PROVINCIAL STRATEGIC HAMLET DEMONSTRATION/TRAINING CENTERS

1. A provincial strategic hamlet demonstration/training center is a representative piece of ground designated by and under the direct control of the province chief. Its purpose is four-fold: first, to provide an agricultural/economic training area for representatives from each of the provincial hamlets; second, by means of static structures and demonstrations, to expose all trainees and visitors to improved methods and facilities available to the hamlets and within the capabilities of hamlet dwellers to duplicate; third, to provide a convenient area where all provincial technical services may concentrate their hamlet economic development efforts; and, fourth, to establish in each province a "clearing house for ideas" which will be visited by people from each hamlet, the professionals within each province, and representatives from each of the GVN ministries, as well as U.S. and other foreign aid and assistance agencies.

2. The primary function, as the name implies, is to demonstrate what can be accomplished by the people themselves to better their own public and private standards of living in the hamlets and to teach them how to perform each task. Selection of the demonstration/training center site is important. It will do little good to establish a center on rich flat ground if most provincial hamlets are situated on hilly terrain surrounded by poor soil. The site should be a typical one for the province, and in some provinces, two or more sites may be desirable. Colonel Ho Nghia, Quang Duc Province Chief, has selected four 20-hectare sites - one for each district - thereby increasing his training capability, eliminating his trainee transportation costs, and keeping the people in the climate and terrain they are accustomed to. Areas he selected, incidentally, are those recently "farmed-out" by the highlanders who will return as trainees, thereby dramatically proving the worth of fertilization. Major Hoang Thong of Darlac Province has an excellent 80 hectare demonstration/training center which has the distinct advantage of close supervision by himself and the provincial technical chiefs. His center is well-advanced and operates in conjunction with the provincial Cailen Hoi Center with dual gains. Proximity to water, especially to a moving stream, is a vital consideration if water-wheels, water lifts, irrigation, fish ponds and the like are to be demonstrated. Similarly, consideration should be given to wind readings if windmill demonstrations are contemplated. Security, of course, is a major consideration and in many instances may actually dictate selection; however, demonstrations of hamlet defense and alarm systems, the functions of hamlet militia and the populace prior-to, during, and after an attack, emergency radio placement and operation, all are worthy of inclusion in the demonstration center and may justify selection of a site in an insecure area.

3. Size and configuration of the center will vary with the particular needs of each province. Size may be from three or four hectares to a hundred or more. If training in plowing or forestry is to be

operated in conjunction with the center, larger plots of ground will be required. Training in pig and poultry raising, small industry, and the usual demonstrations should require less land. As for configuration, it should fit the need. If the center is to take the shape of a model strategic hamlet, a defensible perimeter will be a controlling consideration. On the other hand, if two different types of terrain are desirable for the demonstrations and training, two main areas with an interconnecting road (dumb-bell shape) conceivably would be the best layout.

4. Internal layout of the center requires careful thought and planning. Since the objective is two-fold - to train selected hamlet dwellers in specific areas (agricultural, industrial and professional or trade) and to expose all comers to other improvements they may enjoy in their hamlet lives - too great segregation of activities would be a mistake, yet confusion must be avoided. It would be wise to estimate the numbers of trainees in each category to be in the center at any one time and situate facilities based on the requirements of this number. If later expansion is possible, it would be well to locate the center adjacent to an uncleared area, with initial layout of facilities such that they will remain useful with an expanded center.

5. Control and operation of a provincial strategic hamlet center should be under the province chief since only he has at his command fully competent technicians in all areas. Operation, of course, will be under a center manager, but it is recommended that each facility, demonstration and training program be placed under the appropriate provincial technical officer. For example, the provincial public health chief should be responsible for operation of a hamlet health station and training of hamlet health workers; the public works chief, however, would have first designed (after consultations with public health) and supervised construction of the station.

Virtually all work - including preparation of the land and construction of facilities - should be performed as "on-the-job" training by the hamlet trainees. It is recognized though that even with the province furnishing top supervision and technical assistance and the trainees acting as their own labor force, some semi-permanent instructor cadre will be required. A need for such cadres is recognized and provinces should make known their requirements in their economic development plans (second phase of the strategic hamlet program). This is, of course, the long-term answer. There are several possible solutions for the short-term. One might be to assign a select SDC unit to act as instructors, when not providing defense for the area. They could also serve as center (hamlet) militia and should be most effective at demonstrating hamlet defense to the trainees.

A second interim solution, now being successfully practiced under Maj. Ly Ba Hy, Binh Long Province, is the granting of on-the-job training to a few needy families. The families do all of the land preparation and construction of facilities under the direction of the provincial technical services. Each major facility is treated as a separate PL 480 self-help project which provides food assistance for

the families and makes the project eligible for other commodity assistance. The families build model homes and other buildings in the center, in which they live, and a modest training-per diem of 10$ to 20$ is given each family during its period of "on-the-job" training. These people, incidentally, often develop into excellent instructors and may be considered later for permanent employment in the centers or for extension work.

6. Demonstrations, displays, and training included in each center will vary with the province and should change as the needs of the province change. Certain general guidelines should be established early. Suggested are the following:

a. All facilities and training should be directed toward the needs of hamlet dwellers. They should be designed to elevate both the private and public standards of living of the hamlets.

b. Care should be exercised to not violate the customs and mores of the people. Consideration should be given to devising agricultural, health, sanitation and educational improvements to fit the people instead of trying to change the people to conform with conventional practices.

c. Model homes, pig sty's, cattle pens, public buildings, wells, etc., all should be within the means of low income hamlet dwellers, utilizing locally obtainable materials such as clay and forest products. If nails are not available, poles should be notched, etc. Even though primitive materials may be used, no compromise should be tolerated on quality of workmanship. All corners should be squared and thatch roofs trimmed.

An example of these factors is a model 5-room home being constructed by Major Vu Duc Nhuan in Tay Ninh Province. The house was designed by the provincial public works staff with an estimated cost of 20,000$, not including unspecialized labor. A bill of materials was then prepared for the house with two columns. The first column was headed, "Man Hours Labor", the second, "Piastres". Then item by item on the bill of materials was scrutinized toward substituting locally procurable materials for those that would have to be purchased. Next, an estimate in man/hours was put opposite each item that could be procured locally to include cutting (digging), hauling, finishing and construction time. Similarly piastre entries were made opposite those items that must be purchased and man/hours for construction added to the man/hour column. Result was that the piastre cost estimate was reduced to 2,800$ for homes exceeding 20,000$ in value. When completed the actual costs in man/hours and piastres will be prominently displayed on the front of the home. A cement floor, to be included on the bill of materials, will be treated as an "extra", not essential to the structure but desirable when it can be afforded; the cost of cement, sand and gravel therefore will be shown separately. Points to remember are that piastre costs must be held to the absolute minimum on all structures demonstrated to keep similar structures in the hamlets within the means of the maximum number of people; no compromise

should be allowed on workmanship since this costs no money and sets the standards of construction for the province.

d. Centers should become partially, if not fully, self-supporting. Model houses should be constructed for the trainee families, dormitories for the individual trainees; food, grown at the center, should be used for meals and feed; products resulting from textile training should serve the clothing needs of the cadre and trainees; health, sanitation, teacher, industrial and trade trainees should provide the center with their respective services; and surpluses in all areas should be turned into cash income for the benefit of the center.

e. Not all facilities need be efficient as long as they serve the intended purposes of demonstration. For example, a water wheel and/or windmill might be used to raise water from a river demonstrating these useful methods for irrigation and other purposes. The water so raised could be allowed to flow toward a dam, demonstrating its construction and utilization. Finally a water wheel used for generating electricity might be situated at the terminal end of the flow demonstrating this useful device. From an efficiency point of view this combination would be impractical, but for demonstration purposes it should be ideal.

f. Trainees should be given cross-training in other subjects insofar as it doesn't interfere with their main training effort. An entire farm family, for example, might enter the center for training in improved farm methods. Opportunity exists to give the adult males practical training in wood, metal and masonry construction, the women in home economics subjects, and the children in elementary education. The whole family could benefit by sanitation and similar courses including perhaps literacy instruction.

g. Field extension work should follow all training courses conducted at the center. Also, the center should stock hard-to-get items such as tools, pump parts, seeds, etc. available to graduates. This is the follow-through necessary to make instruction effective.

7. Specific examples of what might be included in a typical provincial strategic hamlet demonstration/training center are:

a. Several model homes of different sizes, construction and price ranges, each with home gardens and other facilities.

b. Strategic hamlet type meeting halls, information halls, markets, administrative buildings, arms and emergency radio buildings, etc. (Dormitories, mess halls, and other essential center buildings should resemble hamlet structures.)

c. Hamlet health station.

d. Hamlet self-help school with playground, agricultural area, etc. (To be used for all types of instruction.)

e. Wells and well digging equipment of all types suitable to the province.

f. Hamlet security fences of both the temporary and permanent "live" type suitable to the area. Emphasis should be placed on making the latter both impenetrable and beautiful.

g. Display of various other security devices and systems (Traps, hide-aways, etc.)

h. Sanitary facilities of the hamlet type.

i. Gravity feed water system.

j. Dams, irrigation techniques, water-lifting devices, contour farming methods (where applicable).

k. Electric power generation by both wind and water; distribution system for key buildings.

l. Agricultural, livestock, forestry displays incorporating comparisons of techniques and methods including fertilization.

m. Intra-hamlet and hamlet road and bridge construction techniques. (Essential Center roads and bridges are best; local labor and materials should be employed.)

n. A provincial economic research center with emphasis on development of hamlet industry and internal/external markets for hamlet products.

o. Village/hamlet tool house.

p. Sample hamlet industries of sufficient size to permit training. Examples include rice mills, lumber mills, quarries, textile works, tile, bricks, thatch, woven siding, food processing including smoke houses and drying platforms, metal works, implement making, the wood finishing industries, toy making.

q. Facilities for teaching hamlet specialized trades to include carpentry; masonry; water system construction, operation, maintenance; health and sanitation; farm implement and machine maintenance, road and bridge construction and maintenance; electrical system maintenance; animal training and utilization.

s. Fish pond.

t. Coastal provinces: fishing industries, techniques, facilities.

u. Demonstrations of organization and operation of village (or district) credit unions, production and consumer cooperatives, community equipment exchanges, banks, etc.

v. Extension (and graduate) service building.

8. Trainees from the hamlets may be either selected among volunteers or elected by hamlet populaces. The latter is encouraged whenever feasible. Recommended method is to assign a quota of individuals/families to each district for each type and period of training offered. Districts would sub-assign to villages/hamlets and the people would send the best qualified and able among their number to the center for training. It is important that training take place during slack periods and that quotas assigned take this into consideration. Whenever possible the hamlet people should pay transportation costs of the individual/family to and from the center (sometimes walking) and should provide any piastre per diem he requires during his period of training (This sometimes can be done by giving him saleable commodities, and the Center should have a means for converting such commodities into piastres; center also should have a cashier or bank to make regular dispersals of per diem deposited in advance or to be paid by the Province.)

9. Training received should be the principal payment to trainees and should be duly certified by a graduation certificate. In addition each trainee should receive the basic tools of his trade and supplies to allow him to enter the trade upon his return to his hamlet. Also, his obligation to the hamlet that elected him should be recognized. For example, if he learned open-well digging he should be given the capability to dig and finish two wells, one for the hamlet that sent him and one by direction of the province (his repayment for the training), both of which he would do with payment in PL 480 foodstuffs only. Thereafter he becomes a qualified contractor receiving payment in accordance with the market. (At this point, provincial extension service and assurance of continuing contracts and supplies become extremely important.) Another example: pigs. Upon graduation pig raising trainees might receive a pair of piglets, sufficient supplemental feed to carry the pigs through to the first harvest of feed crops (instruction to be included in training), cement and essential hardware for construction of a pig sty. Obligation to the province could be repaid by giving back half of the first litter plus one; to the community by training the next in line and presenting him with two piglets from the first litter (shortages to be made up from the second litter.)