

IMPACT OF TRAINING TO SOCIAL FORESTRY PERSONNEL

Ever since the introduction and expansion of the social forestry programmes, the expectations of the people about the performance of the field level functionaries in the social forestry project have been on the increase. The approach now followed in implementing the programme also warrants a re-orientation in the modus operandi of the field level functionaries. From being vigilant and tough protectors of the forest wealth, the Rangers and Foresters working in the social forestry project have to play the role of patient persuaders and motivators to ensure that the programme meets with the acceptance of the people. Knowledge and confidence of these personnel in dealing with the people, therefore have become inevitable. In order to achieve this objective, a series of training programmes on extension methods and public relations were organised for the benefit of social forestry personnel. A research study was simultaneously undertaken to assess the impact of these trainings on the knowledge and confidence level of these officer trainees in relation to extension methods and public relations.

The training programme on extension methods and public relations was organised in eight batches with two batches of Foresters and six batches of Range Officers during 1988-1989. The course contents, both theory and practical were finalised in consultation with the senior officials of the social forestry department. In the week-long training programmes, the participants were exposed to the various extension methods and public relations activities. In order to measure the impact of the training on

the knowledge and confidence dimensions, experimental design was used as follows:

Knowledge level: A teacher-made knowledge test was developed keeping in view the theory and practical course contents of the training programme. The knowledge test was administered in the structure schedule form among the trainees before the commencement of the training. Similarly, the same test was administered at the close of the training. Mean gain in knowledge for each batch of the trainees was computed separately.

Confidence level: To measure the confidence level of the participant-trainees the self-anchoring ladder technique suggested by Cantril and Free (1962) was used. At the beginning of the training, the trainees were asked to indicate their perception of confidence standing in the ladder. The top rung of the ladder represented extreme confidence and the lowest rung the lack of it. The technique was repeated at the end of the training also and the mean gain in confidence level for each batch of the trainees was worked out. The paired 't' test was employed to find out the significance of difference between the pre-training and post-training knowledge and confidence levels of the trainees separately.

From the data furnished in Table 1, it is clear that the training programme on extension methods and public relations was very effective in increasing the knowledge and confidence level of the Range Officers and Foresters. It is also substantiated by the 't' values 80.25 and 55.28 respectively which indicate sig-

Table 1. Pre and post-training knowledge and confidence levels

No. of batch	No. of trainees	Mean knowledge score		Mean gain in knowledge (%)	Mean confidence score		Mean gain in confidence (%)
		Pre-training (%)	Post-training (%)		Pre-training (%)	Post-training (%)	
1	13	25.50	67.50	164.71	40.00	50.00	25.00
2	14	24.00	74.20	209.17	37.00	57.00	54.05
3	21	20.70	65.00	214.00	25.00	65.00	160.00
4	20	22.80	58.26	155.53	34.00	66.00	94.20
5	19	15.00	60.44	302.93	37.00 »	65.80	77.84
6	19	20.00	67.60	238.00	65.00	78.06	20.09
7	26	33.00	60.00	81.82	44.00	69.00	56.82
8	23	44.00	62.80	42.73	40.00	64.00	60.00
Mean	155	25.60	64.40	176.10	40.25	64.35	68.49

nificant difference between the pre-training and post-training knowledge and confidence level of the participant trainees. The impact of the training in terms of knowledge gain was substantial when compared to that of confidence level. This could be attributed to the subjective bias and the perceptual inaccuracy of the officer trainees at the pre-training phase.

The study has clearly demonstrated the effectiveness of the training programme on extension methods and public relations in augmenting the knowledge and confidence level of the social forestry personnel. The study also points to the need for similar training programmes with concurrent monitoring for the social forestry extension personnel at all levels.

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