

CHAPTER 5

International Co-operation

The seminar considered various issues in relation to international co-operation in the field of youth activities. First, questions relating to the achievement and improvement of international co-operation were examined. Secondly, the role of volunteers from external sources was studied, suggestions were made on how this might be made more effective, and implications of existing arrangements for providing and receiving volunteers were assessed. Thirdly, the possible creation of African volunteer organisations was discussed and some suggestions made on how such a programme might be mounted. Finally, consideration was given to the development of Commonwealth co-operation in the field of youth activities.

The organisation of international co-operation in the field of youth activities

International co-operation may be organised in three ways:

- (a) the supply and exchange of personnel including technical assistance;
- (b) financial and other material aid;
- (c) the exchange of information.

Each of these three elements was reviewed in detail; aspects relating to the provision of volunteers were reviewed

separately.

(a) The supply and exchange of personnel - The role and operation of "experts" supplied under existing arrangements for international co-operation, whether bilateral or multilateral, was examined critically. Such personnel receive high salaries, out of all proportion to the local priorities and valuation of their contribution. These salaries are not easy to recognise as appropriate when intense publicity is being focussed on the low living standards of many developing countries. Little purpose was seen in the very short-term visit. To serve any really useful purpose, a visiting expert should be able to spend enough time with a programme to develop some understanding of the detailed social and economic situation in which it operates. This would obviate the need to draw heavily upon the expert's earlier experience which may well be obsolete or otherwise inappropriate. In the supply of operational personnel, the need for careful orientation was particularly stressed. All expatriates need time to adapt to local conditions. For a substantial period of the time which they serve they will necessarily operate at less than maximum efficiency due to the process of acculturation. Orientation is therefore necessary at all levels. It operates in three ways:

- (i) in the sending country;
- (ii) in the receiving country in a centralised group;
- (iii) on-the-job.

Of these, orientation before departure was thought to be of doubtful or limited value. Often those responsible for orientation are retired colonial government personnel from an earlier era and no longer in close touch with the real situation in the countries concerned. Similar problems are apparent in much formal orientation after arrival. Such orientation may be valuable for personnel who are to work in one centralised system with a basically similar working situation throughout, most obviously the schools. It has less value in relation to rural youth programmes which depend so heavily on knowledge of the local situation. Often such orientation programmes are carried out by urban-based personnel who themselves are not well acquainted with the actual situation in the rural areas. Thus, for the purposes of training young people for rural development, the most useful device seems to be on-the-spot orientation directly attached to a programme. This can,

however, consume hard-pressed resources both of finance and time. Therefore there can be no ideal solution to this problem but all approaches should be tried.

(b) Financial and other material aid - It is particularly difficult to bring financial and material assistance to bear on the whole dimension of the problem of youth training and employment. Activities are diffused. Responsibilities are shared. Lines of demarcation of responsibility between different departments of government and between governmental and non-governmental organisations are blurred. Given this situation, international aid cannot easily be directed effectively towards the need for an amplified system of out-of-school education and training related to development. In recent years several governments have attempted to achieve co-ordination in relation to rural development. The results have not been entirely satisfactory. The real need, it was argued, is for governments to set up a powerful co-ordinating mechanism, attached to an influential department of government, which will ensure effective co-ordination of all activities relating to the needs of young people. This body should act as a focal point for international aid and ensure that aid for the training of young people is used to the best effect. To do so, it should be given the power to co-ordinate all government departments and all non-governmental agencies working in the youth field and to create and allocate functions and responsibilities. Such a body must make itself felt at all levels of society, from the highest councils of state to the remotest villages. Its establishment would imply a recognition by governments that the "problem" of young people out of school has reached emergency proportions and that emergency measures are required if it is to be dealt with satisfactorily. Such an initiative could greatly facilitate and improve the effectiveness of international aid in this field.

(c) The exchange of information - This operates at two levels. First, there is the exchange of technical information and secondly, the exchange of information for "educational" purposes. Possible areas for the exchange of technical information were reviewed. These include information on low-cost building techniques, on labour-intensive, low-cost tools and equipment suitable for local manufacture, on animal-drawn transport and machinery, and on special approaches to training out-of-school youth. The "educational" exercise is rather different. Within individual countries, attention must be attracted to the out-of-school sector of education by all means of publicity available so that the needs of this sector are constantly in the public eye and

policy-makers are kept alert to these needs both in the allocation of internal resources and in negotiating aid agreements. Publicity for out-of-school education is necessary at the international level also in assisting planners in determining emphases within aid programmes and in reassuring public opinion in donor countries that resources provided are being productively used.

The supply of volunteers

In view of the virtual explosion in recent years in the sending of volunteers, usually from "developed" to "developing" countries, and the valuable concept of youth helping youth, the seminar gave special consideration to the problems of volunteer sending and receiving, the involvement of volunteers in rural youth training, and the future evolution of volunteer-sending programmes.

The sending and receiving of volunteers is essentially a two-way process. A volunteer, sent in answer to a specific request, can be expected to make some contribution towards the development of his host country. There will also be considerable gains to the volunteer himself in terms of broadened experience and understanding. The volunteer's own country will also benefit in terms of the development of a more enlightened body of opinion. In general, emphasis is laid too exclusively on the contribution that the volunteer makes and not enough on what he receives and takes away.

In recent years African countries have received requests from sending agencies throughout the world to be allowed to send volunteers. It is often very difficult to produce enough satisfying projects to absorb volunteers, particularly those with minimal skills and experience. Many of these are prepared to serve for only a relatively short time. It is the general experience that volunteer service of one year, still more of less than one year, is of very limited value, compared with service for two years or more. This applies particularly in rural youth training.

There are also pressures to use volunteers outside the schools system. The highly controlled environment of the schools, however, particularly the secondary schools which for volunteers from Commonwealth countries present no language problems, probably constitutes the most appropriate sphere of operation for volunteers from overseas without technical skills. There is however a particular need for personnel who can

contribute towards youth training and rural development. The young, unskilled volunteer can contribute little in what is a particularly complex field requiring detailed knowledge of the people involved in the project and involving rigorous living conditions. Nevertheless, volunteers who are definitely skilled and understanding, and who are willing to commit themselves to longer than average periods of service, may be able to contribute usefully to this work. There are, however, major difficulties in supplying personnel with the kinds of skills and background required. Efforts by certain sending agencies to retrain and reorient volunteers who are regarded as having hidden aptitudes for rural development work, were viewed by seminar members with interest but with little conviction.

Receiving governments were urged to adopt a much more critical attitude in receiving volunteers, to define precisely the functions for which they are required and to state clearly the particular skills sought. Once requirements have been established in this way, governments should insist upon fulfilment and not accept unlikely substitutes.

The financing of volunteers was considered. There was no agreement on whether governments should in all cases refuse to pay the in-country costs of volunteers, although in view of the "invisible" gains accruing to sending governments, participants at the seminar believed that a more substantial share of the costs of volunteers should be borne by the providing agency. Against this, if volunteers are provided at no cost to the host government, there is a temptation to retain the services of volunteers rather than to provide employment for a local person. In addition, if host governments must bear some of the in-country costs, this encourages a more selective and critical approach to the use of overseas volunteers.

An African volunteer force?

At the time of the foundation of one of the largest of the British volunteer-sending agencies, the expectation was that its function would be essentially short-term. It was hoped that the presence of large numbers of young volunteers from overseas would promote a legitimate desire within African countries to set up their own volunteer programmes. The ultimate objective was that youth should be stimulated into serving their own communities. This hope has yet to be realised in Africa on a significant scale, presumably mainly for financial reasons. Many governments regard volunteer activities as

stop-gap measures useful only until regular staff can be provided. Nevertheless, the time may have come for a small beginning to be made in establishing African volunteer programmes both for deployment internally and for service elsewhere. In order to restrain costs, the external operations of such a programme might be confined at first to neighbouring countries. Some delegates expressed reservations about one African country accepting what would amount to aid from another, although this may be overcome if a degree of reciprocity is observed. Finance will be a major problem. It was suggested that some of the agencies which now place their own volunteers within African countries might assist in launching African volunteer programmes.

The possibility of any major expenditure being incurred on what was regarded as an unobjectionable but essentially peripheral activity, affecting only the few, was viewed with some concern. The main priority must lie in providing for the training needs of the mass of unskilled and frustrated young people out of school for whom concepts such as volunteering for service abroad are far removed from reality.

Commonwealth co-operation

The seminar welcomed the opportunity which had been provided for those concerned in youth training in the Commonwealth countries of Africa to meet together and exchange ideas and experiences. This successful venture, it was suggested, should be followed up by similar meetings in other regions of the Commonwealth at which the viewpoint of African countries might also be represented. These seminars might, as Commonwealth Heads of Government contemplated at their meeting in January 1969, be precursors to a Commonwealth meeting in due course of ministers concerned with youth problems, who might go further towards establishing formal arrangements for Commonwealth co-operation in the youth field.

Existing arrangements organised by the Commonwealth Secretariat, for the promotion of exchange of experience among professional experts within the general field of education, established at the Fourth Commonwealth Education Conference in 1968, have enabled personnel concerned with the planning and development of youth programmes to visit each other's countries and profit from comparing experience. It was hoped that such arrangements could be developed further. One area which may be worth further examination is actual exchanges

between young people. Again, however, there was concern that expenditure incurred in such exchanges could result in the diminution of resources allocated to the priority problem of training and employment.

In the field of technical assistance, it was agreed that the Commonwealth with its shared traditions, its ease of communication, offers a particularly valuable opportunity for effective co-operation. Bilateral arrangements already provide for a considerable amount of technical assistance work to take place within the Commonwealth, between individual rich countries and individual developing countries. It was suggested that the possibility should be investigated of developing and expanding such assistance on a multilateral basis by including provision for youth training and youth activities within the arrangements which have developed in recent years under the Commonwealth Technical Assistance Programme. Proposals for expanding the scope and extent of the Commonwealth Technical Assistance Programme, drawn up at a meeting of senior technical assistance and development officials held in Barbados in September 1969, are currently before Commonwealth Governments for consideration.

It was suggested that information exchange was a field in which the Commonwealth Secretariat could usefully become more active. On the instruction of Commonwealth Heads of Government, the Secretariat has recently been studying the question of developing an information service. Given the funds, this could include information in the field of training and mobilising school leavers for development work. In particular, the Secretariat, it was suggested, could use to good advantage its special position to develop co-operative programmes involving both governments and non-governmental organisations. It was envisaged that the Secretariat might ultimately provide a functional clearing house on matters relating to the involvement of young people in development, and a comprehensive service to all interested bodies, and include within its work the exchange of information, the exchange of personnel and a consultancy service, making use of the capacities and expertise not only of the more advanced countries but also of developing countries themselves.