



UNITED NATIONS

STUDY TOUR OF PEOPLE'S COMMUNES IN CHINA

15 October-5 November 1980

Prepared for the Governments of  
Algeria, Bolivia, Botswana, Burma, Cook Islands,  
Ecuador, Egypt, Liberia, Mexico, Philippines, Samoa,  
Sri Lanka, Syrian Arab Republic and the  
United Republic of Tanzania

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## NOTES

The designations employed and the presentation of material in this report do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of the Secretariat of the United Nations concerning the legal status of any country, territory, city or area or of its authorities, or concerning the delimitation of its frontiers or boundaries.

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## INTRODUCTION

The People's Republic of China has achieved remarkable progress in rural development and has accumulated considerable experience in organizing people through the commune mechanism. In order to share the wealth of China's own experience and disseminate information on organization for rural development, the Department of Technical Co-operation for Development of the United Nations organized a study tour for the benefit of officials from rural development departments and agencies of a selected number of developing countries.

The United Nations Secretariat, through the Division of Policies and Resources Planning of its Department of Technical Co-operation for Development (DTCD), has been active in promoting programmes in integrated rural development. The programmes carried out by the Department fall primarily in the area of development planning and institutional arrangements for rural development. The study tour was intended to explore and analyse the people's commune organization and its multi-disciplinary activities as they relate to the Department's mandate and areas of interest.

The countries represented on the tour were: Algeria, Bolivia, Botswana, Burma, Cook Islands, Ecuador, Egypt, Liberia, Mexico, Philippines, Samoa, Sri Lanka, Syrian Arab Republic, and United Republic of Tanzania. The working language of the study tour was English.

### Objectives

The purposes of the study tour were:

- (a) To study the Chinese experience in communes so as to promote integrated rural development;
- (b) To develop an exchange of experiences in the design and implementation of rural policies and programmes; and
- (c) To assess the adaptability of techniques and organizational approaches to the conditions and perceived needs of participating countries.

The study tour to China was led by Miss Margaret J. Anstee, Assistant Secretary-General of the Department of Technical Co-operation for Development,

from 21 October until its conclusion; and earlier, the study tour was led by Mr. Faqir Muhammad, Director, Policies and Resources Planning Division of the Department.

The visit to China of the study tour was hosted by the Ministry of Agriculture. Mr. Ping Xin, Deputy Chief of the Division of People's Communes' Affairs of the Ministry of Agriculture, accompanied the group during the entire tour. He also gave a series of lectures on the communes. Mr. Jin Xiangyun, staff member of the Ministry of Agriculture, was in charge of the administrative and logistic details of the travel; Mrs. Fu Guiyun and Mrs. Li Lailai were the interpreters throughout the tour. In all the places visited by the study tour, the officials of the local Bureaus of Agriculture received the participants, made all necessary arrangements and explained the work of the communes in their respective areas. The participants also received hospitality from local officials (see annex III).

The study tour and the United Nations wish to extend their sincere thanks to all those institutions and officials.

The participants were mainly senior government officials with responsibility for planning and policy-making in rural development in their respective governments (see annex II).

### Programme

The study tour took place from 15 October to 5 November 1980 and visited communes in the areas of Tianjin, Wuxi, Shanghai and Guangzhou (see itinerary in annex I). These communes are all located either in officially designated "municipalities" or in close proximity to large cities in provinces. The participants did not have access to information on the over-all system of communes. The fact that communes are an integral part of the over-all Chinese socio-political and economic system also made it difficult to study the communes as discrete entities and to compare them with organizations under different socio-economic systems. In these circumstances, the observations made and conclusions reached by the participants on the basis of communes visited by them may be representative of the type of communes concerned but are not necessarily applicable to the communes' experience as a whole. This caveat becomes especially important in view of the vast size of China and the diverse conditions prevailing in different regions.

Table 1. Basic information on people's communes visited by the  
United Nations (DTCD) study tour

Name of commune	Xin Licun (Tianjin)	Shuan gang (Tianjin)	Wangzhuang (Wuxi)	Hela (Wuxi)	Ma-lu (Shanghai)	Lian-Tang (Shanghai)	Luo-Gang (Guangzhou)	Xinhua Xu- Fuliang (Guangzhou)
Number of production brigades	26	16	7	13	17	24	7	20
Number of production teams	134	100	55	95	149	171	107	310
Total population	37,892	30,000	10,500	19,612	36,400	23,503	31,000	71,000
Number of households	8,521	6,200	3,000	6,607	7,600	6,601	5,500	15,700
Total working members	20,652	10,000	5,567	9,537	18,000	15,086	14,500	31,000
Total area (km <sup>2</sup> )	55	13.3	3.4	36	32	40	75	110
Total agricultural area (ha)	2,600	1,200	247	1,120	2,220	2,495	4,330	5,500
Number of elementary schools	8	15	7	14	17	24	7	20
Number of middle schools	3	2	1	4	3	5	7	3
1979 aver. income f/working member(y)	424	399	470	498	510	468	480	550
Date of visit (1980)	19.X	20.X	23/24.X	24/25.X	28.X	29.X	1.XI	2.XI

The visit to the communes began in the area of the municipality of Tianjin, where two communes located very near to the city were studied, Xinlicun and Shuanggang. The communes visited subsequently, Wangzhuang and Hela, are near the city of Wuxi. The areas visited after that were in the municipality of Shanghai: the two communes visited were Malu and Liangtang. Finally, the study tour visited the Luogang and Xinhua communes located near the city of Guangzhou. In this last area the group also visited a state farm complex, White Cloud. A profile of the communes visited by the group is presented in table 1, which provides some basic data.



## I. PEOPLE'S COMMUNES: HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Agriculture in China before liberation was traditional and characterized by low productivity. The land was distributed unevenly: about 80 per cent was in the hands of landowners and rich peasants, who accounted for only 10 per cent of the rural population, while 90 per cent of the rural population owned the remaining 20 per cent of the land.

Land reform was one of the main objectives of the liberation movement, and land was redistributed in all liberated areas. After the founding of the People's Republic of China in October 1949, land reform was carried out throughout the republic, and by 1952, the former feudal system of ownership had completely ceased to exist.

The land reform process, under the guidelines of the Government, underwent four main stages. The first stage was distinguished by individual ownership and an individual system of cultivation. The second stage was characterized by the establishment of mutual-aid groups, where peasants remained individual owners of their land, but voluntary groups were formed to help each other in activities beyond the capabilities of individual members, e.g., sowing and harvesting of crops, improving common services and organizing a united response to natural disasters. The mutual-aid group was a rudimentary collective organization. In December 1953 and during 1954 the mutual-aid groups were transformed into elementary producers' co-operatives, of a semi-socialist nature, where the land was pooled together under unified management. The distribution of income was based on the land, which remained the property of individual members, and labor contributions. This represented the second stage.

The third stage was characterized by the establishment of advanced co-operatives, which were set up at the end of 1955 and during 1956 as a result of a recommendation by Chairman Mao Zedong and the adoption of a resolution by the Party Central Committee. By the end of 1956, about 96 per cent of peasant households had joined advanced agricultural co-operatives. The main features of the advanced co-operatives were: (a) land ownership was

transferred from the members to the co-operative; (b) the income was distributed according to the work contributed; and (c) all equipment was owned by the co-operative. Former individual owners of equipment were compensated by their co-operatives.

The fourth stage was characterized by the setting up of people's communes. In 1958, Chairman Mao Zedong recommended the establishment of people's communes based on the combination of township organizations and advanced co-operatives, in order to carry out extensive programmes of rural diversification and large-scale farming. The communes were a more effective form of organization and often had more resources than the co-operatives. In August 1958, the Party Central Committee adopted a "Resolution on the Establishment of People's Communes in the Rural Areas." By the end of 1958, all the agricultural co-operatives had been changed to communes.

Today in China (1980), there are about 53,000 people's communes, with a population of some 780 million people. The area cultivated by communes represent about 90 per cent of the land, while the remaining 10 per cent is cultivated by state farms.

## II. ORGANIZATION AND INTERNAL CHARACTERISTICS

A commune is a territorial organization unit that seeks to integrate economic, political and cultural activities. It consists of a set of production brigades, and production teams. Each production team generally corresponds to a part or all of a natural village, that is, to a clearly defined area and the households included in it. At present, the people's communes comprise a three-level system of ownership: commune, production brigade and production team, the latter also being the basic accounting unit.

Production of major agricultural crops is a communes's basic activity, but "sideline" production and industries constitute important additional activities. Education, health, housing and social activities are also the responsibility of the communes.

Agricultural activities include crops, vegetables and fruits. "Sideline" production includes animal husbandry, or livestock, poultry and dairy products; in some communes, raising valuable animals for fur production; fishery and pearl cultivation; and forestry. Industrial activities include a variety of light and medium-sized industries, such as furniture, clothing, food processing and canning, spare parts, electrical generators, medical equipment and instruments, farm tools and machinery, tiles, cement and other construction materials.

The communes undertake large-scale agricultural improvements through such measures as water conservation, irrigation projects, agricultural research; they also manage larger-scale enterprises and sideline activities co-operatively. The production brigades, in addition to engaging in activities such as fisheries, forestry, animal husbandry and vegetable gardening, also own and run small-scale enterprises and engage in commerce. The production teams owns the land collectively and engages primarily in agriculture. Ownership of equipment is also collective. Most of the peasants undertake "sideline" activities in their spare time. In addition to the above, each commune operates a hospital and is in charge of recreational activities such as theater, movies and sports.

Each brigade is in charge of operating a medical-care station, kindergarten and a junior middle school. Production teams are responsible for running nurseries and primary schools. In most cases, production teams also have first-aid paramedical clinics. Large hospitals and high schools are usually the responsibility of the state and are operated at the county/district level. Political education and related public affairs are carried out at the three levels of the commune's organization. In addition, party organizations at each level support the implementation of the production programmes.

Each of the three levels of ownership of the communes is a separate economic unit, distributing its own income among its members. In this respect, the communes are now trying to give practical effect to the major principle "from each according to his ability and to each according to his work". The income is distributed among production team members in cash and in kind, according to the work contribution of each member. At the production team level, the members have a work-point system, instead of salaries, based on a combination of a point scale that categorizes each activity according to its importance, physical and mental requirements and amount of labour accomplished (see also chapter V below).

At the brigade and commune level, the practices of income distribution vary. In some cases, enterprises pay fixed wages, while in other cases a work-point system is in force. In addition to income from collective activities, each commune member is allowed to cultivate a small plot and engage in minor activities, such as raising animals.

### III. MANAGEMENT, LEADERSHIP AND PARTICIPATION

The management structure of the communes corresponds to their organizational structure, with the party cadres until now providing the unifying force both for management of internal commune affairs and integration with the upper levels of administration, that is county, province and state. A system of cadres obviously plays an important role with respect to motivation of the people.

Organization of the commune secretariat normally consists of four to five bureaus, one of which is entrusted with over-all administrative and ideological matters, while the others are responsible for sectoral activities (agriculture, industries and transport; social sectors, such as education, health and culture; and sideline occupations). A management committee operates commune affairs. It generally consists of one chairman and four vice-chairmen. The chairman is responsible for over-all management and presumably for coordination of commune activities, while each vice-chairman supervises one bureau.

At the brigade level, there are from 9 to 11 leaders, each with responsibility for one activity, such as agriculture, enterprises, women, youth, militia and civic affairs, culture education and health. The production team has two or three leaders to manage agricultural activities.

The leadership of the three levels is selected by members of the respective levels in the case of communes and production brigades for a period of two years, and one year for production with eligibility for re-election. Apart from the production team leadership which comes exclusively from team membership, leadership at the three levels may derive from commune members or party cadres posted to the communes. In fact it seems that most of the leadership posts are occupied by official party cadres assigned to the communes rather than by commune members, although in a few cases, official party cadres are selected from the commune. Moreover, election of leaders at each level is subject to official confirmation by the next higher level.

The managers of commune or brigade-run enterprises are appointed by the respective leaderships. More weight seems to be given in such cases to political factors than to professional management requirements. This problem is now recognized, and various measures are under consideration to increase the managerial capabilities of the system, including appointment of better trained managerial personnel, to provide in-service training to new appointees, and encourage self-study.

Most managers and leaders appear to have middle-school education, with little or no formal technical or professional qualifications. Most of them learn their skills through on-the-job experience. While this is highly laudable in that it does not over-emphasize formal education as the basis for selection as happens in other developing countries, it may become necessary to attract more technical and professional expertise as the communes move on to more sophisticated agricultural, industrial and economic activities.

The accounting system, which is essential to enforce accountability, measure productivity, and promote greater efficiency appears to be rather weak. Most accounts appears to be kept in terms of physical quantities and outputs alone, which in the absence of corresponding monetary figures, make it difficult to work out cost effectiveness or allow comparability with other activities.

Participation in the management of commune affairs is provided through the election of leaders. The commune members elect a commune congress, which meets once every year. The congress elects the management committee mentioned earlier and confirms and approves the commune plans and programmes. The management committee in turn meets three times a year. The commune and brigade leadership maintains constant contact with the production teams to undertake ideological education and monitor progress of work. The over-all position for popular participation in commune affairs seems to be based on party processes and election of leaders, rather than on creation of supplementary tiers exclusively concerned with integrated rural development, as happens in some developing countries.

#### IV. PLANNING, CO-ORDINATION AND EVALUATION

Peoples's communes are an important element within the planning process in China. Agricultural plans are prepared by the Ministry of Agriculture and the State Planning Commission at the national level and by the corresponding agencies at provincial and county/district level. Commune plans for agriculture production are prepared by each commune under the supervision and responsibility of the county/district bureau of agriculture. Similarly, other commune activities are part of the sectoral plans of the corresponding bureau or agency, such as health, education, water conservation and irrigation.

The planning process in agriculture is carried out in a "double track" modality. That is, that agriculture draft plans are prepared simultaneously by the Ministry of Agriculture and the State Planning Commission. Initially at the county/district level, the Bureau of Agriculture and the local office of the State Planning Commission each prepares a draft plan, which is submitted to the corresponding provincial office. The county/district bureau of agriculture sends a copy of its draft plan to the local state planning office for co-ordination.

The draft plans at provincial level are reviewed, readjusted and balanced separately by the Bureau of Agriculture and the State Planning Office, and then submitted, at the national level, to the Ministry of Agriculture and the State Planning Commission. At this central level, the drafts of each agency (Ministry of Agriculture and State Planning Commission) are finally attached by the State Planning Commission. The consolidated draft is first cleared by the Ministry of Agriculture, and then submitted for approval to the National People's Congress. The agriculture plan is then sent for implementation to the provinces and county/districts and communes.

At the same time that the county/district bureau of agriculture and the local state-planning office work out the first draft of the agriculture plan, the communes are also engaged in preparing their own production plans. At the commune level, the planning process is the following. The production team works out a team draft plan, according to normal weather conditions and local

characteristics. The team's draft plan are submitted to the production brigades for adjustments and then to the commune level, where the plans are also analysed. All readjustments are sent back to the brigades and production teams for acceptance. The final draft of the commune's production plan is approved by the commune management committee jointly with the brigade representatives, and then submitted to the county/district bureau of agriculture.

At the county/district level, the approved agriculture plan received from the central government through the provincial level bureau is matched with the communes' production plan. Production quotas are readjusted and funds allocations reviewed. The new plans are then sent back to each commune for implementation. Each commune can make observations and discuss the readjustments made to its original draft plan by the county/district office.

The agricultural plan is based on the principles of national development; the nation's agricultural product requirements; and the achievements of the previous year's plan. The main objectives of the plan are to produce enough food for the whole population and provide raw material for industry to improve the quality of life of the Chinese people. Generation of surplus for capital improvements also appears to be an important objective.

Thus far the system of agricultural planning used has been based on (a) planning procedures of other countries; (b) the experience of China's liberated areas before 1949; and (c) the experience of China's three great transformations in agriculture, industry and science.

The main objectives of the plan are established by the Standing Committee of the People's National Congress, following recommendations of the party congress. The agricultural production targets are established at three different levels. At the national level, the state fixes the production targets of the following items: grain, cotton, oil-bearing crops, silk, tobacco, and meat and dairy products. At the provincial level, the former targets are broken down into appropriate varieties and breeds, in accordance with local conditions. At the county/district level, targets are set for other products cultivated locally, such as barley, vegetables and fruits.

Co-ordination and implementation at the commune level are characterized by strengths as well as weaknesses. Strong co-ordination is most



obvious in agricultural production and related economic activities. Its absence or weakness is conspicuous in social sectors. Most of the co-ordination activities under the present system appear to be carried out at the state level by the county/district administration as an arm of the state government, rather than by the communes themselves. In fact, the communes do not seem to prepare any comprehensive plans (productive as well as social). Instead, the sectoral plans are sent by the commune to the corresponding organizations at the county/district level, which presumably take the first steps towards integration of the plan. The planning and co-ordination system generally seems to follow a two-track flow upwards and downwards. The sectoral bureaus send information upwards and receive instructions downwards through the sectoral track. In addition, the planning organization receives and sends information in both directions. The horizontal relationship among sectoral and planning organizations at the various levels is not absolutely clear.

The framework for over-all co-ordination on the production side is provided by the national plan and the setting of production targets by each level. The production targets set by the state, province or county, as already indicated, become the main criteria for the activities of the various commune levels (commune, brigade and production team), thereby exerting strong co-ordinating influences. Other unifying and co-ordinating forces are the party organization and assignment of its members at various levels of administration, although party and management structures are now being separated.

The tasks related to agriculture are divided among a number of ministries (agriculture, state farms, agricultural machinery, meteorology, water). In order to achieve co-ordination among these activities, agricultural commissions/committees are established at various levels, down to the county. These committees co-ordinate the medium as well as the annual plans for agricultural development.

The location of various operational units at the commune level, with given targets with a unified over-all framework, also contributes to co-ordination. However, the authority of the commune leadership over such units remains unclear.

The communes are now part of a highly centralized system. This obviates many problems of co-ordination, in that most activities are regulated by administrative fiat. The possibility of inefficiencies and delays could not be examined by the study team. However, the current debate in the country on the replacement of administrative fiats by economic and market criteria in certain activities suggests that there are shortcomings in the present system. The introduction of new policies and measures based on market principles might remove some of the shortcomings, but it could also aggravate the problem of co-ordination. This would require the establishment of new co-ordination mechanisms or strengthening of the existing ones.

Evaluation. The State Planning Commission has an office which is responsible for the evaluation of plan achievements. The commune management committee is in charge of evaluating the communes' plan implementation.

## V. SECTORAL DEVELOPMENT

As mentioned earlier, the communes engage in various productive activities and are in charge of social sector activities, such as education, health, social welfare. The main sectoral activities are described below.

### Agriculture and other productive activities

Agriculture. This is the major activity undertaken by all communes: it is critical for the national economy, as the country must feed a growing population which is approaching one billion. Consequently, it is the major concern of the production teams. Each production team is responsible for fulfilling the production quotas fixed for it. These quotas are based on particular local conditions such as climate, soil, equipment and other production factors.

The communes visited displayed a high degree of technology. In general, in most cultivated areas, the ploughing is done by mechanized means and "walking tractors" are efficiently used for almost all purposes. The production teams use a considerable amount of fertilizer, which is relatively cheaper than similar products in developing countries; they use large quantities of organic fertilizer to improve the physical and chemical properties of the soil.

The production systems (association and/or rotation) of crops are well developed and can be used as examples for developing countries. These systems, along with improved seed varieties, mechanical and chemical weed control, and chemical and biological pest control make a significant contribution to increased productivity. The efficient use and conservation of water should also be mentioned. Over 50 per cent of the visited area had good infrastructure for irrigation and prevention of water logging. The water infrastructure was built with financial support from the state and the co-operation of all commune members, by using labour-intensive methods. All the communes visited had a scientific station for improvements in varieties.

Forestry. Since the communes visited did not originally have large areas of trees, the planting of trees was given high priority by the communes.

Wherever possible, trees were planted around the fields and on both sides of the roads. In some cases, woods were planted on hills or special plots. The national campaign for planting trees seems to have achieved success in the communes as well as in the cities. Forestry development in the communes provides wind breaks, protects the soil against erosion, reduces evaporation and provides materials for building.

Fishery. In all the areas visited, fishing is an important, and in two communes it is the principal, activity. Production brigades and/or production teams are engaged in this activity, which includes preparation and maintenance of ponds, and breeding and raising many varieties of fish. The communes in China have developed advanced fish-raising techniques and have achieved high productivity levels; many of these techniques could be profitably adopted by developing countries. Fish production in China's communes is sufficient today for daily consumption requirements and provides additional income to commune members.

Animal husbandry. Animal husbandry is another activity undertaken by production teams or production brigades which provides additional income for their members. Animals are well cared for and are fed by crops residues. Animal composts are used to improve soil fertility and for the production of biogas.

Other sideline occupations. In addition to the agricultural activities mentioned earlier, communes are engaged in other productive activities of economic importance, such as raising silkworms, growing mushrooms and medical herbs, carpentry and handicrafts. These activities increase the income of commune members and provide employment opportunities.

Industry. Industrial activities are important, and in some communes they contribute more than half the income. At the same time, it should be noted that most of the communes' surpluses have been invested in setting up this industrial capacity. Industries are operated at the commune or brigade level. In some cases, the industrial structure provides a useful complement to agricultural production at various stages of the process, e.g., by producing basic agricultural machinery and tools, and processing agricultural products. This integration and complementarity of agriculture and industrial activities could be usefully emulated by rural

development programmes in developing countries, since it increases rural incomes substantially, particularly by increasing the value added at the point of production, and can therefore help to reduce migration to the towns. In other communes, however, especially those located near urban centers, many industrial activities were unrelated to agricultural concerns.

#### Finance, credit and marketing

Finance. The communes have the following financial resources for their activities: (a) grants from the state, usually to fund infrastructure projects; (b) loans from the Agriculture State Bank to fund production projects; (c) the accumulation fund, based on a proportion of the income generated by the commune activities and surpluses obtained.

Credit. In every commune there is one "credit co-operative", which is associated with a local branch of the Agriculture State Bank. The main functions of these "credit co-operatives" are to lend money to the commune, production brigades or production teams for use in productive activities; to accept savings deposits of the commune members; and to provide members with personal loans for housing or specific family needs. The interest rates for loans depend on the economic nature of the project. The Agriculture State Bank regulates the main activities of the co-operatives, which are formed by commune members. Repayment of loans is also regulated by the State, taking into account natural and economic circumstances.

Marketing. In every commune there is one "co-operative" for marketing commune products and supplying goods needed by the communes and their members. These "co-operatives" are associated with local branches of state marketing and supply agencies. All co-operatives and agencies at the commune level, are closely related to the communes management committees so as to maximize their usefulness and responsiveness to commune needs.

#### Social sectors

The social sectors find an important place in the activities of the communes and that of the society at large, albeit within the framework of production, which remains the dominant concern. The Government has managed to provide minimum basic staple foods, clothing and health care. In fact, the estimates for such commodities and services figure prominently in the plans which set production quotas based on minimum national requirements.

The national plans also seem to stress the importance of employment, both for increasing productivity and as a social policy. One of the major objectives of brigade and commune-run enterprises is to absorb surplus manpower from the rural areas and reduce pressure on the cities. Such opportunities will have to be increased as mechanization releases farm workers.

As the basic needs of the population are met in relation to food and clothing, consideration will have to be given to questions such as nutrition and greater choice in matters of food and clothing. The demand for such choice will also increase as the discretionary income available to the population raises the demand for consumer goods.

In health, the large number of barefoot doctors has been able to meet the elementary health needs of the people. The production teams, brigades and communes operate Red Cross stations and hospitals. The health sector is manned by a combination of barefoot doctors and university-trained doctors in hospitals. Traditional Chinese medicine shares with modern medicine an important place in hospitals and medical care centres. The commune members can make use of these services at the cost of a small annual fee. In richer communes or brigades, these costs may be covered from general funds, which penalizes poorer members.

The brigade and commune hospitals also undertake vaccinations and health education as part of preventive care and health maintenance. Family planning services are available free of charge in shops, where contraceptives can also be obtained without recourse to doctors or hospitals.

In education, the situation is somewhat different from other sectors. There is no compulsory education, but measures have been taken to popularize elementary and middle-school education. Primary schools and middle schools are run by the brigades/communes; their number is determined by availability of resources, residual in many instances, and setting of specific goals to be achieved during a particular plan period. The number of rural students attending higher educational institutions also seems to be low in comparison to their urban counterparts; this may reflect the fact that teachers in rural areas tend to be less qualified, and the general standard of education is lower than in the cities. All students have to pay tuition in elementary,

middle and senior level institutions, except in the case of rich communes which may be able to pay these fees from their own resources. This works to the disadvantage of the poor communes and their members who need such assistance most urgently. The state supplements the educational resources by assigning state-paid teachers to the elementary and middle schools.

The areas where comparatively less progress has been made include housing, water supply and sanitation. The Government has recognized the principle of private ownership of housing in rural areas. Commune members can obtain low interest loans, building materials and assistance in building their own homes, but they must first obtain the required land from the commune. Most houses visited by the study team had no running water or private sanitation facilities. Families have to fetch water for drinking, bathing and cooking from wells or other external sources, and they must use community toilet facilities.

Two other social issues deserve special mention. The first is the role of the women in national development, and the other is the problem of income disparity.

Women are now fully integrated in the labour force of the country. They even constitute a majority of the labour force in some communes. The principle of equal pay for equal work is recognized, and women get the same work points as men for comparable work. However, two weaknesses persist in the system. One is that women are generally assigned to work which bears fewer work points. Therefore, their incomes in practice are lower than those of men. The second weakness is the extremely small number of women in leadership positions. We found few women chairpersons or vice-chairpersons at commune levels, or leaders at brigade and team levels. The occasional women leaders were usually assigned to traditional women's occupations.

The group also found marked income disparity among communes and among constituent units of individual communes. Such disparities often arise from natural conditions governing the land and resource endowment of a unit. Or they may be caused by imposition of particular kinds of economic activities from above. In any case, income disparity can constitute a serious social problem and require measures to promote equality of opportunities.

In the communes, men retire at age 60 and women at age 55. In most communes, people over retirement age can continue to work if they so desire.

In principle, old people who are retired are cared for by their families and keep their original housing. Many communes which have increased their income have also begun to provide retirement benefits, including food, clothing, shelter, medical care, fuel and lighting, and modest pocket money.

State farms complex. The group visited the White Cloud Complex, which is state-owned and is based on five former state farms and two communes. The complex was established as a holding company in 1979 on an experimental basis. As in the communes, the complex undertakes industrial activities, in addition to agriculture. Both activities are intensive, and productivity is high. Farm workers receive wages, and peasants from the communes who become integrated in the complex receive work points, as in other communes.



## VI. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study tour was highly instructive for all participants. Each participant was impressed by particular aspects of the communes, depending upon his or her background and specific role in integrated rural development. In general, the study tour enriched the participants' experience, which will enable them to function more effectively in the national and rural development roles they play in their own countries. Specific application of the experience acquired will depend upon the socio-political organization and economic conditions of the countries concerned.

For many of the participants, the China study tour represented their first experience in a socialist country with a different socio-economic structure and conceptual framework. The participants were duly impressed by certain aspects of the work of the communes, such as measures for maximizing resource utilization, the systems approach to rural development and the use of certain technologies.

The intensive resource utilization in the communes is truly remarkable. Virtually all products and by-products are used in one way or another. This is partly facilitated by a systems-approach to productive aspects of development. The communes generally develop sideline activities so as to absorb the by-products of their main activities.

The technologies developed and applied to agricultural development are equally impressive. Outstanding examples are the cultivation of fish at various water levels and consuming various types of feed in the same ponds; oxidation of water to increase fish yield; water conservation techniques; design of simple agricultural machinery suited to local needs and suitable for manufacture through local expertise and resources; and labour-intensive assembly lines for light industries and handicrafts. China is thus in a position to make a significant contribution to the promotion of technical co-operation among developing countries.

The participants were also quite impressed with the high degree of discipline, organization and motivation to work demonstrated by the Chinese

commune members. (However, the applicability of the Chinese model elsewhere would require strong party organizations and representative institutions.) For some participants, the Chinese land reform and commune land tenure system provided an example of how to overcome "minifundia" and related problems.

When it comes to institutional and managerial aspects, it is difficult to single out specific examples, partly because communes are a part of the national socio-political system and their practices do not lend themselves easily to application out of context. Also, some practical considerations made it difficult for participants to evaluate certain issues adequately. For example,

(1) There is a dearth of literature on communes, particularly in languages other than Chinese, so that much time and effort had to be spent on understanding basic descriptive aspects. It is suggested that participants of future study tours be provided with basic information on communes.

(2) Most of the persons interviewed by the study teams were practitioners engaged in their daily routines rather than theoreticians or scholars specializing in general concepts about communes. While such practical orientation is valuable, future field visits should be supplemented with discussions on general concepts and principles.

(3) The study tour was hosted by the Ministry of Agriculture, which did an excellent job in every respect. Since integrated rural development is in fact a microcosm of national development and is closely linked with it, other relevant institutions should be invited to participate in the design and operation of study tours. The participation of officials engaged in over-all and sectoral planning would have been particularly helpful in the present case.

(4) The study tour was confined to rural communes under the jurisdiction of municipalities (Tianjin and Shanghai) and suburbs of cities (Wuxi and Guangdong), probably for logistic reasons. It may be that the study tour was confined to areas with a relatively higher resource endowment, where the communes were therefore relatively better off; so perhaps the participants did not get a fully representative picture of the communes.

(5) It was hoped that the study tour might make an important contribution

to technical co-operation for developing countries (TCDC) by promoting an exchange of experience among participants on rural development in general and the commune experience in particular; however, the absence of a structured programme worked against this.

(6) The concepts used by many of the participants and the Chinese system are at times quite different and not easily translatable in the languages of the study tour. This problem can only be solved through discussions and exchange of experiences.

### Recommendations

Several recommendations are either implied in the above conclusions or explicitly stated therein. Some major recommendations for future action on the study of communes in relation to integrated rural development are:

(1) The United Nations should discuss with the Chinese authorities the possibility of designing and promoting projects for technical co-operation among developing countries based on relevant aspects of the Chinese commune experience, e.g. specific technologies or job training in communes financed by United Nations fellowships.

(2) The United Nations, on its own or in collaboration with the Chinese authorities, should consider issuing and widely disseminating a technical monograph on communes and the relevance of their experience for integrated rural development, to fill the present information void.

(3) The United Nations should consider the possibility of organizing a series of interregional seminars on general and specific institutional and managerial aspects of integrated rural development to promote exchange of experience among different systems and develop guidelines for future action.

(4) Future study tours to China should take into account the preceding conclusions. Prior preparation and circulation of substantive and technical documentation is strongly recommended. The number of communes to be visited can be reduced and more time can be allotted to formal discussions on issues and themes with a programme prepared in advance. Consideration should also be given to including communes in rural interior areas, particularly such as are dependent on very meager resources.

(5) Improved planning of study tours along these lines would also facilitate exchange of information among participants and so strengthen the TCDC value of the tour.

(6) Ideally, the next activity to be undertaken by the United Nations should be an interregional seminar on integrated rural development, with China acting as the host country. Such a seminar should be organized around an issue-oriented agenda, and the United Nations and the host government should prepare technical papers for each agenda item.

## ANNEXES

### Annex I

#### ITINERARY

Wednesday, 15 October		Arrival at Beijing and departure to Tianjin. Discussion of tentative programme.
Thursday, 16 October	a.m.	Visit two handicraft plants.
	p.m.	Visit carpet plant.
Friday, 17 October	a.m.	Introduction to China People's Communes, and formal commencement of study tour.
	p.m.	Visit watch factory.
Saturday, 18 October	a.m.	Depart Tianjin by train to Beijing. Visit to Chairman Mao Zedong's Memorial and Great Wall.
	p.m.	Meeting and luncheon at Summer Palace with the Vice-Minister of Agriculture; visit several places in Beijing.
Sunday, 19 October	a.m.	Visit Xin-Licam People's Commune.
	p.m.	Meeting among participants.
Monday, 20 October	a.m.	Visit Shuang-gang People's Commune.
	p.m.	Lectures by Tianjin officials on local communes.
Tuesday, 21 October	a.m.	Visit New Tianjin Port.
	p.m.	Banquet by Mr. Cheng Xueven, Director of the Bureau of Agriculture and Forestry of Tianjin; departure from Tianjing by train to Wuxi.
Wednesday, 22 October		Arrival in Wuxi (Jiangsu Province).
Thursday, 23 October	a.m.	Introduction to local communes by Wuxi officials.
	p.m.	Visit Wangzhuang People's Commune (first part).
Friday, 24 October	a.m.	Visit Wangzhuang People's Commune (second part).
	p.m.	Visit to Hela People's Commune (first part).

Saturday, 25 October		Visit to Hela People's Commune (second part).
Sunday, 26 October	a.m.	Visit to Tai Hu Lake.
	p.m.	Depart Wuxi to Shanghai by train.
Monday, 27 October	a.m.	Visit Shanghai Agricultural Exhibition.
	p.m.	Visit Shanghai Harbor and Shipbuilding, sailing of River Huangpu to Yangtse River.
Tuesday, 28 October		Visit Malu (Ma-Lu) People's Commune.
Wednesday, 29 October		Visit Liangtang (Lian-Dang) People's Commune; meeting among participants to review the study tour.
Thursday, 30 October	a.m.	Visit Shanghai Industrial Exhibition.
	p.m.	Visit Yu Garden and Cheng Huang; meeting among groups of participants to draft the Study Tour Report.
Friday, 31 October	a.m.	Lecture on Communes' participation and the planning system.
	p.m.	Depart Shanghai by plane to Guangzhou.
Saturday, 1 November		Visit Luo-gang People's Commune. Drafting of group reports.
Sunday, 2 November		Visit Xinhua Xu Fuling People's Commune.
Monday, 3 November		Visit White Cloud Integrated Complex of Agriculture, Industry and Commerce (State Farms Complex).
Tuesday, 4 November	a.m.	Discussion of draft report by participants.
	p.m.	Final lecture on People's Communes; visit Guangzhou International Trade Fair; banquet by Mr. Zhou Jianju, Deputy Director of Guand-dong Provincial Bureau of Agriculture.
Wednesday, 5 November	a.m.	Depart Guangzhou by train to Hong Kong (end of study tour).

## Annex II

### PARTICIPANTS

ALGERIA	Mr. M. Chentouf	Director, Planning Studies, Ministry of Agriculture
BOVIVIA	Mr. Hugo Romero	Adviser, Integrated Rural Development Programme
BOTSWANA	Mr. C. Butale	Officer, Communal Projects, Ministry of Local Government and Lands
BURMA	Mr. Aung Thaung	Divisional Agricultural Manager, Agriculture Corporation
COOK ISLANDS	Mr. Nihi Vini	Director, Outer Islands Affairs
ECUADOR	Mr. Julio Bohorquez	Director, Rural Development, Ministry of Agriculture
	Ms. María Montenegro	Officer, Banco Central de Ecuador
EGYPT	Mr. Ali Helmy Abdel- Rahman Ahmed	Director-General, Agricultural Co-operatives Ministry of Agriculture
LIBERIA	Mr. Oscar Jarjee Quiah	Minister, Ministry of Local Government
MEXICO	Mr. Francisco Oyarzábal	Director, Area Planning for Rural Development Centre for Rural Development Research
PHILIPPINES	Mr. Teodoro Ela	Acting Chief, Economic Development Specialist, National Economic and Development Authority
SAMOA	Mr. Lene L. Milo	Officer, Rural Development Prime Minister's Office
SRI LANKA	Mr. A. Ariyaratne	President, Sarvodaya Movement

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REPUBLIC

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Yassin Kassab

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Department  
Ministry of Social Affairs

UNITED REPUBLIC  
OF TANZANIA

Mr. Abdalla Omar Bakari

Director of Agriculture  
Ministry of Agriculture  
(Zanzibar)

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Acting Assistant Commissioner  
Prime Minister's Office

UNITED NATIONS

Miss Margaret J. Anstee

Assistant Secretary-General  
Department of Technical  
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Mr. Faqir Muhammad

Director, Division of Policies  
and Resources Planning  
Department of Technical  
Co-operation for  
Development

Mr. Jorge Gumucio

Programme Co-ordinator  
Division of Policies and  
Resources Planning  
Department of Technical  
Co-operation for  
Development



Annex III

CHINESE OFFICIALS

Beijing

Ministry of Agriculture

Vice-Minister of Agriculture	Liu Peizhi
Director of the Bureau of Foreign Affairs	Kong Candong
Chief of the Division of International Affairs Bureau of Foreign Affairs	Zhang Shizhan
* Deputy Chief of the Division of People's Communes Affairs	Pin Xin
* Staff members of the Division of International Affairs	Jin Xiang yun
Bureau of International Affairs	Xu Guocang
* Interpreter	Fu Guiyun
* Interpreter	Li Lailai
Interpreter	Liang Dang
Deputy-Chief of the Sixth Bureau Division	Sun Huiyuan
Ministry for Economic Relations with Foreign Countries	
Interpreter of the Sixth Bureau Ministry for Economic Relations with Foreign Countries	

Tianjin Municipality

Director of Tianjin's Bureau of Agriculture and Forestry	Cheng Xuewen
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\* Officials accompanying study tour.

Tianjin Municipality (continued)

Vice-Director of Tianjin's Bureau of Agriculture and Forestry	Tao Wensheng
Assistant-Chief of the Agriculture Commission	Wang Longsheng
Office Chief of the Bureau of Agriculture Forestry	Tang Sizeng
Chief of the People's Commune of the Agriculture and Forestry Bureau	Ning Peixiang

Xi-Licum People's Commune

Chairman	Li Chen
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Shuang Gang People's Commune

Chairman	Feng Yunhai
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Wuxi (Jiangsu Province)

Vice-Director of the Agriculture and Forestry Bureau of Wuxi Municipality	Yu Jing-hua
Chief of the Protocol Department Municipal Foreign Affairs Office	Jin Xun
Vice-Leader of the Management Section Agriculture and Forestry Bureau Municipality of Wuxi	Ling Yi-ca
Agro-Technician of the Bureau of Agriculture and Forestry Municipality of Wuxi	Yang Ren-wei
Interpreter of the Municipal Foreign Affairs Office	Zheng Su-su

Wangshuan People's Commune

Vice-Chairman	Hou Fu-bao
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Hela People's Commune

Chairman	Liu Wei-ping
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Shanghai Municipality

Deputy-Director Shanghai Agriculture Bureau	Shi Zhi-lu
Deputy-Director of the Commune Management Division Shanghai Agriculture Committee	Fan Guang-ling
Deputy-Director of the Foreign Affairs Division Shanghai Agriculture Bureau	Yang Yu-cheng
Staff, Shanghai Agriculture Bureau	Jiang Yue-jing
Staff, Shanghai Agriculture Bureau	Zhang Zhi-fang
Staff, Shanghai Agriculture Bureau	Jiang Zhong-tang
Interpreter	Cheng Hai-yan
Director of the Shanghai Agricultural Exhibition	Zheo Gi-fa

Malu People's Commune

Chairman	Zhang Biao
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Lian-Tan People's Commune

Chairman	Sheng Shao-ying
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Guangzhou

Deputy-Director Guangdong Provincial Bureau of Agriculture	Zhou Jianfu
Chief, Office of Affairs Guangdong Provincial Bureau of Agriculture	Xie Rongsen
Staff Member Division of Foreign Affairs Guangdong Provincial Bureau of Agriculture	Han Hong-guang
Interpreter, Division of Foreign Affairs Guandong Provincial Bureau of Agriculture	Zhong Xiwei

Luo Gang People's Commune

Vice-Chairman

Zhong Zhaochang

Xinhya Xu Fuliang People's Commune

Chairman

Zeng Song-gen

White Cloud Integrated Complex of Agriculture, Industry  
and Commerce (State Farms Complex)

Deputy Manager

Peng Wenzheng

Chief, Office of Affairs

Li Xianghou