. Week-end visits to the adopted areas provide suitable opportunities to live with the community and know their problems and make an earnest effort to do something for them. Similarly efforts should be made to follow-up the work done in the areas earlier. Such sustained efforts will flower into friendship between the NSS Unit and the community. These activities can be arranged through one day camps and frequent visits under regular activities.