

A VILLAGE PUBLIC WORKS PLAN

Most rural strategic hamlets contain few public facilities such as adequate sources for water, sanitation facilities, public halls and administration buildings, and many lack even adequate access roads into the hamlet. The problem is not limited to the establishment of such basic facilities. More important is the maintenance of existing and planned public facilities. Hamlet defense installations rapidly deteriorate; they require continual maintenance and should be made more impregnable, permanent and attractive. Likewise, hamlet internal and external roads and bridges require improvement and regular maintenance. Wells must be dug, kept clean and in good repair and pumps require steady maintenance. Obviously there is an immediate need for village/hamlet public works departments.

PROBLEM - To devise a method for immediate creation and continuance of village/hamlet public works systems.

The 1000 USOM-assembled Village Tool Kits may be used as the nucleus around which Village Public Works departments are established. It is suggested that in each village a toolkeeper be appointed, a toolhouse established, and that public revenue producing (piastre and/or "in kind") means be established to permit payment of the toolkeeper, maintenance and acquisition of new tools and public facilities. As suggested under the schools program, much of the toolkeeper's salary may be given "in kind": rent in kind by means of a publicly constructed and owned toolkeeper's house; food and other commodities in kind from those who do not wish to contribute piastres or labor on revenue-producing communal industrial or agricultural undertakings. The rental of tools for private use also can generate income. The plan envisages that the toolkeeper will soon become the Village Public Works Officer, charged with maintenance of all public facilities. Later his duties might include installation, operation and maintenance of village electrical systems, gravity-feed water systems and similar sophisticated community advancements. Likewise the hand-tool rental service can be expanded to include machine agricultural equipment, otherwise beyond the capability of individual farmers to acquire.

Again, this involves the "selling" of a concept and should be handled by competent cadre operating under the guidance of the Provincial Public Works Officer. Like in the school program, the public works representative should work from a fact sheet, item by item, explaining and opening for public discussion each point requiring decision. The representative should be an enthusiastic competent individual, himself thoroughly sold on the concept and program. He must be prepared to properly advise the populace on the advice and assistance that the populace may expect from the provincial and national governments. And,

most important, he should leave behind for public perusal, discussion and vote, a detailed plan, custom-built to the needs, desires, and capabilities of the village populace. Before departing, he should name the date of his next visit and, at that time, he should return with the official provincial (GVN) answers (including commitments) developed during his initial visit.