

CONSIDERING AN INTERNATIONAL ASSIGNMENT

DR. THOMAS R. STITT, Agriculture Education Specialist
USAID/Southern Illinois University Contract Team
Kathmandu, Nepal

Travel and life in foreign lands is the current vogue for modern America. Mass media present opportunities for group tours, educational tours and individual journeys to Europe, South America or Asia. Diversity and variety abound to satisfy the requirements of every traveler. In addition to privately supported efforts there are travel and living opportunities which do not receive the attention of the mass media, i.e., International Assignment as a professional competent vocational technician. Since World War II many international agencies have been formed to provide technical and financial assistance to developing countries. (A list of agencies involved in the international development appears at the end of this presentation.)

There has been, and still remains a tendency for the average American to be satisfied that the world is developing at a rapid rate. The news media's reports on the "Green Revolution," Japan, the world's fastest growing economy and the sophisticated war machinery used throughout the world, imply progress. This information has tranquilized the American conscience to some of the real and critical needs in international development.

To review some of the real needs I refer to the June, 1971, issue of the *Survey of International Development*. In an article entitled "Extra Assistance Urged for 25 'Least Developed Nations'" it states:

A United Nations report (Document E/4990) prepared by the Committee for Development Planning, provisionally identified twenty-five countries - comprising about 150 million people - as the world's "least developed". To be classified as least developed, the following three main criteria were "substantially" the determining factors: per capita income of less than \$100 a year; manufacturing accounting for less than 10 per cent of the gross domestic product; and a less than 20 per cent literacy rate for persons 15 years old and over.

The report lists sixteen countries in Africa - Botswana, Burundi, Chad, Dahomey, Ethiopia, Guinea, Lesotho, Mali, Malawi, Niger, Rwanda, Somalia, Sudan, Uganda, United Republic of Tanzania and Upper Volta; eight in Asia and Oceania - Afghanistan, Bhutan, Laos, Maldives, Nepal, Sikkim, Western Samoa, and Yemen; and in Latin America the country of Haiti . . . (the report singles out India and Indonesia as having also very large numbers of poor people.)

Elsewhere in the July Survey it reports that "the estimated average annual income of a rural African to be a mere \$43 and that of an Asian only three dollars more (\$46)". This would easily add a few million more to the population called least developed.

The least developed countries share many general characteristics - they tend to be geographically small, their resource endowments are usually undiversified, their domestic markets are limited, health and social services are inadequate and levels of instruction grossly insufficient. Moreover, as the low literacy rates suggest, the countries are short of skilled labour.

There is surely a job to be done by the technically competent Vocational Educator. With the increasing number of public educational institutions incorporating a sabbatical leave system into the program of teacher improvement, improved travel providing access to all areas in the world, and increasing international awareness, a larger portion of the technically competent population will be accepting the challenge.

There are two viewpoints, those of the employee and employer, for consideration. Major emphasis will be given to factors the employee must consider.

FACTORS TO CONSIDER PRIOR TO ACCEPTING AN INTERNATIONAL ASSIGNMENT

In the analysis of prospective international assignment there are two prominent areas which must be assiduously appraised. For the purpose of discussion the area has been divided into

professional and personal (family) aspects. Experience and observation indicate that regardless of the professional opportunity, the family (assuming you are married) situation must be satisfactory if the assignment is to culminate in a totally successful experience. As such, the family aspect is discussed first.

FAMILY ASPECTS: The family unit will vary in each case including such variables as: Number of family members, age and number of dependents at home and away from home, the number of adult dependents in the States, the reactions and interactions of the family unit. After an analysis of the family situation, the necessary information must be compiled about the following areas:

1. Education, 2. Medical facilities, 3. Housing and utilities, 4. Communications, 5. Transportation, 6. Food and clothing, 7. Insurance, 8. Recreational facilities, 9. Need for availability of domestic help, 10. Financial requirements incurred in renting existing house, cost of living increase, traveling and miscellaneous expenses.

The professional international recruiter, working with people who understand the problems and solutions in the international environment, assumes equal comprehension by the neophyte and may inadvertently leave him tremendously uninformed.

To illustrate, additional elaboration is presented for the areas of Education and Domestic help.

Education: To ask if education is available will usually receive an affirmative response. This can be misleading until details are obtained regarding classification as private or public school, transportation to school; if boarding school, is distance three miles or three countries away? Classes - vs. - correspondence course, the cost and at whose expense, and accreditation of the school system should be known. The particulars about the educational system must be compared with the assessment of the family's educational requirements.

The second illustration, *Domestic help: In the age of mechanization in America many conveniences are taken for granted.* Some foreign posts have limited opportunity for daily active involvement of the wife. A logical conclusion is for the wife to care for the house in order to "keep busy." In a developing country where all water for the house is boiled for 20 minutes, all bread and pastries are baked at home, locally purchased food is cleaned and sterilized, and the washing is done with a wringer type washer and dried outside, the "care of the house to keep busy" can develop into a tremendously demanding situation. Conversely, domestic help including a cook, bearer, full-time babysitter, part-time gardener and a washer-ironer man can be a full time training-management-administration responsibility, skills generally not considered to be part of the average America housewives' capabilities, but is not an uncommon requirement in developing countries.

The two illustrations are incorporated to alert the newcomer to the international field to the need for probing for details in all aspects. The thorough and complete exploration of the family and in-country situation will provide the best possible guide to adaptability and acceptability of the family in the international setting that is under consideration.

PROFESSIONAL ASPECTS: Simultaneous to the considerations of the family, the professional aspects must be evaluated. In many respects this is an easier decision for it is concerned with the direct effect that it will have on only one person, you, as a professional. Areas for consideration include the following:

1. Leave-time: Your superior's willingness to allow you to be absent from the present position for the duration of the tour must be established. If termination of the present position is required, serious consideration must be given to the problems of locating, interviewing, and finally negotiating the next position while on a foreign post. This is a difficult task even with an acceptable communications system.

2. Professional Growth: The job description for the post considered should provide opportunity for professional growth in the area and subject matter of your major interest, (i.e., teaching,

supervisions, curriculum development, research, or writing in your subject matter area). The quality of administrative and professional staff which is available to provide leadership to your efforts is worthy of consideration.

3. **Institutional Support:** Institutional support of staff varies substantially with different countries and/or institutions. A clear understanding of what is expected from both parties will avoid later confusion and difficulties.

4. **Professional Losses:** Absence from the present assignment for a period of two years (not an uncommon length for an international assignment) will place serious restrictions on participation in ongoing graduate students research, professional research projects, publications, and involvement in institutional and professional organizations. The benefits must be sufficient to offset these losses.

5. **Timing:** The departure and return timing must correspond compatibly with both the family and professional requirements.

6. **Development Stage:** The stage of development varies from country to country and even locations within a country and must be compatible with the professional aspirations.

7. **In-Country Professional Support:** In research assignments, for example, consideration must be given to data collection systems, computer facilities, research assistants, information bank and resources available. For the teaching assignment the location, student population, resources available, teacher counterpart, to mention only a few, must be considered. Each subject matter area and job description must be compared to the in-country support and professional aspirations.

The final decision becomes a personal effort. Each individual must weigh honestly and fairly every aspect prior to making the final decision.

During the analysis of the situation and decision-making process, there are several steps which can be taken to assist you in obtaining the desired information. The major source is the agency which is negotiating the contract. There are other sources and the size, location, population, native language, years open to Americans, Europeans, and international organizations, will influence the availability of resource material. Sources include:

1. Reference material from the library. This will range from limited to extensive, depending on the country involved. As most positions call for involvement in development or implementation of programs in the foreign environment there are several references which bear consideration as desirable reading. (A reference list suggested by the author appears at the end of the article.)

2. Foreign students attending a nearby institution who are from the host country.

3. Faculty and staff members who have traveled and worked in the country.

4. Returned Peace Corps Volunteers who were posted in the country.

5. Films and slide series available through the audio-visual service.

Orientation to the culture, customs, religion and language are essential. It has been observed that institution staff members tend to be critical of international students who have not mastered the English language in America but have a casual attitude toward the mastery of the host country language. The mastery of the language may or may not be a prerequisite to the success of the technician; that will be dictated by the assignment. An understanding of the language will obviously not be detrimental. A thorough understanding of the culture, customs and religion of the country is critical. To criticize or express undue concern for practices which have long been a part of the customs, culture or religion of a people is only to live up to the host country national's expectations of the "Ugly Americans."

AGENCIES SELECTION CRITERIA: Each agency which is involved in international development will have its own specific requirements for technical support staff. They will vary, but all will give consideration to the following areas:

1. **Professional Competencies and Experience:** The job description covers a wide range of responsibility in some cases and extremely narrowly defined assignment in others. The agency's job is to identify and recruit the potential candidate whose professional competencies and experiences most nearly match the job description. This, as in all other areas, represents a value judgment on the part of the agency.

2. **Past Promotional Record:** This is standard and quite similar to those factors considered by all major institutions. Salary increments and promotions in a reasonable period of time are considered essential.

3. **Mobility-vs-Stability:** There is, or appears to be a conflict in this area. The extremes are unwanted but the desired range is

difficult to identify. Most agencies are not interested in a technician who has moved to a new position every year, without the benefit of salary or promotional advancement. They are not generally interested in a potential candidate who has become so "stable" that he has not moved forward in the system for 15 years. A staff member who has progressed in his profession in a normal or better than average rate will be favorably considered.

4. **Health and Age:** Again the agency will have its established limits. The age is not generally a limiting factor but rather depends on the components of length of tour, country under consideration, location within the country, temperature, altitude, diseases, facilities and support available. Health is a limiting factor and the agency must be confident that the potential advisor will be able to complete the tour in satisfactory health, in the area under consideration.

5. **Adaptability to a Foreign Environment:** At the present time there are no infallible procedures to determine the technician's response to a foreign environment. Personal interviews are essential for both parties involved. After selection, exposure to sensitivity training programs, training in the culture and customs and religion of the country will provide assistance in meeting the future demands of the technician.

VALUES OF INTERNATIONAL ASSIGNMENT

The value and benefit of an international experience cannot be totally established until the tour has been completed. The international experience will be at times, difficult, frustrating, and in some cases, it will be impossible to achieve the desired goals. Progress will be slow by American standards with "Manana" – for "Tomorrow" from South America or "Bholi Parsi" meaning "Tomorrow or the next day" from the East, being standard responses. Care should be taken however, to consider the fact that progress in the stateside system does not always move as fast as we deem desirable.

The International assignment provides a combination of professional and family opportunities. It might be expressed best in the terms of the Vocational Education as "Learning by doing." There is no other program in which you and your family may study, observe and participate in the international setting to the extent that is possible in an international assignment. The culture, environment, economy, language, technology, social organization and religion become a living laboratory in which you live each day.

The mental, physical and emotional state of the family will determine the degree to which you profit from the experience. This major factor, you – the catalyst – makes it impossible to predict the exact degree of benefit which will be derived.

The exposure to another language, culture or religion will bring your family to the realization that they do exist and assist in the development and involvement in those aspects of the country. One soon becomes aware of two major factors.

1. No system is perfect, infallible for all people – theirs, ours – or the best combination you can make of the two.

2. Efforts, techniques and systems which you have previously identified and categorized as undesirable, impractical, or even impossible will be in operation constantly – some quite successfully. This will cause you to assess and re-evaluate your system of identification and categorization and return to your previous job with a considerably broader base of alternatives than before.

The final analysis of an assignment will primarily depend on you and the effort you are willing to expend to ensure success. For those who are willing to make the necessary adjustments there is a tremendous opportunity for travel, exposure and involvement in new cultures, religions, and for meeting and making new friends around the world. There is also a valuable technical contribution which can be made in assisting developing countries to achieve social and economical stability. These benefits more than compensate for the difficulties and make an international assignment worthy of consideration.

SELECTED REFERENCES FOR READING DURING CONSIDERATION OF OVERSEAS ASSIGNMENT

Chang, Chi-Wen, *Rural Asia Marches Forward*. Focus on Rural and Agricultural Development, University of the Philippines, College of Agriculture, College, Los Banos, Laguna, Philippines, 1969.

Arensberg, Conrad M., and Arthur H. Niehoff, *Introducing Social Change: A Manual for Americans Overseas*, Aldine Publishing

Company, Chicago, Illinois, 1964.

Hall, Edward T., *The Silent Language*, Faucett Publications, Inc., Greenwich, Conn., 1959.

Rogers, Everett M., *Diffusion of Innovations*, The Free Press of Glencoe, The Crowell-Collier Publishing Co., New York, 1962.

INTERNATIONAL AGENCIES PROVIDING TECHNICAL AND/OR FINANCIAL SUPPORT TO COUNTRIES FOR SOCIAL OR ECONOMICAL DEVELOPMENT¹

1. The Economic Commission for Asia and the Far East (ECAFE), Bangkok, Thailand.
2. The United Nations Development Program (UNDP), New York, U.S.A.
3. The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), Rome, Italy.
4. The International Labor Organization (ILO), Geneva, Switzerland.
5. The United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), Paris, France.
6. The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), New York, U.S.A.
7. The World Health Organization (WHO), Geneva, Switzerland.

8. The International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (World Bank), Washington, D.C., U.S.A.
9. The World Food Program (WFP), a joint organ of UN and FAO, Rome, Italy.
10. The Agency for International Development (AID), Washington, D.C., U.S.A.
11. The Ford Foundation, New York, U.S.A.
12. The Rockefeller Foundation, New York, U.S.A.
13. The Agricultural Development Council, Inc., New York, U.S.A.
14. The Asia Foundation, San Francisco, California, U.S.A.
15. The International Committee of Mass Education Movement, Inc., New York, U.S.A.
16. The Overseas Technical Cooperation Association (OTCA), Tokyo, Japan.

¹ CHI-WEN CHANG, *Rural Asia Marches Forward — Focus on Rural and Agricultural Development* (Philippines: UPCA Textbook Board, 1969).

FRESHMEN AT GUELPH: A Profile of the 1969 Freshmen Class at the University of Guelph

D. J. Blackburn and G. M. Jenkinson

What is the background of students entering university today? How do agricultural science students differ from students in other academic programs? How do students differ in relation to their academic program?

In an effort to answer these questions a survey of freshmen students who enrolled in Arts, Science, Household Science and Agricultural Science at Guelph was conducted by the Department of Extension Education in November 1969. Each academic program requires the successful completion of 13 academic years in public and secondary school in Ontario (or equivalent) for admission.

The surveyed students were selected at random and comprised approximately 16 percent of the freshmen students who had completed grade 13 in Ontario in 1969. A response rate of 96 percent yielded 156 completed interview schedules.

Some of the students entering the B.Sc. (Agr.) or B.Sc. programs at the U of G do so in preparation for admission to veterinary medicine. Nine (or slightly more than one-quarter)

PREFACE

The Ontario Agricultural College of the University of Guelph has sole responsibility in the Province of Ontario for the formal university education of undergraduate students in agricultural science.

The OAC, OVC, (veterinary medicine) and MacDonald Institute (household science) were administered financially by the Ontario Department of Agriculture and academically by the University of Toronto until 1965. The OAC was founded in 1874 as the Ontario School of Agriculture, MacDonald Institute was founded in 1903 and the OVC located on the Guelph Campus in 1922. In 1965 the University of Guelph was established and academic programs in Arts, Science, Physical Education and Landscape Architecture were developed.

In 1965, total student enrollment was approximately 1500. By the fall of 1969 the number of students had risen to 5763 reflecting the development of new academic programs. Of this group, the OAC is administratively responsible for 967 B.Sc. (Agr.) students, 159 engineering students, 53 students in landscape architecture, 266 diploma in agriculture students — a total of 1445 undergraduates. In addition, more than 300 graduate students are enrolled in the various departments of the OAC.

NOTE: There are slightly more than 7 million persons residing in Ontario. Approximately 100,000 students are enrolled in the provincially supported universities (14).

of the 34 B.Sc. (Agr.) respondents and one of the 33 B.Sc. respondents in the survey indicated their intention to enter the D.V.M. program.

Demographic Characteristics of Freshmen

The sex distribution of students by academic program, as shown in Table 1, indicates the usual situation of no males in Household Science, more females than males in Arts and a high proportion of males in the science programs.

TABLE 1
DISTRIBUTION OF FIRST SEMESTER STUDENTS
ACCORDING TO PROGRAM AND SEX

Sex	Program				Total
	Agricultural Science	Arts	Science	Household Science	
Male	82%	41%	91%	0%	55%
Female	18	59	9	100	45
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
Number of Students	34	69	33	20	156

Data in Table 2 show that the B.Sc. (Agr.) and B.H.Sc. programs have the highest proportion of rural reared students.¹ This result was not unexpected. However, the proportion of students from rural areas entering agricultural science at Guelph has declined in recent years with a concomitant increase in the proportion of urban students. In 1941 there were 178,204 (census) farms in Ontario; in 1966 the number of (census) farms had declined to 109,887. It is essential that Colleges of Agriculture attract an increased number of urban high school graduates in light of the presently declining farm population if present enrollment levels are to be maintained or increased.

There is no apparent difference between programs in the size of high school attended by the freshmen. One might expect that rural reared students would go to smaller high schools. However, the recent school consolidation program in Ontario has likely