



13th WEDC Conference

**Rural development in Africa
Malawi: 1987**

DISCUSSION GROUP REPORT

Human resources development

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The development of the human resource was seen as a vital part of general development and some examples of good practice were considered in some detail. The question of incentives for development was considered. Obviously some kind of remuneration - whether in cash or in kind - was deemed necessary during training and subsequent to the training but it should be part of an overall package. Career advancement was also seen as a powerful motivating agent and a proper career structure with people able to progress all the way through a career to the top was seen as something to aim for. The need to avoid disincentives, such as when new, keen staff are attached to demotivated older staff, was also recognised.

Development of this resource needed to be part of the general development of the village, community, profession or whatever if it was to be effective. Examples where the community had considerable say in who was trained and when seemed to be more successful than isolated schemes. It also has advantages in that the content of the training is more likely to be immediately relevant and therefore more easily understood. Such a system, however, must be part of an on-going process if it is to keep pace with the introduction of new technology. A point was made that so often some technologies were castigated as inappropriate when in fact it was the management and other necessary skills which had not been provided - when they could quite easily have been included in the commissioning package.

With any development the staff who lead must themselves have adequate and appropriate training. This was seen as a key requirement with particular reference to the need of trainers of trainers establishing the flexibility in tutors so that they are able to respond to the students or trainers that they are actually dealing with - which may be quite different from the design group. It may even be necessary to redesign the job until the staff have gained more experience and confidence.

Three levels of essential training were identified in the successful programmes. A basic training session, which may in fact be quite short, was seen as an essential first step. This should be followed by a period of 'on-the-job' training attached to appropriate qualified staff before assuming the role for which the training had been designed. Finally there should be an element of continued training during the remainder of the trainee's career. This should cover new introductions of technology and should also be seen as a mechanism by which field experience could be fed back into the training programme.

Finally the need to make the training appropriate at all levels was strongly expressed and this was seen as meaning difficult decisions would be necessary when funds were very limited.