

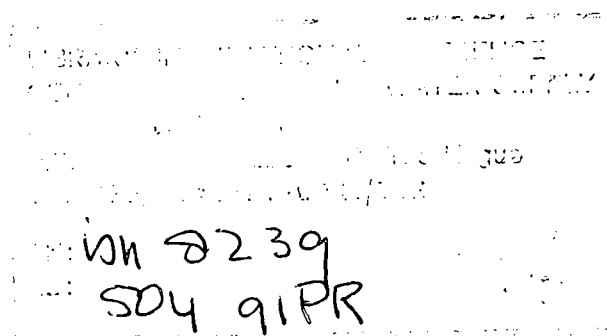
**PROCEEDINGS OF
THE FOURTH CONFERENCE
OF
THE WORKING GROUP
ON INFORMATION AND THIRD WORLD**

**AT THE MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS/DGIS
THE HAGUE
3 OCTOBER 1990**

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**WERKGROEP INFORMATIE EN DERDE WERELD
WORKING GROUP ON INFORMATION AND THIRD WORLD
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FEBRUARY 1991

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PROGRAMME OF THE DAY

- 10.00 uur** Registration
- 10.30 uur** Introduction by the chairman Drs D. Hoftijzer, IVO, Tilburg
- 10.45-11.00** Opening by Dr. N. Biegman, Director General of DGIS, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, The Hague (instead of J. Pronk, Minister of Development Cooperation, The Hague)
- 11.00-11.45** Ms. A.F. Corr ea, Librarian of the University of Dakar (Senegal), teacher at the Library Academy in Dakar and staffmember of the regional bureau for Africa of ILFA
- 11.45-12.15** P. Osborn, General Secretary, Satis, Amsterdam
- 12.30-13.45** Lunch
- 13.45-14.15** Prof. Dr. W.F. Heinemeijer, President of IMWOO and retired professor in the Social Geography at the University of Amsterdam
- 14.15-15.00** Thiendou Niang, Information Officer, CTA, Wageningen
- 15.00-15.20** Tea
- 15.20-16.00** Dr. L. de la Rive Box, Head Policy Affairs DGIS, The Hague
- 16.00-16.30** Drs. K. Breed, member Working Group on Information and Third World
- 16.30-17.30** Drink offered by DGIS

INTRODUCTION

Dirk Hoftijzer

Institute for Development Studies (IVO), Tilburg University

Welcome to this meeting on the Dutch Working Group on Information and Third World. Special welcome is of course to our speakers, especially Ms. Antoinette Corr ea who came all over overseas.

May I first introduce myself. I am Dirk Hoftijzer, working at IVO - Instituut voor Ontwikkelingsvraagstukken - at the Tilburg University. Though I am neither a librarian, nor a documentalist, I have been involved in development information issues in my previous job at the EADI secretariat and with the database on ongoing development research in Europe which we are setting up in Tilburg on behalf of EADI.

I have been invited by the Working Group to chair this meeting, an invitation I gladly accepted.

This is already the fourth meeting of this type in the Netherlands. Nevertheless there are two major differences between this meeting and the three previous ones. The earlier meetings mainly dealt with the improvement of mutual cooperation between information and documentation centres within the Netherlands. The mutual exchange has improved considerably the last few years, which among others resulted in a guide on documentation and information centres in the Netherlands. Therefore, the time is now ripe to also have a closer look at the other side of the coin, the demand side. In this meeting, information demand from the Third World will be compared with the Dutch supply of information. The second major difference is the composition of you, the audience. More than in previous meetings, policy makers, researchers are among us. This, obviously, is a very positive development. Information is non-information if it doesn't serve the user. How difficult it may be to exactly define user needs, only through a dialogue between users and information suppliers or information brokers, the usefulness and the use of information may be improved. As I just said the demand for information from the South will also be discussed today. Therefore, some experts from the South were invited to speak to us. Thus, the main part of the lectures and the discussions will be in English.

OPENING

N. Biegman

Director General of DGIS, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, The Hague

On the one hand today is a sad day, because of the cremation of Ms. Den Uyl, the reason why the minister of Development Cooperation, Mr. J. Pronk who should have spoken to you, is not present now. But on the other hand 3 October remains the day of the liberation of Leiden and the reunion of Germany. Against this background I want to welcome you on the fourth meeting of the Working Group on Information and Third World. I particularly welcome our speakers from foreign countries.

As I have said minister Pronk is unable to be here. However, he takes great interest in this meeting. He will, if possible, try to be with us, this afternoon. And I have to apologize also someone else and that is Ms. Tannie van Berckel, who should have been the hostess of this day, together with Ms. Annemiek Hoeksma. Unfortunately she is ill. Ms. Hoeksma will replace her today together with other DGIS colleagues.

The fact that this meeting is taking place inside the ministry of Foreign Affairs, shows how much we value the development of good information provisions. This is true for the ministry as a whole, but certainly for the sector Development Cooperation. For the ministry as a whole we have the section Research and Documentation and for the sector Development Cooperation we have the Library and the sector Country Information. It is this office which has worked together with you the last years, and has taken up the initiative to invite you here. The Library and Country Information have the task to collect and open up documentary information on behalf of the Directorate General for International Cooperation (DGIS). Their task is in the first place to serve the staff of DGIS but they also help people who are not working for DGIS. Among their clients, if one can call it that way, is also the circle of documentation-centres gathered here today.

One of the aims of today's meeting is to enlarge the knowledge of each other, in an effort to promote the already existing cooperation even more. Because we not only sincerely want to be of help for you, but also want to benefit from the services of the other organizations gathered here today.

A you will know, minister Pronk has just published a report, which contains analyses of the changes in the relations between East and West and the consequences for the developing countries, about environmental problems, technological development in the field of international trade, raw materials and the debt problems. He has pointed out the structural aspects of the poverty problems, in the rural areas as well as in the cities, the existing difficulties in field of health care and education. He has analyzed the role of the government and the private sector, of culture and of women. That is a lot. The report covers, or tries to cover the whole field of problems related to development cooperation. I do not want to exhaust you by mentioning all kinds of conclusions with regard to the policy which has to be developed according to this analyses. The only thing I want to show is how enormous the variety and complexity are of the problems we are confronted with. The enumeration of the problems alone is already sufficient to make this clear. Furthermore we have to realize that everything is linked with everything. Documentalists therefore play a tremendously important role. It is their task, so to say, to keep the whole field accessible and surveyable. This is all the more important because nobody active in the field of development cooperation can have equal knowledge of everything. Independent of the fact that he or she is a generalist or a specialist, there will be still some fields where his knowledge will be less complete or even lacking, where s/he needs the help of a good equipped and accessible information centre. One of the first things the minister said after he was installed, was that he wanted his civil servants to study, to gather new knowledge and keep in touch with new development in the field in which they are specialized. Documentalists can be a great support, certainly if they also follow the new developments and have contact with the users. The Library and the Country Information of DGIS fulfil this task excellent. We live in a privileged situation in the Netherlands compared to the Third World. There are certainly financial problems, but they are in general less urgent than in the developing countries. We have the most modern technology at our disposal and we learned how to use it.

In the previous meetings, I have been told, the functioning of documentation centres in the Netherlands was the main theme. Automation was a 'hot item'. In this meeting documentation centres in the Third World, especially in Africa, are focal points. Ms. Corr a will speak about library-information in Africa and the needs for educational information in that field. Mr. Niang will as a result of his own inventory talk about the need for agricultural information in Africa. We should concentrate our efforts in the first place on the question how to make the huge amount of information in the Netherlands available for the developing countries. And in that way I should not want to exclude the possibility to realize a flow of information which goes both ways. In the afternoon the accent will be on the importance of good information provisions for research and policy in the field of development.

All very interesting themes. That is why I wish you a fruitful discussion. You will have noticed that I am as convinced as the minister of the importance of this exchange of thoughts. I am glad that you will do that in this building and with us. I wish you a successful day.

THE INFORMATION NEEDS OF THE THIRD WORLD

Antoinette Fall Corr ea

Librarian of the University of Dakar (Senegal), teacher at the Library academy in Dakar and staffmember of the regional bureau for Africa of IFLA

Ms. Corr ea focusses the information needs from the South with special emphasis on the situation in Africa, a region where the quick and appropriate implementation of research findings are obviously very much needed.

The concern of this meeting is how to respond to the information demand of the Third World. On behalf of the Third World countries, I would like to thank the Dutch Ministry of Development Cooperation, the NUFFIC, the library community and IFLA for this concern.

How to meet the information needs of the Third World? I do not know if there exists a right solution to this problem, nor if I am the right person to talk about this.

However, I am going to share with you some thoughts drawn from my experience as African woman, as a professional and as an educator in the information field.

The information need? Is it for Africa a new concept evolved from the modern and westernized culture? Or does the concept only wear new patterns? And which ones?

A quick glance at the history of African societies will give an answer to the first question. Then a study of the present trends of the continent information policy will enlighten the thinking and will lead, in a third move to point out the main problems which hamper the smooth implementation of theoretically well planned information policies.

The Negro-Egyptian civilisation

Though the traditional African culture rests on oral communication, the intermingling of different civilisations, since Antiquity, kept Africa from isolation and made the literacy phenomenon, if not familiar, at least known at the early time.

Modern historiography shows that in the earliest times, the Negro people inhabited the Sahara which was then a rainy and vegetated area. Later on, the drought obliged the population to go down towards the Nile valley and even further South. Around the Nile in Egypt and in Nubia they built one of the first civilisations known in the world: the Negro-Egyptian civilisation. We still find these remote origins in the oral literature of most people in West Africa, for example in Hausa, Mossi or Songhay legends.

In the last century the deciphering of Egyptian hieroglyphics led to consider without doubt the Egyptian civilisation as the first manifestation of the Negro culture; not to mention that the fact had been stated long time ago by the historians of the Antiquity such as Herodotus.

Cheikh Anta Diop, in *Nations Negres et Culture*, illustrates the indubitable links existing between the civilisation of Ancient Egypt and some traditional practices in sub-Saharan Africa. He gives evidence of similarity about customs such as circumcision, matriarchat, social stratification, etc; he studies the relationship of the ancient Egyptian language and African languages, especially Wolof, Serere, Sarakoll  and Yoruba; he explains the decline of the Negro dominance in the Nile valley; the arrival of Semite and European invaders, the migration of the people and the regression of the Negro-civilisation in the continent.

During the great migrations from the Delta to the inner territories of the black population, the latter gradually lost contact with the Egyptian metropolis. When they finally settled down, the new environment did not need to enhance the technical development further which was essential for living in the Delta.

Without any striking food or weather problems, unlike the Arabs or the Europeans, they turned to their social setting and developed its organisation. As a result the neo-Sudanien empires were set up very early.

"The Ghana empire was created, at the latest, about 300 AD and lasted till 1240, whereas the empire of Charlemagne, the first in the West after the barbarian invasions, was created in 800 AD".

The magnificence of the Gao empire, whose king paid 180 kilograms of gold to an architect for a mosque, is described by Ibn Battouta, an Arab historian who travelled for years in Africa during the fifteenth century. The empires were constitutional kingships: the king was governing assisted by a council whose members belonged to the different social classes. Such a political organisation was found in Ghana, Yatenga as well as in Mali, Gao or Cayor.

Not only did the African societies establish a political and social organisation highly valued, but they also mastered the spiritual forces of their environment and they built a cosmogony where the relationship between man and the universe was in harmony.

The Yoruba-Benin civilisation, one of the most brilliant in Africa, illustrates this. The very populated cities were small republics (Ifé, Illorin, Oyo). The highest religious authority, Oni was living at Ifé where he used to exert a strong influence on the people. He made his palace the centre of the Benin art, from which cubism draw inspiration.

An African scholarship

One of the significant features in the history of Africa is the relation of the black world to the muslim culture, particularly in the West. The Arab conquest of North Africa in the seventh century, opened the continent to the islamic penetration and favoured economic and cultural exchanges through the Saharan trade. Islam in Africa has been very much modified in its practice by the social peculiarities of the people. So that it is designed as a black mohamedanism or "Islam noir". The pertinent point in this conversion is not the religious phenomenon but its influence on the literacy process in Africa.

An authoritative text about the university of Tombouctou in the sixteenth century describes the intellectual life in most West Africa by that time.

Tombouctou, metropole intellectuelle au Soudan au XVI siècle

"The great centre of higher education was the mosque-university of Sankoré, situated in the district bearing the same name. Within the walls of the mosque teachers from all over the town used to teach their various subjects each and every day. In his 'Tekmilet ed dibadi', Ahmed Baba (1556-1627) deals with the biography of the scholars who devoted their life to the teaching activity of the mosque-university and who contributed to the fostering of the great Western-Sudanese intellectual centre.

From this 'pleiad' of theologians, grammarians and jurists, Amed Baba himself emerges as the very embodiment of the intellectual life of his time. He symbolises Timbouctou's cultural activities at their peak. He came from a family of scholars, 'the Acquit and the Anda Ag Mohammed' who since the 15th century, had been enjoying some sort of an intellectual and religious hegemony in the town. He had been attending the lectures of the Mandingo professor and jurist consult, Mohammed Bakhayoko who issued him certificates entitling him to teach. Extremely intelligent and endowed with an extraordinary memory, he learned all that could be known by his life time: grammar, theology, history, rhetoric and particularly law in which field he had no peer even in North Africa."

Within the muslim countries: Tekrou, Mali, Songhay, Hausa and Kanem-Bornou, the use of the Arab alphabet allowed the development of written literature at Timbouctou, Djénné, Oualata and Bornou. The writings covered varied subjects from poems and chronicles to moral essays and theology, yet this culture did not propagate within the greater population. The majority of the people were educated by means of oral literature which maintained tradition through stories, legends, myths, songs, poems, etc.

Oral information transfer

The corporate tradition, culture and knowledge of the society were thus stored within the human memory. The great story tellers, the traditional singers, bards and griots became the 'knowledge house' of the society. Although this system for the storage and dissemination of information and ideas still persists in non literate communities, it is no more valued by the modern state. For the latter the content of such knowledge is mainly geared towards history. But besides the stories and legends transmitted by the griots, there is another type of information which has helped to build the African socio-economic system and the living conditions. That type of information, fundament of the scientific and technical knowledge, explains the prosperity of the great Sudano-Sahelian empires and the existence of famous art centres in the Guinean gulf. Thus, there was circulated information, there was even scientific and technical information in Africa in the early times.

Does the concept wear new aspects? Yes it does. It had to, because the civilisation of the African people by no means has known a normal evolution, due for a large part to Arab and European conquistadors searching for slaves. Later on the colonisation process had not done better; in plundering the continent, it had dismantled the social equilibrium based on cultural references, on scientific and technical knowledge, on political organisation.

Since access to scientific and technical information is necessary for economic progress "information has become such a precious resource that the fate of modern nation in all essentials is connected with their capacity to generate and exploit it". Third World countries that try not to be left even more behind are tackling new ways to fulfil their information needs, with the ultimate goal to let a citizen be culturally free in a universal and democratic world where the share will be fair.

The pattern of information policies

In the Third World, today, there is a growing trend for an integrated policy in the field of scientific and technical information - STI - through regional and local networks. African countries belonging to a natural geographic area set up such networks.

Regional networks in West Africa

- ADRAO (Association for the Development of Rice-growing in West Africa); created in 1976 it comprises 13 states: Benin, Burkina Faso, Ivory Coast, the Gambia, Ghana, Liberia, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone and Togo.
- CFN (Niger River Commission); created in 1984 by the 8 states sharing the river, it has to promote and coordinate studies and research programmes linked to the development of the river basin resources.
- OMVS (Organisation for Developing the Senegal River); created in 1970 by Mali, Mauritania and Senegal, it has to collect, process and microfilm the STI related to the river basin development.
- RESADOC (Sahelian Network for STI); created in 1979 by the CILSS (inter states permanent committee for the struggle against the drought in the Sahel). The CILSS comprises 8 states of the Sahel region: Cabo Verde, Burkina Faso, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Senegal and Tchad. RESADOC's main objective is to provide a better STI transfer amongst the state members. Located in Bamako (Mali), it is connected to national centres.

These regional networks mainly concerned with the collection and dissemination of information on agriculture and water systems, have benefitted from the support of international organisations such as FAO, UNDP or IDRC.

The United Nations Economic Commission for Africa houses and runs in Addis-Ababa (Ethiopia) the unique

continental network: PADIS. It is a trilingual system mainly concerned with information on socio-economic development. It works on a cooperative scheme base whereby each country participates by inputting information in a standardised format.

National networks

After years of unsuccessful trials, more recently it emerges a new trend for designing national comprehensive plans for STI. The Senegalese example - which I know best - will illustrate the move.

Objective of the national STI network

To take away the barriers between public administration, private enterprises, universities, research institutes and national libraries in order to become a coordinating and exchange centre for these different components. The coordination between information resources and channels will eliminate the repetition of effort, avoid waste of time, manpower and money, develop the performance of information systems, identify clearly the object of information policy, identify the available information systems and the capacity, type and services of these systems and make use of up-to-date technological devices.

Structure of the network

The national STI network is conceived to be a distributed computing system with a central processing unit connected to 5 sectorial processing units. The central unit function will be to offer to a general public, access to a multidisciplinary national database. The database will be fed by inputs from the sectorial units and from outside sources (i.e. foreign databases). The sectorial units are focal points of local networks covering specific fields of interest. The local networks are:

- CNDST (National Centre for ST Documentation) is the first one; already working for years, it houses the central unit. Presently it offers: - a directory of information units located in Senegal (CDARDI); - a directory of institutes, researchers and programmes on agriculture; - a directory of energy sources in West Africa; - a catalogue of periodicals received or published in Senegal; - a list of information sources on environment.
- SCM (Council of Ministers Secretariat).
- RIDES (higher education).
- Research Institutes.
- ISRA (Senegalese Institute for Agricultural Research), particularly oriented towards information on agriculture, cattle rearing, fishing, environment and climatology.

These networks are mainly concerned with agriculture, water systems, environment, population and education: basic elements for the continent's socio-economic development and a résumé of the Third World information needs.

The information system impediments

What are the main problems which prevent the smooth implementation of the information policies?

The regional networks are supposed to receive input from the national centres, the national centres from the local networks, the latter from the individual libraries or information units; the impediments exist mainly at this level. An example drawn from the Senegalese library situation will highlight the point. The diagnostic of an information unit, part of the higher education network, shows the following facts:

- the budget is 50% lower than it should be to perform normal functions (there is 40% reduction in the total national budget running the nation).
- 30% of the building has become inadequate for library functions (too much humidity for document preservation).
- 50% of the equipment is out of order (air conditioner, microform readers, photocopying machines).

- 50% of the personnel is inefficient (lack of training and of professional awareness).
- 50% of the collection is obsolete or missing (cuts in periodical purchase, inadequate conservation technics, inadequate security system, no exchange scheme due to the transportation cost, lack of appropriate equipment for in-house production of documents).

In fact the problems can be summarized as follows: 1. lack of financial resources. 2. inefficiency of human resources.

Relations with the Western countries

How could the Western countries help in overcoming the impediments? Actually the most efficient way rests on joint cooperation between Western organisations and the Third World information units:

- joint cooperation to develop the library equipment and infrastructure,
- joint cooperation to develop the collections, through local schemes and overseas document supply schemes,
- joint training programmes, to develop in-service training patterns particularly in the field of top level management of information services, presentation technics, applications of new technology.

Because of the availability of the know-how in Western countries and of the raw material in the Third World, scientific and technical transfer is a must. Information should play an active role in the transfer. However, the Third World search for solutions to go out of its present state of depraved economy does not mean a call for new forms of subjugation. As it is strongly said by K. Mchombu (librarian in Botswana): "the substance and methods of African librarianship will be an interlocking mix of indigenous knowledge and modern knowledge resources responding not only to Africa's information needs, but also arising out of the reality of Africa."

Question:

Ms. Corr ea, you ended with a kind of challenge to us. And you said that there should be a more equal base and more equal cooperation. I think, that would be fair. However, I put a challenge to you. There has been so much foreign assistance in the past. Many of you and your colleagues have been trained abroad or in library schools in Africa. Library schools have been set up with foreign assistance and equipment, and money have been provided. At the same time we find out, as you indicated yourself, that it doesn't work, at least not all the time, at all ways and everywhere, because of all the other conditions. And I think the major problem is the economic condition of Africa. So my question to you is: what can Africa do itself? What can you do yourself, without relaying too much on the foreign assistance. I ask this, because I am afraid that continued foreign assistance will not help you in the long run.

Answer:

It is sure that we have to do something at the critical part of the situation, and we are aware of that. The first thing is to be aware of the situation. To be aware of our capacity and to be aware of the extra tensions. In fact we are aware of that, we know our capacity, we know what we can do. But we also know what we cannot do, what we cannot reach. It is also part of trying to search for solutions, to know what you can do, what you cannot do. If you cannot do it, who can do it with you and how.

Question:

First of all, I like to introduce myself. My name is Dr. Naidu and I come from the Third World. I come from Fiji and I am representing here the EMDA Institute as a board member at the office in Brussels. I think the subject, Ms. Corr ea treats, is a very challenging subject. It is a very difficult subject and the following question also illustrates the frustration. Because a lot of money has been made available under various bilateral and multilateral arrangements to assist developing countries to build up the information system. But I think the point she made very correctly is that there is a distinction between written and oral

information. And I can speak on behalf of my part of the world which is the South Pacific where we were trying to provide information to the chambers of commerce, which are private, commercial bodies, non-governmental bodies. We found out that we gave them a lot of equipment, photo-copying machines, we gave them papers to print on, we gave them everything and then we went on missions to check, what was going on with this information network, which was supposed to go down to the individual members of the chambers. You have here very close to this building perhaps an emasculated structure of how this commercialized information is translated into guilders everyday. We try to do that and we found out that the written information is very difficult to observe. So immediately we introduced some sort of oral presentation of the same information by drawing figures and trying to get a perception of what is being realized here in terms of information. And can you imagine trying to convert commercial data into pictures is not very easy. You have to be a comic strip writer to get the information across. But I think that is the only way. I spend more than 20 years in this area of development, that is trade and investment development in the Third World. And I can assure you that our generation will not solve this problem. It will not be able to solve this problem simply because the commercialisation of information in the North is such that it will also be thousands and thousands kilometres away from the Third World. And what we put dollar value in, in this part of the World, here in Rotterdam and in Amsterdam and other parts of the commercial centres in Holland, we cannot put the same kind of value on information when they come in the capital of Fiji, called Suva, or even in Singapore. Some of you may have been in Singapore twenty years ago, you would not have understood what has happened to this country in the last twenty years. It is today a citadel of digital information supply at a cost that the subscribers are prepared to pay in the City Bank of New York to all the other subscribers of this information. So I think the value we learnt in the Pacific was that we put a dollar value on the information that we supplied. So that this could be transferred on to those who wanted information. Of course we were able to minimize the entire supply of information to a very few people. And later on we found out that these people were then able to distribute this information in transactions with third parties. And this is how the South Pacific is now, as it is called in the Lomé Convention a very good ground for a laboratory type of testing of how to conceive the development project and how to see through the project cycle in terms of real implementation and the impact of this type of information on agro-industrial development. I do not want to minimize the problem, but I think Ms. Corr ea tried to stress that there has been a tremendous disruption in cultural development of countries in the Third World. There are various forms of commercial, colonial and other forms of domination, but that should not be an excuse for development. I agree, and I think the question raised just before my intervention justifies that, tax-payers do not want to give away a lot of money in form of foreign aid when the end-user cannot justify that he is willing to use the money substantively for the purpose for which it was distributed. So I think, Mr. chairman, we at the EMDA Institute are really in the part of the problem of transforming this information from the North for the commercialisation of this information in the South, in the trade development part of our programme. And we are assisting very specific countries in the island parts of the Pacific, Indian and Caribbean Oceans, just in this particularly area of activities and we find the focus on the sectors, the sectorial approach to this kind of information perhaps in the long run will help us to find solutions how to tailor information, very large flow of information to the target, countries of the target markets, and otherwise information will be very much lost. Thank you very much.

Question:

To what extent do you think that the Senegalese model can be generalised for developing countries in the region of West Africa or even further abroad. The issue raised about Singapore's supply role of information in networking clearly indicates that the Third World as such doesn't exist in general and broad terms.

Answer:

There are differences from country to country. There are differences on the base of capacity, not on the base of the objective. The objective is the same, the ways are the same but the different countries do not have the same amount of money, the same people to help them to reach the goals. But as I said, there is regional thinking about how to integrate economy. And the transfer of information is one of the parts of this economic integration, because we feel that without this integration there will not be any future for the African or Third World countries. So it is really an actual trend in information policy.

SUPPLY AND DEMAND AS FACTORS IN INFORMATION SERVICES - THE EXPERIENCE OF THE SATIS NETWORK

Paul Osborn

General Secretary, Satis, Amsterdam

Extrovert and responsive information activities will only come from those information professionals who are prepared to spend a lot of time in the market place, and consequently less time in the library.

First, I want to thank the organisers for their kind invitation to me to participate in today's meeting. It has given me an excellent opportunity to meet many new colleagues and to correct the lack of information about the Satis organisation in the Netherlands. It is probably true that Satis is better known in Washington or Manila or Harare than in the Hague and Netherlands. Let me assure you that this is not because we find the other places and other people more exotic than you and spend more time on them and in them. It simply seems to be a rule that international organisations are always better known everywhere except their "home" town. Let me tell you first, in two hundred words, about Satis.

Satis is an international, not-for-profit organisation in the field of technology, environment and sustainable development. Satis exists to serve its members, and their partners, and to do this, Satis operates a number of programmes in information, publishing, communication, technology dissemination and marketing. Satis programmes aim to improve the performance of Satis member organisations - today there are about 120 in 65 countries - in their work. Satis members are village groups, small enterprises, action-research teams, governments and multi-lateral agencies. They work in health, agriculture, habitat, water supply, energy, training, transport, sanitation, gender issues and many others areas.

On an average day, Satis members work with 3,450 clients, respond to 180 technical enquiries, distribute 4,000 publications, create 137 new, permanent jobs, and save massive volumes - as yet, unmeasured - of energy and natural resources. It has been calculated that the accumulated impact of Satis members is, for example, to solve the world employment problem for 49 seconds each day. That is why Satis exists.

I have been asked to talk about the role of information in change and development in the Third World, and to describe the experiences and perspectives of Satis as an international organisation in this field.

Well, I shall do this, out of respect to the organisers and the hosts, but I really want to talk another subject as well, about evolution and environment.

I want to talk about the evolution of an organisation, Satis as a living organism. And I want to talk about the evolution of the environment in which that organism, Satis, lives. I do not plan to do this in any Darwinian way - although some of you may find similarities - because I do not want to become known as the Charles Darwin of the science of networking. Maybe later in the day we can have some discussions on the issue of "survival of the fittest" with regard to information.

My presentation will be in three sections:

1. Evolution and environment: an introduction to the development of Satis
2. Observations on the reality of information flows
3. Future priorities for information services in North and South, for inter-regional cooperation, and for donor agencies.

(What I am going to tell you is not limited to our subject areas; you can find similar experiences in almost any subject area.)

1. EVOLUTION AND ENVIRONMENT: The beginning of Satis' evolution is in the mid-1970s.

Satis was born from a need, but I want to be very clear and honest about which need. It was not created in direct response to the range of basic needs in the Third World - no information service is. Satis was created to meet the needs of a new generation of development institutions: the appropriate technology organisations. These organisations were typically Northern: ITDC in England, Brace Research Institute in Canada, VITA in USA, GRET in France and Tool in the Netherlands. For insiders, these five agencies were known as the Big Five. Other organisations, which you probably know today, such as SKAT in Switzerland, GATE in Germany, Botswana Technology Centre, Development Alternatives in India, CEMAT in Guatemala, did not exist - they arrived soon afterwards.

The Big Five were, in fact, very small. They were marginal, peripheral, young, vulnerable. As newcomers to the development profession, they had a hard time getting accepted. Their message was also hard to get accepted: that the technological components of development were often inappropriate. Sometimes they were seen as heretics. As newcomers, they also had few resources, and little information. Compare that with their situation today, where many Satis members and their messages occupy a central position in national and international development policies and programmes.

Their needs were for organisation, cooperation, acceptance, recognition - and, in this, information was to be the cement to keep the bricks together.

Hence the creation of Satis, as the Socially Appropriate Technology Information System. The person who dreamt of that name was - is - a visionary. As an acronym, it also touches on the content of its work: Satis, as a Latin-root, means satisfaction (in several modern languages), and in the case of Satis members, the satisfaction is of basic needs. This combination is rare, although similar creatures exist at TOOL and Both Ends whose names also say what they do. Maybe the explanation is that all these organisations or their staff have, at early stages of their lives, had offices in the fertile soil of the back garden of the Royal Tropical Institute in Amsterdam.

A word of warning, because I know that acronyms are one of the favourite foods of documentalists, librarians and information scientists. The name Satis is not an acronym any more: our evolution has overtaken the acronym, and our full name is Satis.

The first phase of Satis was the creation of conditions for a meaningful cooperation between its participants. For people, and their organisations, anxious to organise and exchange information, about new subjects, and about new approaches to development, this meant a new set of tools for information management and exchange. Remember that the information staff in these newcomers did not fit the classical model of the librarian: because of limited resources, and also in part because of the non-conformist approaches, the documentalist often had no formal qualification. In fact, to take a couple of contemporary terms, they were often called the "barefoot librarian" working "where's there is no librarian".

After a long period of gestation, after many international workshops, and thousands of people-hours from, by then, about twenty interested organisations, the first products emerged: the Satis Classification, and the Satis Card. Today, we call the Satis Card the Satis Standard Format (that's evolution). These formed the basis for the first generation of Satis Catalogues, which was a union catalogue of about 9,000 bibliographic references from about 20 organisations. It was a monster - literally, the whole thing weighed about 45 kilos. It was distributed to Satis participants world-wide, so that appropriate technology organisations could have access to each other's knowledge and documentation. People envisaged massive flows of information on research, on field projects, and on people between organisations, and in fact to end-users in the Third World, with a special emphasis on South - South exchanges. The idea was, and still is, that Satis itself should not become an information provider, but should concentrate on improving the work of existing providers. This may change in the future.

At one stage, for example, there was talk of sending bibliographic references on Satis cards to project field workers small enterprises who made a technical enquiry on, for example, metal-bending or water-pumping; all this would be sent with a manual for the end-user on how to interpret the references and order the document. In reality, this noble objective was only partially achieved, with occasional requests for document exchange between participating libraries, and the union catalogue project soon died a natural death. But it had many other positive effects which, with other Satis services, made the investment highly successful.

Of course, the achievements of this first phase have been continued: the Satis Classification, for example, is a massive success: it is now used by about seven hundred organisations, and is in its third edition, available end November. We are developing a Satis Thesaurus, which will be a customised and expanded version of the OECD Macrothesaurus. We are starting an integrated package called SatisFile, to assist in the computerised management and exchange of bibliographic and other data. This will enable, for example, the development of online databases and, perhaps, a range of Satis CD-ROMs.

The first phase of Satis was a superb learning process for its participants, and later for other networks, because it demonstrated that:

- end-users do not want bibliographic references
- most librarians, in Satis-type groups, do not want them either
- many people (librarians) in the same peer group like to use the same customised documentary tools, and to develop and refine them together, even if they do not use them for intensive exchange
- a network only survives and thrives by having concrete tasks and services.

In retrospect on this first phase of Satis, many people have said the actual product of cooperation was not important; the cooperation itself was the most important. I believe in a blend of the two factors: an appropriate product can only come from an appropriate process - and even then, there is no guarantee.

At the beginning of my presentation, I used the word organic. That word is used, at least in agricultural circles, as part of sustainability. Organisations can also be organic - and thus sustainable.

The second phase of the evolution of Satis was to expand outside the library, and into the printshop and the bookshop. Many Satis members had themselves grown into the area of publishing as a means to disseminate *information, and requested Satis to support them in this. As a result, many members of Satis are publishers and distributors, with no interest in library work.* During this second phase, the second generation of Satis catalogues was born; this time it was a sales catalogue, listing a selection of practical books and audio-visual materials which are distributed by Satis members. To support this, the Satis Token programme was developed, to enable people with currency problems to purchase books abroad - and, at the same time, to generate more independent income for Satis members, especially in the South. In the future, we might produce CD-ROMs with full-text and full-graphics editions of the publications of Satis members. Again, the idea has been that in the field of publishing, Satis should only strengthen the work of members. Again, this might change in the future.

The third phase? That's where we are right now. At the request of some members, we are slowly expanding activities from the library and the bookshop to a more turbulent area - and, to be honest, for some people it's a frightening area - called the "market-place". To do this, we are developing strategies to help our members disseminate and replicate technologies directly, particularly in the areas of micro- and small-enterprise (with a variety of legal status and organisational forms). As a result, new members are joining with no interest in library work, nor publishing. At the same time, we are developing programmes in communications. One is an electronic network called SatisNet, based on the Geonet system, to allow fast, decentralised communication between Satis members. Our newsletter, SatisNews, for example, is available as a full-text electronic database on this network. Another programme, under consideration, is to develop activities in training for the transfer and exchange of technology, as well as training for documentalists.

By walking into the market place, many Satis members are entering new territory. They are opening themselves up to the realities of information behaviour of the end-user. In this, Satis members will soon start to request support - and that will bring the organisation to a new, fourth phase. It also brings me to the second part of my presentation.

2. OBSERVATIONS ON THE REALITY OF INFORMATION FLOWS

I believe that information moves in mysterious and unexpected ways, and not by bibliography alone. The information habits of an Indonesian small entrepreneur, a landless group in Brazil, an East African planner, a fishing cooperative in Togo, or a European research network, all have very different logics.

Most information institutions, however, feel uncomfortable with mystery and surprise. Consequently, most information networks have modelled themselves on what is (perhaps) appropriate in the North. They have often been expensive failures because of inflexible and inappropriate design, content and work styles.

In 1985, Satis conducted a feasibility study for the International Labour Office on the nature and volume of the supply and demand of information on technological alternatives for development. In that study, we monitored information flows and discovered that 85% of visible information flows are referrals from one information point to another. That means that six out of every seven steps taken by a piece of information do not touch the person wanting the information, or the person who is considered interested in it. This is excellent news for reference centres all over the world! And even when the piece of information does get to the actual or perceived user, it is often not appropriate, or not appreciated.

During that study, visits were made to many information services, with as extreme examples of unequal priorities:

- an international reference service, in the Asia/Pacific region, handling 94 requests in one year with an operational budget of 1.5 million dollars or 16000 dollars per request
- a local NGO handling 600 technical enquiries with an operational budget of 15,000 dollars (that's less than the cost of one request in the previous example) and just 25 dollars per request.

3. FUTURE PRIORITIES FOR INFORMATION SERVICES IN NORTH AND SOUTH, FOR INTER-REGIONAL COOPERATION, AND FOR DONOR AGENCIES

It is my belief that there are very finite limits to the usefulness and the actual, viable markets of the existing packages of information services applied by a typical, and often Northern, development organisation. The existing real demand is virtually saturated, and an expansion of the same services into new, unprofitable areas is not viable. This is not to say that the existing services have reached the end of the road, not at all. We simply need to understand that very few requests will ever reach the North - no matter how well inventarised and "directorised" and free the information here is. Most requests, most of the demand for information, never leave the South - and it is questionable if that is unsatisfactory for most of them.

The need for appropriate information is, in comparison, infinite. Meeting that demand requires new strategies, and new practices. The strategies should be based on some good old-fashioned market research principles, as well as action-oriented research to better understand and respond to the processes of information transfer, to and between end-users. I suspect that such research will point towards much more information being tightly targeted on relatively small numbers of users.

To use another phrase from the early days of Satis: "Think Global, Act Local". One example of this can be advertising in the local press, and working with local distributors and information centres. Another, more strategic example, will be to set up joint ventures in information in specific countries.

Information services have an inadequate grasp of supply and demand. Furthermore they are also treated as the poor relation in any development programme. As a result, they are often the weak link in the development chain. This can be corrected, in part, by donor agencies ensuring that extrovert and responsive information activities are integrated in overall programmes of both Southern and Northern partners. But such "extrovert and responsive information activities" will only come from those information professionals who are prepared to spend a lot of time in the market place, and consequently less time in the library.

In this, because we can see it is the next phase of our own evolution, Satis is ready to play an active part. We want to learn how others are coping with this new challenge, and to share our experiences.

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Question:

I (FID) have a question about what you see as the information market, because you said first of all you feel that the market is exaggerated as far as North - South information flows concerned. It is not one of the issues that is the major issue of fact of information analysis, a information flow, the repackaging of information and what is actually offered and how is this done by the Satis itself for the organisations that are members of Satis. I mean is there a way of repackaging information and analyzing the information that is offered? Is this a task of the members of Satis or Satis itself?

Answer:

Repackaging is a word which is been used most frequently by Satis members these days. When I said that I think that more research is needed and understanding how information actually flows. I think, but that depends on the research, this will result in information activities being very much specific to a specific local set of conditions. I used the example of the tea-bags in the Netherlands depending on the water quality in different parts of the Netherlands, different tea-bags and different coffee is marketed in different areas. This is the way Dutch people who always take coffee which them to Spain and France, never have the coffee like they have at home. And I think that sort of repackaging should also be done with information in local languages and also in terms with the different logics how people actually want information. At what time, in what form they want it. One of the discussions inside several Satis members is to spend much more on local advertising and on building up local distribution networks. Lot of information which comes in huge crates by the KLM or Van Gend and Loos, not in huge transfers of information in that sense, but in local recreation, repackaging of information. When I say the market is exaggerated, I think that the Northern agencies principally can only serve Northern minded clients wherever they are. And I think that market by its very nature is principally for ex-patriots and for a number of a very small restricted number of people from their own country. And that is largely exaggerated. For example, The TOOL Foundation (Amsterdam) handles 600-700 inquiries each year. That number is not going to change, is not going to double, even is going to stay about that size. And however much promotion you put into it, it is not going to change. Whereas there are millions of questions out there, but they are not going to reach the North.

Question:

De la Rive Box (DGIS): I like to link up with the last point you made. There are millions of questions out there, but they are never going to reach us. Let me give you an example. I have worked in Latin America, where some NGOs which are affiliated with the network are also working. The problem is how do you translate general problems in for example in agriculture which I worked. How do you translate that to the level that they can be fed into your system? They made be general questions, but how do you get them there? I am not sure that the NGOs at this moment have the mechanism of translating it. So I like to, now you are going into market, that your market is not only a market of money, but also that you try to go in the market of questions, of specific questions, at the grass roots, let's say. I like to know how you prepare your members in the different countries, for translating these different questions, for stimulating those questions, to be fed into the network, because that is really where it is going to depend on then.

Answer:

I don't want to be too dogmatic on this, but dogmatism can be sometimes demonstrate where we want to get to. It would be nice to think that nearly all questions, from for example the organic agriculture sector in Bolivia, would be answered within resources existing in South Bolivia. And it should not be necessary for questions to go a long route to get a answer. In other words to strengthen institutional resources, inside a given situation, so that this question your issue of translation in fact does not arise, because there is no need

to translate, to transfer a question. And part of the way which Satis is tackling this is to decentralize it's own organisation, we plan to transfer the secretariat to our centre of gravity, with is the South. And we plan to decentralize operations, much more regionally and thematically so that the inevitability of six out of every seven steps not being immediately productive so that inevitability is reduced by strengthening local capacity.

Question:

My name is Michael Polman. I am from Antenna. A question to Paul Osborn regarding the general tendencies he sees developing on the NGOs networks. He is describing more or less how Satis develops itself an internal market between the members and it wants to open up that market and share the expertise to a wider field. But in that, are you not advocating in fact selling of information and would that not be much more appealing especially for Northern NGOs and Northern information networks, UN services, because normally they produce a lot of information? And would it not mean a new kind of barrier between the North and the South again? Because mainly in the South there is a lack of budget, they would have to pay some how for the information, because there is not a kind of equal exchange, because they do not produce so much information normally.

Answer:

Maybe I get into the troubles for this one to. Information is commodity. There is the question of ownership, and you have the questions of money. I think that most NGOs in the South choose not to buy. Most NGOs in the South are in the position to buy and there is a problem here which arises partly for isolationism that they choose not to buy. Than the issue of value of money; there is too much information available, there is the information explosion-implosion issue. And I think that NGOs like any other users fairly quickly find out that some information databases have nothing of their interest and other ones which deliver quality. For example, the study Satis did for ILO in 1985 demonstrated that the area of technology information organisations like TOOL in the Netherlands or GRET in France, these people are much more appreciated for the quality and the speed and the relevance of the responds than ILO, UNIDO, UNESCO, WHO, DIALOF, DEVELOP, etc. And I think that in that sense the market place can also be used to filter out the less useless information.

Question from Ms. Corr ea:

I would like to ask to Satis about this getting on the market. How do you get in the market and what do you do about to produce local information?

Answer:

I think your second question is my answer to your first question. The important thing is to strengthen the local information resources. One of the Satis slogans about 3 years ago was that book aid is food aid. This is the same as food aid. There are many programmes to deliver free literature which are noble and genuine in their intention, but disastrous in their effects. They distribute information but in fact they ruin the possibility for the local information suppliers, for the local development agencies to develop valuable activities in information. And in this sense I regard book aid very much as food aid. Of course, sometimes it is necessary in an emergency but it reduces the possibilities for local institutions to valorize, to made the best of the own information resources.

Question:

They wanted practically to know what do you. Because, in most of the information units like the one I described, there is a lot of valuable local information which is not made in a commercial form to be distributed. The information is there, but no one knows about it. And they have problems with manual directories, with bibliographies, etc. which can be vital for the country or for outside.

Answer:

Several members of Satis, for example SKAT in Switzerland, this is perhaps the best example, ILO is an other one, they have a number of programmes in terms of equipment, training, investment capital and joint ventures to assist local organisations, NGOs, research institutes, it doesn't matter what the legal status is, what the matter is that the information has to be released. They have created a number of joint activities to technically permit, publishing enterprises which in the long run will become commercially valuable, in other words sustainable.

Question:

I (IRC) have a little bit of addition. I have worked in Nepal which obviously has a language which I can not read although I could speak it. And I must say that we did quite a bit in non-translation, but digestion of material and then publishing it again also commercially. That means we handled it out for display in local book sellers. I think the basic question that we also felt in the projects where I was associated with that there somehow was a lack of respect for that what was written in a local language. Somehow we translated something out of french into a local language. It is not understood ,we have to translate it from the belly of the people rather than from our mind in my perception. And I think there is a market and there is a value. It may be a slightly different value than we attached to it, but I am very much in favour of the description that Paul osborn is giving out of the activities that various Satis members are undertaking, because basically what we are lacking and many of us around this table must agree to that, is that although we are sitting on a well of information, myself being an engineer not being interested in collecting information as such, I am only interested in harvesting the information to reap it and use it. That is our biggest problem. So let's try and get it out and digest it. And let other people maybe colleagues of Ms Corr ea do their work and publish their things and we should accept it as useful. And I think ultimately it will turn out. Indeed the book aid for food aid is a very reasonable comparison. It will turned out to be more valuable and fruitful than the present way of transferring information.

THE POINT OF VIEW OF THE RESEARCH-WORKER

W. Heinemeijer

Retired professor in the Social Geography at the University of Amsterdam and president of IMWOO¹

Chairman Hoftijzer:

The next speaker on our program will look at the theme of this day from the perspective of the researcher. Heinemeijer is emeritus professor in the social geography at the University of Amsterdam. He has mainly done research in North-Africa, especially in Morocco. Professor Heinemeijer is president of IMWOO, which has developed important information activities in the field of social-scientific research. To mention two: the IMWOO-bulletin and the guide of researchers published last spring. Professor Heinemeijer also presents the Dutch research-community in the board of EADI.

Heinemeijer:

Thank you. The Working Group has asked me to talk about the problems that are concerning you on behalf of the researchers. I am a representant of the older generation of researchers. Someone who is overwhelmed by the nowadays existing possibilities, but still has been educated in the classical way. I had a professor in the ethnology, nowadays called anthropology, who said, when we came to him with a proposal for a research: 'just start browsing'. What he meant to say was: 'go to the library and look into the books and periodicals on the shelves to find out if they contain helpful information. That was the way it worked in the past. It is interesting to talk now again about this subject as an researcher. I speak - as has been remarked - on behalf of IMWOO. And that means that I have to try to put on the stage the interests of the Third World researchers as economist, anthropologist, sociologist or geographer. Those are quite different disciplines, which will make my speech more problematic. Because all those disciplines will try to place their own accents. The only common trait they have is that every researcher, regardless the fact or he is Dutch or from the Third World, wants to be informed about current, past or forthcoming research, if only in order not to duplicate the work of someone else. In that respect I can say that this need of information is covered in a superb way by the Directory² published by IMWOO this year. Because the Directory mentions the names of institutes and researchers and the fields they are active in. And it will become even more interesting if there are more entries to retrieve the information. We become more and more exigent: we not only want to know the names of the researchers, but also the backgrounds. That means that everyone who is planning to develop a new data-system also has to cover the past, to arrange the data according to a process of time. But this is only a minor problem. Much more complicated is the fact that the four disciplines I mentioned have a tendency, a need, to exceed their limits. A normal procedure, if we bear in mind that there is in reality only one science, the subdivisions are human made and more or less arbitrary. They are the consequence of the fact that we are incapable to an all-embracing view. For that reason the four disciplines covered by IMWOO repeatedly show tendencies to broaden their workfields. We need closer contacts with technological researchers, with agricultural researchers, with agro-geologists and hydro-geologists. The list is becoming longer and longer, as you see. We now have concrete plans inside IMWOO to broaden the field we cover. But to realize those plans, we need money. Far more money than the Directory has costed.

We talk a lot about information, about the desire and the need to communicate with each-other. But at the

¹ IMWOO: Institute for Social Science Research in Developing Countries, The Hague.

² Directory of Development Studies in the Netherlands, 1990; Register of Development related Social Science Research and Researchers, IMWOO/SWIDOC, Den Haag, may 1990.

moment a far more serious development takes place: the threat of over-information. So much research is being done, that one sometimes doubts whether it is still possible to contribute something new. But if it seems that everyone is researching everything, than it still is important to stress the differences in quality. Then you come to a point where it is not only desirable to know the titles and the names of the researchers and if possible the regions which are more or less covered, but also the level of the research undertaken. And in that respect there exist great differences. Because of the fact that there is so much information and there are so much possibilities to get that information, we will have to upgrade the demanded level and quality and we will have to support this process. To specify and clarify the problems we are confronting, I want to look more thoroughly to several points. In doing this the danger exists that I use my own research experience to much as an example. But I shall try not to fail the economists and anthropologists, because we have a lot of overlapping interests with respects to the required information.

However, what we can say is that every qualified research needs good and actual information, presented in a convenient and accessible form. A few conditions which make the task even more difficult. To illustrate this I want to take the example of an researcher who is going to start a new project. The first question which confronts him, is the question: what is already done, who has done it and how specified is the information I need. Let us in this respect look at the geographical and cartographical tools. Someone who is planning to do research in whatever part of the world, will have to know what the physical conditions are in that part of the world. He will be served by cartographic tools, cartographic sources and cartographic data in general. But it is nothing new as the geographer informs you that the first thing to look at is the quality of the data. There are a lot of good-looking but useless maps. And bad maps can endanger a whole project, because your infra-structural, logistical preparations and even your budget are in a lot of case partially based on the information contained by maps. The geographical-cartographic entrance is very important because it has direct consequences for a lot of other aspects and data of the research, for instance statistical-demographic data. The researcher must have entrance to all the relevant information from the beginning. This means that every database intended for social researchers not only has to cover but also has to situate all the possible relevant information. Every researcher, independent of the fact of he is an economist, anthropologist, geologist, technologist or agro-geologist, has to know how many people try to make a living somewhere and how their relation is with their environment. And in that respect coarse facts lead to nothing. Demographic averages are of no use, we want them specified, if possible even statistically interpreted on the level of dispersion and the level of centrality, because that are all new facts which also can be interpreted.

The researcher I have presented to you, the researcher who is starting a new research project is, as you certainly will have remarked, still at home. He is in fact still doing desk-research. Some researchers never leave their study-rooms, but much desk-research will - or better, has to - end up in field-research. And in the field you need much beforehand collected and sorted out information.

The researcher who enters the field is not the first to do that. It is my experience that you never are the first. Other researchers have been there before, and they have often seen things you can not see anymore. So it is important to know also the older material. And that means that you not only need entrance to the newer collections of books and periodicals, but also to the older ones. And that is - as you will be well aware - one of the bottlenecks. We all know how difficult and time consuming it is to develop on-line retrieval systems that offer full access to periodicals. There are however already a lot of on-line accessible collections. But most collections have a starting year, for instance 1975. The intention to cover also the older collection often exists, but mostly the time and money to do this are lacking. The result is that much research to my experience, starts in 1975, as if before that date nothing has happened. And if you mention this, they say that it would take too much time to read all that old stuff. So it seems that browsing still is necessary. And that I fortunately have learned in the old days. However, the fact is, that we have to work back.

There is still a lot of work to be done. Because the longer we are doing research in the Third World, the more we are becoming aware of the fact that all our research has one important defect: it is too much characterized by an a-historical approach. We all pretend as if the world begins on the moment we enter it, while societies already have centuries of history. We have to consider the impact of that history, because we know ourselves how stimulating or frustrating past events can be. So also our historical knowledge has to be expanded and deepened.

My experience is also that you can learn a great deal from your immediate predecessors, even if the perspective of their research was slightly different. In this respect I want to stress the importance of the

collected survey-material. Never, ever throw material away. Even if you think that it is of no use for you anymore. There are institutions - as for instance the Steinmetz archive - who try to keep collected basic material available, if only to make secondary analysis possible by someone else, who perhaps has another perspective or even quite other questions. I have experienced myself that someone looked at a research done by me and found quite amazing new things, things I had been blind for and things he found out because he had another approach and asked other questions.

So it is important to preserve old survey-material and keep or make it accessible by means of the computer. You can't of course ask everything from a data-collection. If that was possible, we never would have to leave our desks. We should know everything. But we have to go out, to collect new material, combine that material with your old survey, make both available and publish about it. We have to create systematically new openings to everything that can be found. And in that respect we are already booked some result. You know that better than I do, because you are the information specialists, I am just a friendly but demanding user, who is always surprised about the amount of useful information you come up with.

But the problem is: how can we make all those Dutch activities useful for the Third World. There are good examples of how it can work, but there are also quite a lot other examples. An often occurring problem is for instance the language. That is why the Directory is published in English. EADI has connected the Netherlands by means of its International Development Information Network with an international circle of research and training institutes engaged in Third World problems. The Netherlands have also in that respect offered a huge opening at colleagues in other countries in the world. And that is not all. I have always been proud about the fact that I was one of the founders of CEDLA in Amsterdam, an institute that in an admirable way made its collection on-line accessible. And there are more of those institutions in the Netherlands, which do very important things on a regional scale. It is very important to know what you can find regionally in the Netherlands. Huge numbers of students have not the slightest idea about the amount of information available and accessible in our land. They pretend to be the first one ever to investigate the subject they are interested in. And that is simply impossible. However, you must know the way to find useful information. And most students nowadays do not have the time to find that out. They need all the time they have, just to finish their basic training. This impoverishes their education a lot. On the one hand most students want to know as quickly as possible where they can find the necessary information, on the other hand they have not enough time to broaden their horizon, to get really accustomed with everything the scientific world has to offer. I have students who know and use only our own special library. They pretend to find everything they need over there. Even the general university library is too far away for them. They make insufficient use of existing possibilities, at a moment when the university libraries are becoming more and more important and trying to make the total Dutch collections accessible by computer.

Because of the shrinking financial possibilities of the libraries, it becomes increasingly necessary to know and consult specialised institutes. (Our own library - the one I mentioned above - has at the moment scarcely the means to finance the binding of their books. A great number of periodicals had to be cancelled. The argument was that you could consult them somewhere else anyway). In that sense there will be asked a greater effort of the Dutch researcher in the future.

There is a lot of very valuable material to be found in the Netherlands: in the university libraries and to mention some institutes: CBS, KIT, NIDI. A lot of hidden treasures also, especially in the collections of the seminars, just waiting for a prince "to kiss them awake".

On the other side we experience a bigger internationalization. And we are in the Netherlands often not equipped to compete. The geographers have already long time ago given up their efforts to compete. In Geo-Abstracts all books and periodicals are analyzed and made accessible in computerized form. Abstracts are very useful as a first access to a lot of fields, because they are arranged according to subject and region. The only problem that is that a geographer always wants a very refined and precise description, and for that you have to know the region very well. An administrative delimitation coincides not always with an intellectual or scientific relevant one. On good cartographic information for instance you can graft demographic research and all kinds of statistical entities. This enlarges the level of knowledge and the insight. Those development I welcome. An other example are the Sociological Abstracts. They offer the possibility to find, rather quickly and smoothly, which publications are first, second or third hand. Although you can not blindly rely on it. Even Nature publishes unsustainable medical articles.

Big international organizations as UNESCO, UNIDO are linked with the international information networks. The only problem I have with their information is the rudeness of it.

The problem is of course that relations between on the one hand the people who run the libraries and develop the documentation-systems and on-line systems and on the other hand the researchers, who want more and more sophisticated and to the point information, becomes more and more intensive and interdependent. It has to become a coalition that benefits both sides. That means for you, as information specialists, the necessity to develop effective categories and divisions for the data. Useful and workable thematic headings, to make the needed information accessible in sufficient detailed form. Something which can only occur if there is a permanent debate between scholars and documentalists. An example is the Directory, a first attempt to offer the opportunity to search as well on subject, region, institute as an researcher. In this case, as in most cases, the way of covering was proposed by the researchers. But the problems with researchers is that they take not enough counsel together and disagree too often with eachother. The result is that you get from one person the interesting keyword 'human ecology', while another comes up with the keyword 'environmental ecology' for the same subject. The one keyword is more attracting and more credit-worthy than the other, but still... And there was another - young - researcher who had proposed even another keyword: 'ecological research'. The result is that you can find me under human ecology, but not under environmental ecology, where you can find some of mine colleagues. So, I am partially not retracable for a foreigner, who does not use the keyword human ecology. And even more painfully for me, who has been doing ecological related research, is the fact that I am not mentioned under the keyword ecological research, because I took the foolish decision to use human ecology as descriptor for all my research. I thought it to be an excellent choice, a fortress where I was king. And now I am being mangled by two other descriptions.

It seems a minor problem. But it is one you have to signalize early. And the really interesting thing is the discussion it will lead to. For instance a debate between geographers, economists, agro-hydrologists and anthropologists. The anthropologists will come up with cultural ecology, because it contains the in their eyes crucial term culture. And then you have a discussion between four disciplines, which have to find an all including term and systematically defined and developed variations.

In that way the problem of categorizing brings researchers and information specialists together. At lot of work, which will enable us to do the things we do more effectively in the future, I hope.

Question:

Can you give, on the base of your experience as a researcher and as attendant of students, a reaction to the question as to how far the universities and research-centres pay attention to the fact that information gathered in the Third World is too often taken back to the Netherlands in stead of left behind for use in the Third World? And could you go into the question as to how far cooperation between researchers from the Netherlands and researchers from the Third World is promoted?

Answer:

That is a good question, which touches the heart of the work we are doing. What are we doing it for? Let us be honest. We are not all philanthropists. A lot researchers just are driven by curiosity. Very many researchers have to commit that if they are not only driven by an ideal to create a better world. In my opinion altruism can also be understood as self-interest. It takes something from a researcher to do his work under often not easy circumstances. And then the way in which you undertake your research becomes tremendously important. I think that is where your question is pointing at.

You collect your material in the field and you go to do field-work with already collected and arranged material. In the most favourable circumstances you go to do field-work with material that is very useful for colleagues in the Third World. I had the luck to be able to cooperate with institutes in the Third World and to come with very useful and in their eyes amazingly detailed information. But they also showed me distinct shortcomings. This gave slowly birth to the idea to start a common research.

However, it is my opinion that the best way to write a good publication is to return to the Netherlands. I do not belief that the important publications are written sitting in a tent in the jungle or somewhere else.

I think that the material is intended to be taken to the Netherlands. But that does not mean that you withdraw it from the country you were doing research in. In my opinion data, especially survey-data, always has to be duplicated. In that way all the gathered material stays in the country where you did your research. You take the duplicate home to the Netherlands.

Your second point implicates coordination by an institute in the Netherlands. In most cases there exist arrangements between institutes in the Netherlands and in Third World countries. And WOTRO usually controls if a researcher is backed by an institution. Coalitions with research-institutes inside the country where the research is done become the norm. I have worked with countries from where people came to the Netherlands to work. That meant that there existed ties between the countries, which made cooperation between institutes far more easy.

But there are also institutes, you have to be honest about that, with which it is better to cut the links. However, in general the intention has to be to start a cooperation. And I believe that there is a growing consensus among researchers about the necessity to do this.

Question:

The first answer was related to the collection of field-data in the developing countries. My question is what is the benefit for the Third World country as such of just collecting data and taking it back to Holland. It should be also the other way around, by making available to Third World institutes the data collected by desk-research in the Netherlands.

Answer:

I agree, of course the example I can give you is quite clear, that in the first place many types of research carried out by, let take the Dutch experience, in countries of the Third World are welcomed because every society is helped by better knowledge of itself also and we know very well that often outsiders have taught us very much about our own society. There are very interesting researches, for instance, by Indian sociologists on Dutch family life. Quite interesting because in the eyes of the other you see often more clearly how the object is. So in that respect I think every Third World country is helped by knowledge. But now the question taking knowledge with you. As I said you have to do your utmost to make it available of course for the country in question. We did research to know the effect that the Netherlands working 'guest-workers' had on their villages of origin in North Africa. That research was carried out in a team with Moroccan and Dutch specialists. We published it in French and Dutch, so it is readable for everybody. We translated it into English as a summary to put it into the Geo-Abstracts. Now the whole world can use it if they like to know about it and the material as I already told Ms. de Rijk, is in a duplicated form so the whole research, all the material, all the interviews, all the computer-sheets, all the tables, all the graphics and what you may have are in a doubled quality available in Holland and in North Africa. So in that respect I think, we have to look at it and we have to bring it in the academic market-place so that everybody in the economic and the anthropological and geographical field will be convinced that this is the way you have to deal with this material because you were in fact the guest of the country concerned. So I understand the meaning of your question, and there are perhaps examples in which there is not a complete double way traffic, but we have to work on it.

Question Ms. Corr ea:

I would like to thank my colleagues for pointing out this problem of the material taken out by expatriate researchers out of Third World countries while most of the time even sending back publications results was forgotten. This is one of our main problems in collection building in our scientific libraries. Because most of the time we have material that researchers need to conduct their product, they come down, walk with the material, most of the time go back with and don't give any result. It is really a big problem and it is good to talk about it.

Answer:

I have no answer. You are quite right and this point should be underlined in the minutes of this meeting so there will be more attention paid to this point.

THE PRESENT AND FUTURE CHALLENGES IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF AGRICULTURAL INFORMATION SERVICES IN AFRICA; THE CTA ANSWER

Thiendou Niang

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[This article is an adaption of the speech of Mr. Th. Niang, eds.]

I have been asked to present a communication to contribute to a better understanding and awareness of the present situation of the agricultural information services in Africa by an industry analysis, to suggest possible actions to overcome the identified problems, and to provide information about CTA's activities.

Firstly, I will try to do an environmental analysis which will outline the key issues pertaining the agricultural information market's opportunities and threats, and a societal analysis.

Secondly, I will explain CTA's mandate and functions, and its activities in response to the African needs.

I. THE AFRICAN MARKET

I.1 Future challenges

The African agricultural information market is facing two major threats: the limited number of services and the acute shortage of professional staff.

- * There is a limited number of agricultural information services in the African countries. They can be estimated at 900, but compared to the clientele they must serve, this number is insignificant.

The CTA directory "Information Sources on Tropical Agriculture" covers 337 libraries and documentation centres of research institutes, teaching establishments and development organisations in the agricultural sector in the 69 African, Caribbean and Pacific countries, of which 44 are African.

There are great differences in the strengths of the agricultural information services in different African countries, and most of them are located in the capital cities.

- * There is an acute shortage of qualified and trained professional African personnel at all levels. In a paper on training in agricultural information, M.J. Menou and T. Niang give some of the reasons for this:

"The present availability of educational programmes in agricultural information, though it may be satisfactory in specific and local situations, does not respond properly to the educational needs of the people nor to the manpower development requirements of national agricultural information systems. It is felt that the programmes currently available for basic information education are not appropriate as to their contents; they require long leaves and can only be taken with fellowships, which are awarded without any connection with the development of the systems.

Furthermore, the majority of people involved in agricultural information have a basic education in a general discipline with little relevance to information activity. Numerous organizations working independently offer specialized short courses, mostly one by one, increasing the relative weight of the preparation and implementation of each one. This scattering makes information difficult and hinders the pooling of efforts. Courses often repeat rather than complement each other. They do not grant the diplomas which are required in order to secure satisfactory working conditions and career prospects.

Most training activities do not have regular funding. Irrespective of their type, they are constrained by the scarcity of qualified educators, the lack of teaching material and the scarcity of centres which could host practical training sessions in conditions close to real-life situations. The available resources do not allow for the full training of a sufficient number of persons during a given period so that a critical mass could be achieved. Trained people remain isolated in a non-supportive environment without having

access to a real follow-up and technical backstopping, continuing education or technical information. For many reasons, staff turn-over is high, and training encourages this to some extent". [1]

Hopefully, there are three key opportunities to be considered: building a network of contacts; coordinating training activities in agricultural information; and developing a market research.

*** Building a network of contacts**

Cooperation with national, regional and international institutions is an important step towards reinforcing information dissemination activities in Africa.

The main purpose of establishing these contacts is to help to tailor activities to meet African requirements. One has to envisage a consortium of partners to consider establishing linkages among international development organisations, international professional associations dealing with information and documentation, international networks of researchers and extensionists, and database and databank producers. Such connections will enable partners to remain informed on programmes related to scientific and technical information, research development and to harmonize their activities.

*** Coordinating training activities in agricultural information**

The efforts made in the field of training agricultural information professionals has been greatly appreciated by the decision-makers, donor agencies and information professionals.

The Experts' Meeting in Training in Agricultural Information appreciated CTA's outstanding efforts to put into effect the conclusions and recommendations of the Rome Meeting, the preparation of the programme of training in agricultural information and its role in promoting international cooperation in agricultural information training. Finally, it recommended that CTA be responsible for following up the Progefia activities.

*** Developing market research**

It is now obvious that if there is a wish to inject Science and Technical Information (STI) more successfully into African rural development programmes, it will have to come to grips with two prerequisites, one methodological, the other organisational. The first is unquestionably a careful analysis of the users' priority needs; knowledge of what is wanted is a sine qua non for the right tie-in between the supply and demand of STI. The second condition is to concentrate the Centre's activities in disseminating information in order to make a greater impact as quickly as possible. There is no question of ignoring all the efforts already made by various institutions in the field of STI dissemination. However, it is now a question of creating the conditions for genuine coordination between needs and services. Those actions will reinforce and improve the quality of the services offered.

I.2 Societal analysis

The important social, technological, economical, political and structural factors could be summarised as follows:

Social

In Africa, decision-makers and user groups perceive libraries as secondary services and, consequently, the attention or support libraries receive from them is very limited. As a result, information centres remain fragile. Perhaps this is tied to the present information officers' perception of themselves as bookkeepers rather than as disseminators of information.

One might wonder if this perception is not also tied to the value scientists, extension workers and trainers attach to information they receive free of charge. "As a matter of policy the library, like most non-profit

organisations in the regions, does not charge prices for its primary products and services such as inter-library loans and photocopy services." [2]

Another cultural issue is the fact that users under-value locally available information and data in decision-making, planning, monitoring and production of technical information, training or extension material.

Because they don't have confidence in the local documentation centres, potential users prefer to send their requests to European, United States or international information centres, such as CAB International, FAO, etc.

The situation described above militates against the strengthening of local information services, for even if centres receive support from donor agencies and facilitating organisations (bilateral or multilateral cooperation), there is no real guarantee for support for the centres at the end of the project.

Another problem in libraries is the stealing or mutilation of library material, which is a constantly encountered problem.

Deficiencies in users' education and orientation, and difficulties in obtaining enough reading material for the consolidation of learning, explain why the theft of books is on the increase in the documentation and information centres in Africa.

The existence of functional library committees in agricultural colleges and faculties, research stations, as well as advisory boards at Ministry level, to assist with the identification of user needs and wants, and to find out the best options for meeting them, would strengthen the libraries and documentation centres in these regions. Although library committees exist in most English speaking African countries, they do not have a real effect on the management of the services.

One has to add to these general characteristics of the African environment, the cultural differences between some member countries. Some are anglophone, others francophone, and the rest are lusophone countries. The francophone and lusophone information professionals feel somewhat excluded from general information programmes (such as the IAALD programme). Some of the reasons for this perceived ostracism might be the level of education and the attitudes and values of the information professionals in these countries.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

The information technology transfer not only helps the information services in developing countries to tap the worldwide information resources, but also helps in making the information functions visible and in improving communication among partners in information networking.

John Metcalfe states: "Microcomputers and CD-ROM technology provide the opportunity for revolution in ease of access to information. The increasing power of microcomputers and their decreasing size and price has resulted in their introduction to the library environment in many developing countries, particularly for use in cataloguing, accounting and creating small databases of information. In the survey for the CGIAR Aspen Report, it was found that 42% of 123 organisations already used microcomputers.

Onto this increasingly sophisticated base has now come the CD-ROM. When the CD-ROM is run on a player connected to a microcomputer, the user has easy access to any words on the 200.000 pages stored. Gone is the need for costly telecommunication systems." [3]

The advent of the UNESCO mini-micro CDS/ISIS (Computerised Documentation Service / Integrated Set of Information Systems) database management software package with its different language versions (French, English and Spanish) offers opportunities for a better exchange of information and improved access to bibliographic records.

This software, which can also be used for many other files such as directories of people and projects, is the most commonly used software in Africa. This is because it is almost freely distributed to developing countries, and because many people in Africa have been trained to use it either within international programmes (UNESCO/DSE, UNESCO/EIB, IDRC/ICRAF, ILCA, etc.) or within national training programmes.

In addition, the International Information System for Agricultural Science and Technology (AGRIS, FAO) has prepared a CDS/ISIS using the AGRIS format, which facilitates the exchange of data between national

agricultural information centres. Telefax machines have improved document delivery, as it is now possible to send a request and receive a document faster than was possible before. Most of the African countries now have access to telefax facilities, either public or institutional. Modern photocopiers are also more reliable and provide many possibilities for "publishing" information/documentation.

Agricultural databases

There are several databases for the agricultural sector. I will here mention the most important ones relevant to the African countries, not only for their tropical subject coverage, but also for their availability on CD-ROM.

- * **AGRICOLA** is compiled by the National Agricultural Library of the United States. The Agricola database comprises 2.515.000 records consisting of 1.140.000 from 1970 to 1978 and 1.375.000 from 1979 to June 1990. Although about 80% of all entries in Agricola are documents originating in the US, this database contains many references on the African countries. It should be noted that the non-US document coverage is now reduced, due to the fact that their input is left to AGRIS.
- * **AGRIS Database.** The International Information System for the Agricultural Sciences and Technology (AGRIS) is a cooperative network composed of 142 national and 18 regional and international centres. The AGRIS database comprises 1.661.256 records, covering all aspects of agricultural development. These documents are indexed with the multilingual thesaurus, Agrovoc. The main by-product of the AGRIS database is Agrindex, which is now printed in French, Spanish and English. There are also a magnetic tape distribution service, an online service for searching, and SDI services. Special products include topical bibliographies (animal biotechnology, plant protection in Africa, etc.) or national bibliographies (Senegal, Côte d'Ivoire, etc.)
- * **CAB ABSTRACTS** is the world's largest bibliographic database on research in agriculture, forestry and related disciplines including social sciences and aspects of human medicine. The computerised database, dating from 1972, contains abstracts of two million published documents; abstracts of another three million, accumulated before 1972, are available in printed form. Some 130.000 abstracts are added to the database each year.
- * The **KIT Database** comprises two subfiles: "Abstracts on Tropical Agriculture" (ATA) and "Abstracts on Rural Development in the Tropics". The database comprises about 80.000 records. Tropag is the machine-readable version of the ATA subfile and is available through orbit infoline in the USA. The KIT database is published in two journals: the monthly "Abstracts on Tropical Agriculture", with 4000 records per year, and the bimonthly "Abstracts on Rural Development in the Tropics" with 2000 records per year.
- * The **CIDARC Database** is another source of information on tropical agriculture. The database consists of over 44.556 bibliographic records including all research reports produced by CIRAD, as well as publications collected elsewhere. These records deal with forestry, livestock, veterinary services, agronomy, locusts, ecology and agricultural mechanisation. CIRAD publishes "Agritrop", a quarterly bibliographic review on agriculture and rural development in hot regions.
- * **CARIS.** The Current Agricultural Research System, created in 1975, is operating as a decentralised network of 120 national, regional and international centres coordinated by FAO. The global database of CARIS contains more than 22.000 descriptions of research projects. It provides many services to users such as national and regional CARIS directories etc. At a regional level, the CARIS system is supported by regional institutions such as IRAZ (for Central Africa) and SACCAR (for Southern Africa). At a national level, some centres participate directly in the system.

In addition to those mentioned above, there are other databases, such as BIOSIS and RESADOC, which contain information of interest to African agriculturalists.

According to John Loder, "all these services compete to some extent, but they are serving different markets. They differ in central subject interest, language, and their market's ability to pay in hard currency, and so are more complementary than competitive."

There is no doubt that CD-ROM has a great potential for information transfer in the developing countries. However, the present status of computerisation in these countries does not enable them to take full advantage of the technology.

Among the Third World countries, African countries are at the bottom of the list as far as computerisation is concerned. "Of the Third World's 5% share in global computer sales, Latin America accounts for 58%, Southeast Asia for 28%, the Middle East for 8%, and Africa for only 6%. Apart from the efforts of the Côte d'Ivoire, Cameroon and more recently Gabon to invest in this field, most other African countries are only at the first stage of computerisation, using it for calculating salaries, for accounting and statistics." [4]

In the African countries, there are only a few agricultural information services equipped with the physical facilities to access CD-ROM resources, in spite of the efforts made by cooperative agencies such as IDRC, CTA and the World Bank, to provide these countries with such equipment.

INFORMATION NETWORKING

Introducing the Directory "Information Sources on Tropical Agriculture in the ACP Countries", T. Niang states: "The most significant phenomenon in the development of information services in the ACP countries over the last decade has been the emergence of information networking and the exchange of information and experience. All of the synergies and economies of scale have been exploited: interlibrary loans, development of collective catalogues for periodicals and reference works, standardization of working methods and the exploitation of the documentation capital.

National sectorial networks have emerged in the Congo (the Congolese Agricultural Documentation and Documentation Network -REDICA), in Côte d'Ivoire (the Côte d'Ivoire National Agricultural Documentation Network - REDACI) and in Senegal (the Senegalese Agricultural Documentation Network - REDAS).

At regional level, the approach which has been taken in the establishment of networks reflects the major socio-economic and geopolitical concerns. RESADOC in Mali is primarily concerned with problems related to drought, desertification and environmental protection in the Sahelian countries.

At the international level, AGRIS and CARIS remain the main global information systems. Beside the fact that they provide a model for networking, AGRIS and CARIS offer joint short-term training programmes, and advisory services to their members.

This information networking has a potential multiplying effect on all the members' activities, but the "networking approach is restrained by administrative and managerial regulations that are designed to promote self-reliance rather than mutual reliance." [5]

DOCUMENT DELIVERY

Due to the shortage of foreign currency in many countries which hinders the importation of books, publications and scientific material, UNESCO set up a document delivery scheme. With this scheme, the users pay in their national currency, the value of which is expressed in United States dollars, and have the freedom to choose what publications to buy and where to buy them. There are distributing bodies for UNESCO coupons in 24 countries of the ACP group (Angola, Burundi, Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, Ethiopia, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Kenya, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritania, Mozambique, Nigeria, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Sudan, Tanzania, Togo, Uganda, Zaïre, Zambia, Zimbabwe).

Another mechanism is the one of the British Library Document Supply Centre (BLDSC). In his paper "Document supply with particular reference to agriculture", Dr David Wood stresses: "It is interesting to note at this juncture that the BLDSC overseas photocopy coupons are accepted as payment by some libraries other than the British Library. It has therefore taken on the role as a form of international currency although the BLDSC has not yet gone as far as agreeing to redeem them at face value other than by providing services. Nevertheless it does mean that holders of these coupons have access to the holdings of an

increasing number of foreign libraries. This development has resulted in an additional benefit namely that libraries which accept BLDSO coupons also receive requests in a standard format, i.e. on a standard BLDSO request form. This has enormous advantages over the various forms and other scraps of paper which over the years have circulated around the international Interlibrary Lending (ILL) systems of the world." [6]

A third mechanism for document delivery is that used by AGLINET (the Worldwide Network of Agricultural Libraries), which aims at promoting the mutual and rational exploitation of library resources for the benefit of the world's agricultural development through systematic collaboration among agricultural libraries for the efficient provision of an inter-library loan service (including photo reproduction and bibliographic information).

The network consists of a chain of major agricultural libraries in each region or country of the world, supported by an international centre, the FAO library.

At present, 27 agricultural libraries form the network.

Economic

Although there is a lack of adequate fund allocation to libraries and documentation centres, the biggest problem facing information centres is the critical shortage of foreign currency. The strength of foreign currency against the local currency makes it even more difficult to purchase books and subscriptions to journals.

Scarce funds are also often misused on purchasing expensive journals and books which are not relevant to the institutions' current programmes.

Political

There are some regional groupings of interest to agricultural information activities. Among the most relevant are:

*** Southern African Development Co-ordination Conference - SADCC**

In 1980, the Heads of State of the Southern African Development Co-ordination Conference (SADCC) declared their commitment "to pursue policies aimed at economic liberation and integrated development of their national economies". The SADCC member countries are: Angola, Botswana, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Swaziland, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe and, since 1990, Namibia.

It is within the SADCC context that a research coordinating unit, the Southern African Centre for Cooperation in Agricultural Research (SACCAR) was established in 1985, to coordinate regional efforts in the field of agricultural research.

The mandate of SACCAR includes the strengthening of national agricultural research systems and capabilities, the promotion of the interchange and utilisation of scientific and technical information and the generation of new technologies.

SACCAR maintains the Agricultural Research Resource Assessment (ARRA) on Research, Training and Extension Institutions.

SACCAR also published, within the framework of the collaboration with CTA, the SADCC Agricultural Development bibliography, an inventory of ongoing agricultural research in the SADCC, and is planning to set up a network of agricultural information services in the SADCC.

Although SACCAR does not have enough staff to be able to handle a regional cooperation programme, the support it gains from donor agencies will increase its potential to play a major role in the promotion of information programmes in the SADCC.

*** The Sahel Institute**

The Sahel Institute is an institution of the Permanent Interstate Committee for drought control in the Sahel (CILSS), based at Bamako (Mali), and engaged in research, training and the dissemination of scientific and technical information.

The member countries are: Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Gambia, Guinea Bissau, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Senegal, and Chad.

Some of the tasks of the Sahel Institute are to support and coordinate research programme information services in the Sahelian zone, and to organise technical meetings in order to promote the exchange of ideas in the field of rural sociology, plant production, animal production, forestry, plant protection, natural resources, and environmental protection.

In 1979 the Sahel Institute established the Sahelian Network for Scientific and Technical Information and Documentation (RESADOC), which specialises in the problems of drought and desertification, and in environmental protection.

Although Resadoc has difficulties in communicating with its national focal points in all the Sahelian countries, it has great potential for helping the development of these countries.

These market groupings, based on a variety of social, economic and political indicators for a large number of countries (Inter-national Market Selection, as defined by Bender), offer to any development agents opportunities to develop collaborative programmes responding to its customers' needs, and to avoid duplication.

Structural

*** PROGEFIA**

As a result of the "Meeting on International Cooperation in the Training of Agricultural Librarians and Documentalists", held in Rome on 17 June 1988, CTA prepared a "General Programme for Education in Agricultural Information" (PROGEFIA).

The programme proposes a long-term master plan for education in agricultural information in the less developed countries.

Its objective is not only to present a completely coherent and adapted set of educational programmes which would eliminate the major deficiencies identified in the present provision of education, but also to allow the organisations interested in providing such education to ensure complementarity between their respective interventions, and to pool their efforts and resources in suitable forms.

*** PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS**

Although there are international, regional and national professional associations of information specialists, such as the International Association of Agricultural Librarians and documentalists (IAALD), which operate for the promotion of the agricultural information profession, their activities have been less than effective for the developing world. As a result, opportunities for agricultural information officers to meet and share ideas and experience are very limited.

*** AGRICULTURAL INFORMATION FOR AFRICA**

In a paper presented at the CGIAR Documentation and Information Services Meeting, Michael Hailu proposes the setting up of an agricultural information network for Africa, whose major objectives are, among others, to assist the NARS' efforts to improve their capacities for handling and delivering information through technical advice and training, and to promote collaborative programmes between information personnel.

This proposal, which has been supported by the Second Meeting of CGIAR Documentation and Information Services (held at ICRISAT, Hyderabad, India, 16-20 January 1989), falls under the responsibility of the International Livestock Centre for Africa (ILCA), which is trying to implement this programme.

II. AN AGRICULTURAL INFORMATION TOOL IN AID TO ACP COUNTRIES: THE CTA

The Technical Centre for Agricultural and Rural Cooperation, created within the framework of the Lomé

Convention, which is a collaborative agreement between the 69 African, Caribbean and Pacific States (ACP) and the 12 member countries of the European Economic Community (EEC), is at the disposal of the ACP States in order to provide them with better access to information, research, training and innovation in the spheres of agricultural and rural development and extension.

The Centre has four different categories of activities: technical meetings, studies and publications, an inquiry service, and a programme of reinforcement of the ACP agricultural information services.

CTA organises technical meetings in the form of seminars or workshops, for discussing agricultural policy, strategy or research results, assessing the development of a specific technology, or allowing ACP specialists to exchange information on their research programmes or developmental activity in areas of regional or general concern, such as "Food security in East Africa" and "Small ruminant breeding".

It considers publications to be vital tools in the dissemination of information and therefore produces various types of publications.

- * CTA publishes, in English and French, a two-monthly periodical, "Spore", which is distributed to 25.000 individuals and institutions in ACP countries, as well as in Europe.
- * CTA co-publishes with ACCT the series "Le technicien d'agriculture tropicale", in order to popularise practical knowhow.
- * To break down language barriers, CTA translates selected reference books from English into French or from French into English. A good example of this programme is the publication in English, in collaboration with Macmillan Publishers, of the key reference books in the series "Le technicien d'agriculture tropicale".

II.1 Review of the activities of CTA's Information Service

II.1.1 The inquiry service

With the establishment of the inquiry service in 1985, CTA implemented one of its main functions as specified in Article 37 of the Lomé Convention.

This service, which complements seminars and publications, has the task of disseminating scientific and technical information on agricultural development in response to specific requests, and of channelling inquiries from planners, researchers, teachers and extension workers in the ACP countries to the appropriate sources of agricultural expertise and technological know-how.

Summary of the activities

In 1985, when it was created, the inquiry service received 182 requests for information or documentation, and in 1986 this increased almost six-fold, to 1082 requests. Demand increased further to 4626 requests in 1987 and 10.212 in 1988.

For the first time since its inception, there was no great increase in 1989; the number of requests received amounted to 15.300. The main reason for this is that the inquiry service is being decentralised. CTA's Regional Branch Offices in the Caribbean and Pacific are handling more queries, and national information centres are being strengthened.

In addition, an increasing number of CTA publications is available, providing answers to many queries that, previously, would have been directed to CTA.

These inquiries come from a wide range of socio-professional categories: planners, researchers, teachers, farmers, extension workers, librarians, documentalists, students and decision-makers.

DISTRIBUTION OF INQUIRIES BY SOCIO-PROFESSIONAL CATEGORY

users	%
planners	26%
researchers	20%
teachers	13%
farmers	9%
extension workers	8%
librarians	7%
students	4%
decision-makers	3%
other	10%

These requests come mainly from the ACP countries (61%) and EEC countries (29%), but some inquiries come from countries that have not signed the Lomé Convention.

Answering inquiries is justified when one considers the need for CTA to acquire scientific and technical information published in other countries to meet ACP information needs.

The 10 main clients in 1989 were: Nigeria, Senegal, Zaire, Ghana, Benin, Congo, Rwanda, Côte d'Ivoire, Ethiopia and Tanzania.

Users of this service are interested in all areas of agriculture: crop protection, animal husbandry, fisheries, forestry, rural economics and sociology, education and extension, agricultural equipment, soil science and research methodology.

Analysis of the inquiries received at CTA during 1988 reveals a particular interest in post-harvest technology, small ruminant husbandry, the improvement of agricultural production by use of non-chemical fertilizers, and agricultural education.

To deal with these inquiries, CTA provides a bibliographic service, together with an accessions service for primary literature, and also provides technical notes giving practical advice on technical aspects of agriculture or factual data (statistics or facts). Guidance on other sources of expertise or technological know-how may also be offered.

It should be noted that a wide range of people are involved in the demand for scientific and technical information: documentalists, and extension workers account for only a small percentage (15%) of requests. Many of the professionals involved in rural development approach CTA directly for their information requirements, either because they do not have confidence in the information structures of their own country, or because these structures have not marketed themselves effectively.

It is also interesting to note that the motivation of most of CTA's clients is high-minded: formulation of a research programme or development project, and assistance with the solution of a practical problem. The documentation supplied may sometimes also be used to broaden or deepen knowledge, and in such cases it should be considered as a self-teaching aid.

II.1.2 The programme of support to ACP information services

CTA's experience has shown that, in most cases, the requests it receives could be handled by national information and documentation services if these were better equipped and utilised. It is in this context that CTA has embarked on a programme to reinforce the information and documentation services of ACP countries. This programme covers the following areas: training, provision of reference material, the production of national and regional bibliographies, and the provision of equipment for electronic information systems and reprography.

Summary of the activities

a. Training in agricultural information:

The main activity of CTA in this area concerns the short term courses and the promotion of international cooperation in training in agricultural information.

Short term courses

Training in agricultural information refers to a programme of short courses for agricultural librarians and documentalists on sources of information, the management of information services and microcomputing for database management.

In the short course on sources of information, the aim was to familiarise information professionals with information sources and to make information more readily available and accessible to users.

This course was held in Dakar (Senegal) in December 1986 for the French-speaking African countries, in Lilongwe (Malawi) in June 1987 for the English-speaking African countries, and in Trinidad in December 1988 for the Caribbean countries.

In 1989, CTA introduced a new module: "Management of Information Services" in its training programme.

The first course offering this new module was organised within the framework of the CTA-SACCAR Memorandum of Understanding and was attended by 15 nationals from SADCC member countries.

The aim of the course was to familiarise the participants with the management skills required for running information services, and to stimulate ideas on development strategy for information services and systems in the SADCC.

In 1990 a course on micro-computing for agricultural information management was designed and held in collaboration with the EIB (International School of Bordeaux) for the French speaking ACP countries (Bordeaux, June 1990).

The study programme of all these courses includes listening to national reports, with the aim of creating synergy between the training content and the professional expectations of the trainees.

The teaching methods adopted throughout the development of this series of courses have encouraged the sharing of experiences between participants and trainers. This has been aided by the setting up of a teaching team made up resource persons with complementary skills (information specialists, scientists and trainees).

These courses have produced immediate results, including the compilation of indexes and bibliographies. They have had an impact on the attitudes and behaviour of the information professionals and on documentary practices.

Two examples may be given to illustrate this impact. The first is in the form of a quote from one of the course participants: "Since returning from Dakar, I have a better understanding of the usefulness of scientific and technical information, and in particular of the importance of making this better known to others (the users)."

The second example is the creation and intensification of good working relationships between colleagues, which is reflected in the mutual exchange of documents and technical assistance among course participants.

Many changes have also been observed in documentary practice, particularly as a consequence of the introduction of marketing and the promotion of documentary services to users - such as the use of bibliographies and abstracts and the use of inter-library loan services.

In the field of documentary policy, the establishment of a legal deposit for agricultural publications in the National Centre for Agricultural Documentation in Burkina Faso must be noted.

Follow-up activities are an important aspect of the CTA courses. This follow-up takes the form of support for trainees in compiling bibliographies (for example, on the role of women in agriculture in Southern Africa), the provision of reference works and reprographic equipment to Chad, Mozambique and Guinea-Bissau, and support for trainees to participate in international professional meetings.

In addition to offering its own courses, CTA helps ACP nationals to attend other training courses, including the course "Information on Agriculture" organised by CAB International, the course "Management of small agricultural libraries" organised by the EIB and the course held by the Centre on Integrated Rural Development for Africa (CIRDAFRICA).

CTA also sponsored the attendance of ACP nationals at professional meetings such as the AGRIS/CARIS technical consultation and the International Association of Agricultural Librarians and Documentalists (IAALD) regional meeting and congress.

Meeting on International Cooperation in Training Agricultural Documentalists and Librarians

In June 1988, CTA organised an informal meeting on international cooperation in the training of agricultural documentalists and librarians, at FAO in Rome, on the occasion of the 6th technical consultation of centres participating in AGRIS.

The objectives of the meeting were to review past and present activities in the training of agricultural librarians and documentalists and to define a strategy for increased collaboration between all organisations involved in this activity in order to avoid duplication, and for a more rational utilisation of resources. The meeting was attended by fourteen delegates and observers from national and international organisations.

The meeting identified the following as the main constraints in training programmes: inadequate flow of information between interested parties, lack or unavailability of educational aids and materials, disparity between the training offered and the requirements of the beneficiaries, lack of coordination in training activities.

Having identified priority programmes for the future (information sources, management of information services, and utilisation of technologies for information transfer), the meeting proposed a set of measures to deal with problems related to training. These included reinforcing the practical training of agricultural documentation professionals, combining all practical training of trainers programmes for the future, and a study on a coordinated training programme for agricultural documentalists in developing countries.

b. Provision of reference material:

The main activities in this area concerned the selective dissemination of information, and the production and distribution of publications.

Selective dissemination of information

In 1988, CTA set up a pilot project on the selective dissemination of information (SDI), the aim of which was to improve the dissemination of scientific and technical information (STI) to ACP researchers by the regular provision of bibliographic information and the primary documents pertaining to it. This SDI project aims to contribute towards raising the operational level of the scientific and technical potential of ACP countries by means of an STI input into research programmes.

The SDI project enables its beneficiaries to gain access to data relevant to their research programmes and, at the same time, to involve the beneficiaries of this service in an informal network for the exchange of data on, and experience of, scientific activities.

The importance of the SDI project, which was set up with the technical collaboration of the Centre d'Information et de Documentation en Agronomie des Régions Chaudes (CIDARC), lies in the fact that it offers the opportunity to use several databases (CAB Abstracts, AGRIS, AGRICOLA, PASCAL, CIDARC database), which guarantees greater comprehensiveness in documentary research.

A further advantage of the SDI project is that it stimulates partnership and collaboration: CTA, CIDARC, and the national information services cooperate in defining a strategy for action to improve the dissemination of STI.

The pilot phase of this project focuses on 71 SDI profiles for nine research institutions in the following countries: Benin, Burundi, Cameroon, Ethiopia and Madagascar.

The interim report of the programme mentioned that between 6 May 1988 and 6 April 1990, 12,886 bibliographic records and 7,400 pages of photocopies were sent to the researchers who are the beneficiaries

of these activities. [7]

Production and distribution of publications

The activities of CTA in this field have focused on the distribution of CTA's own publications, the provision of subscriptions to CIRAD periodicals, bibliographic reviews such as Maize Abstracts, Agrindex (FAO), and the Analytical Bulletin on Rural Development (BADR) as well as providing access to documents emanating from the BADR.

Reference material has also been provided to the Ministry of Rural Development in Senegal to set up a reference service.

In 1988, CTA collaborated with the International Centre for Corn and Wheat Improvement (CIMMYT) on the production of a databank for maize germplasm on CD-ROM, containing 11.000 entries.

CTA has also implemented pilot operations for the reconstitution of national documentary archives, from which both Chad and Guinea-Bissau have benefited. In addition, CTA has helped national and regional information structures to publish bibliographies (e.g. "Agricultural Material in Lesotho", "Women in Development"), as well as inventories of institutions, research programmes and researchers (CARIS: for the Caribbean, the Pacific and the Southern African regions).

In addition, CTA, with the aim of promoting cooperation between ACP countries, has supported the preparation of "The SADCC Agricultural Development: a bibliography". This product consists of nine bibliographies, one for each of the SADCC countries (Angola, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Swaziland, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe). In all, over 22.400 bibliographic records have been collected. Apart from the printed volumes, machine-readable data are available to simplify the task of regularly updating the information.

CTA supplied a number of documentation centres with book-tokens by the United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organisation, UNESCO; the Socially Appropriate Technology Information, SATIS; and the Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, CNRS, to enable them to overcome the shortage of convertible currency for the purchase of publications.

c. Equipment supply:

In 1989, CTA launched a two-year experimental project to introduce CD-ROM technology to ACP countries, with the collaboration of KIT.

The objectives of the CD-ROM project are to enhance self-sufficiency in information dissemination, to support and stimulate the use of computer technology in ACP information centres, and to decentralise access to major databases. With the increasing number of questions being received from ACP users, it was necessary to relieve the inquiry service of some of its responsibility for answering these questions.

CTA supplied CD-ROM equipment, training and a portfolio of CD-ROM databases to 11 ACP information services, located in Cameroon, Kenya, Mali, Papua New Guinea, Trinidad and Tobago, Western Samoa, Zambia and Zimbabwe. As far as possible, equipment was purchased locally to ensure local maintenance services.

In 1990, the following countries benefited from the project: Tchad, Nigeria, Suriname, Ethiopia, Sierra Leone, Sudan, Fiji, Burkina Faso, and Tanzania.

On a smaller scale, countries such as Guinea Bissau, Tonga, Ethiopia, and Mozambique, have enjoyed support from CTA to purchase a photocopier to sustain their document delivery services.

Audiovisual equipment was purchased for the Sahel Institute, for the creation of a multimedia centre at RESADOC.

III. THE CTA STRATEGY FOR LOMÉ IV (1991-1995)

CTA's plan of action will cover 1991-1995 and will focus on three fields: training in agricultural information, provision of new technology for information transfer and provision of reference material.

It should be underlined here that CTA will make efforts aiming at harmonising and integrating its activities with those of other agencies involved in the development of information services in the ACP countries.

III.1 Training in agricultural information

The proposed CTA activities should be the core programme of PROGEFIA, as this strives to support the efforts of the institutions of developing countries.

Progefia also intends to contribute to the qualitative transformation of specialised education programmes and to their transfer, step by step, to the educational institutions of the developing countries, so that these programmes, which in their vast majority,

are at present:

become:

- | | |
|---|--|
| - scattered | - interconnected |
| - redundant | - complementary |
| - general and superficial | - specialised and operational |
| - occasional | - continuous |
| - without diplomas | - with diplomas |
| - loosely connected with the development of agricultural information services | - integrated into manpower development plans of these services |
| - rigid | - modular and adjustable |
| - full time | - part time |
| - residential | - at distance |
| - implemented by organisations of the industrialised countries | - implemented by organisations of the developing countries |
| - without follow-up | - backed by teaching material and continuing education |

Another reason for CTA to adjust its programme to the Progefia plan of action is that Progefia participants are from agricultural institutions, educational institutions, specialised or regional information systems, technical cooperation agencies and professional associations from developing countries and from the industrialised countries.

Lastly, Progefia is primarily directed at the staff currently attached to these agricultural institutions in developing countries which have to contribute to information activities of any kind, and of any capacity or level (managers, staff of the technical and administrative units, staff of the information units, trainers).

CTA's activities in training in agricultural information will be focussed on four areas: (1) the implementation of specialised short courses; (2) the production of teaching and learning material; (3) the reinforcement of the training programmes; (4) the building of a cooperative mechanism to support Progefia.

1. Specialised short courses

Two courses on the processing of agricultural information

These courses will be directed to the support staff of the information services of the lusophone countries. They will aim at preparing these staff to carry out the task of recording, reproduction, distribution, acquisition, filing, storage, simplified processing and retrieval of documents.

Two courses on the training of trainers in agricultural information

These courses will aim at strengthening the overall capacity of the training and education system.

The courses will be directed to fulltime teachers in information sciences or rural development related programmes, and the managers and professional staff of information units which have important responsibilities in training and technical backstopping of the personnel of other units within "national agricultural information systems".

These courses will cover expression and communication techniques, agricultural information systems, and teaching methods and arts.

Production of teaching and learning material

These programmes will comprise core activities such as the preparation of two handbooks. The first handbook should deal with microcomputer technology for agricultural information management. The second handbook should deal with the management of agricultural information systems. Another core activity will be the translation and adaptation of handbooks on the techniques of information and documentation work into Portuguese.

III.2 Provision of reference material

CTA's activities in the area of the provision of reference material will be focussed on national and regional bibliographies, current literature services, reference material, portfolio of agricultural databases on CD-ROM, and the provision of tokens to access primary documents.

It is envisaged to produce national and regional bibliographies for the 9 Sahelian countries, for the 8 Pacific countries, for the 5 Central African countries, for the 6 Eastern African countries, as well as for the newly added ACP members (Namibia, Haïti and the Dominican Republic).

As far as Selective Dissemination of Information is concerned, it is envisaged to deliver 60 generic current awareness literature services, of which 10 for the Pacific region, 10 for the Caribbean region and 10 for each of the four African regions. These will be supplemented by general profiles (up to 140 specific current awareness services) on request.

In addition, CTA plans to supply reference material to 40 information services. The basis for the identification of this material will be the documents "300 Références pour le développement rural" and "Tropical Agriculture: selected handbooks". This reference material will be supplemented by a list of newly produced handbooks and by suggestions from the beneficiaries of this service.

To promote the best use of the information technology, CTA will also provide to ACP centers a portfolio of relevant agricultural bibliographic databases on CD-ROM. This will comprise a complete starter set for the new sites and annual subscription for all sites.

The project will consider the acquisition of the following discs: Agricola biological abstracts, CAB Abstracts, AGRIS database, Tropag and Rural, Sesame, and CGIAR CD-ROM.

A yearly subscription to UNESCO and BLDSC booktokens for beneficiaries of national and regional bibliographies and for the CD-ROM databases will help to access documents cited in these sources.

III.3 Provision of equipment

The provision of literature will be supplemented by the provision of 40 workstations (IBM PC or compatible microcomputer with monitor, with at least 640K RAM, a hard disc and CD-ROM drive, and a laser printer), at a rate of 8 workstations a year. This equipment will be supplemented by a voltage stabiliser and software (WordPerfect, PC tools) and floppies.

Finally, it is planned to provide 30 photocopy machines to information/documentation centres. The photocopiers will be supplemented by a kit of consumables and a two year maintenance contract.

CONCLUSION

The agricultural information services in Africa suffer from some weaknesses and threats.

To improve the dissemination of information in Africa, a great deal of improvement needs to be done, particularly in:

- the understanding of the environmental factors, mainly the cultures prevailing in these countries;
- a better communication between the developed countries and the developing countries, particularly in formulating national, regional and international information programmes.

The close connection between relevant institutions will help to identify priority needs for the design of work programmes that are better adapted to the national and regional requirements.

It is within this perspective that CTA registers its action to consolidate its leading role in training in agricultural information and its catalytic role for CD-ROM programmes.

In implementing this strategy, CTA's attempt is to sustain agricultural development through the strengthening of agricultural information services of the ACP countries.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

ACCT	Agence de Coopération Culturelle et Technique. Agency for Cultural and Technical Cooperation.
ACP	African, Caribbean and Pacific States
AGLINET	Worldwide Network of Agricultural Libraries
AGRICOLA	Agricultural On-line Access (database produced by US National Agricultural Library)
AGRIS	International Information System for the Agricultural Sciences and Technology (FAO)
ARA	Agricultural Research Resource Assessment (SACCAR)
BADR	Bibliographie Analytique pour le Développement Rural
BIOSIS	Biological Sciences Information System
BLDSC	British Library Document Supply Centre (UK)
CARIS	Current Agricultural Research Information System (FAO)
CD-ROM	Compact disk - Read Only Memory
CDS/ISIS	Computerised Documentation Service / Integrated Set of Information Systems
CGIAR	Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (USA)

CIDARC	Centre d'Information et de Documentation des Régions Chaudes (CIRAD). International Centre for Documentation on Hot Climate Agriculture. (France)
CILSS	Comité Permanent Inter-Etats de Lutte contre la Sécheresse dans le Sahel. Permanent Interstate Committee for Drought Control in the Sahel.
CIMMYT	Centro Internacional de Mejoramiento de Maíz y Trigo International Maize and Wheat Improvement Center (Mexico)
CIRAD	Centre de Coopération Internationale en Recherche Agronomique pour le Développement. Centre for International Cooperation on Agricultural Research (France)
CIRDAFRICA	Centre on Integrated Rural Development for Africa (Tanzania)
CNRS	Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique (France)
CTA	Technical Centre for Agricultural and Rural Cooperation (Netherlands)
DSE	Deutsche Stiftung für Internationale Entwicklung. German Foundation for international development.
EEC	European Economic Community
EIB	Ecole Internationale de Bordeaux (ACCT). International School of Bordeaux
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
IAALD	International Association of Agricultural Librarians and Documentalists
ICRAF	International Council for Research in Agroforestry
IDRC	International Development Research Centre (Canada).
ILCA	International Livestock Centre for Africa
ILL	Inter Library Loan
IRAZ	Institut des Recherche Agronomique et Zootechnique (Burundi)
KIT	Royal Tropical Institute, Amsterdam
PASCAL	Database of CNRS
PC	Personal computer
PROGEFIA	Programme Général pour la Formation en Information Agricole. General Programme for Training in Agricultural Information
RAM	Random Access Memory
REDAS	Senegalese Agricultural Information and Documentation Network
REDACI	Côte d'Ivoire Agricultural Documentation Network
REDICA	Congolese Agricultural Documentation and Information Network
RESADOC	Sahelian Scientific and Technical Information and Documentation Network
SACCAR	Southern African Centre for Cooperation in Agricultural Research (SADCC)
SADCC	Southern African Development Cooperation Conference
SDI	Selective dissemination of information
STI	Scientific and Technical Information
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

DEVELOPMENT ADMINISTRATORS AND NETWORKS

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Paper about the use of (bibliographic) information by decision makers in the development field. There are almost no empirical studies about the use of information by decision makers in the development field. But those studies who do exist suggest a huge gap between the supply of information and the real use of that information.

Case:

Imagine the following case: a civil servant has been charged to improve the use of existing information for policy-making; the minister wants to link research and policy. How does this civil servant try to find out what information there is available?

He contacts an international institute active in the field of information exchange or a local library and asks for documentation about the use of information by policy-makers.

What happens next? The civil servant formulates his question - somewhat vague but clear enough in his own opinion - and puts that question to the librarian. The Question goes from there to the CTA, to the desk of mister Niang or Andries Dusink, who interprets it and hands it over to the KIT.

There it will be interpreted again and translated in certain number of standard codes comprehensible for the program which directs the CD-ROM program. Until this moment a completely human information network has been used. Five people are involved, who interpret each question in their own way. The interpretation will not be verified, but taken to be correct.

Then comes the magical moment. Somewhere a CD-ROM will be consulted and there will come out some titles - out of which a selection will be sent to the civil servant of DGIS who needs the data as quick as possible to prepare a lecture for a meeting about Information and the Third World. The civil servant makes again a selection and composes his lecture.

Selection, after selection, after selection. How did this occur? I do not know. There must have been a good fairy who mediated between all these links in such a way that here still came something out of it. Because I got my information in time and some of it I could use for today. But there seemed also to be a lot a useless and redundant information. In fact until now, I have not found a good systematical study about the way development administrators use information. I received a lot of poor articles about the use of information in poor countries. What really happens with the use of information by development administrators we still not know. We do not know it in the Netherlands, neither do they know it in other countries.

So the provisional conclusion must be: there are until now no solid comparative empirical studies about the use of information by development administrators which really inform us about the use of all the existing information.

Development administrators are a curious lot. In rich countries they are the persons who occupy themselves with the rest of the world and the rest of the problems in this world. They are specialists in generality. Mostly they do this kind of work only during a limited period in their career and without much special education. About the existing literature they know very little. And even if they are more familiar with it, they can pretend that the problem which occupies them is completely new and that therefore information is lacking, that in fact research still needs to be done. But for that research the time is lacking, because of the urgency of the problem. And even if research has been done than the problem that has been studied is unfortunately not completely theirs.

Development administrators from rich countries travel a lot. They therefore have an excellent insight in latest fashions in their area and can so criticize or renounce the work that has been done according to the previous

fashions. Development administrators are no scientists, neither are they diplomats, they are somewhat in between. They are a curious lot of people and I am one of them.

Therefore my first thesis:

Much has been written about how information for development should be used. But very little is written about the factual use among policy makers or development administrators. The less you know about something, the easier it is to advise other people about it.

Quite a few of the above mentioned papers that I received treated the question how information systems in developing countries should be designed, for instance a very interesting study by Nijkamp. But I have found no articles about comparative studies how development administrators act on this information and how the preparation of policy can be improved, neither here in the Netherlands nor there in the so called Third World.

Nevertheless there are enough reasons to think about this problem. SIDA, the Swedish agency for development corporation concluded a number of years ago that the situation was pretty bad with the use of that kind of information. On the question: 'does SIDA learn', the answer was: ...'there does appear to be a trend that changes in political policy and the ideology of foreign assistance (...) are very important in explaining SIDA's actions. ... certain strategic factors within SIDA have a major effect on the organization's readiness to learn. The answer to the question was not a straight yes or no. The answer was a qualified yes, but. Such factors as the clarity of the purposes or the aims of work, the spread of the activities, but also the length of the policy memoranda and the rapidity of change among diplomats or workers in SIDA. So there is no institutional capacity to learn, there is no institutional memory. In fact SIDA is an example of an agency that has a lot of information, but very little capacity to retain it.

I don't think that SIDA is so much different from DGIS, where I work, from the situation in the Netherlands as a whole. Even though we have libraries full of material, and even though hundreds or even thousands of development administrators have a full time job in the ministry or the so called 'medefinancieringsorganisaties', or in that large number of non-governmental- organisations with which DGIS is working, the use of the existing information is rather limited. And the knowledge about that use in the Netherlands is even more limited. How limited may appear from a small study that Tannie van Berkcel and I did on library use in this ministry. She collected all the data, I just elaborated them. For this occasion I would like to present to you some of the results of that study.

The general conclusion is that the average development administrator or policy maker in DGIS uses the country library of the ministry - there is also an another, a larger library serving the whole ministry of foreign affairs - three times a year. There are differences, but in fact the most striking thing of it is that the differences, even between the different departments of DGIS, are so small. Let us consider the data.

The first question was: where do the requests for information to our library come from?

In about two third of the cases, the requests come from inside DGIS. In about one third of the cases the requests come from outside, generally from students, consultants and other agencies who are interested in Dutch development cooperation. To be exact, in the period of study about 77 requests came in each week, that is about 2 each hour.

When someone from inside DGIS has a request, he mostly - in 79% of the cases - goes in person to the library and contacts the librarian. This creates the so important possibility to reformulate the request. Requests from outside mostly came in by telephone, in about two third of the cases.

The second question was: who from DGIS requests information, which department?

The central policy departments, in other words, those departments who are reasonable close to the process of decision making, were the most important. About one quarter of requests came from there. The evaluation department, the technical advise department and the public information department are also reasonable great

users. The country departments, where projects are being considered, are in effect quite small users of the library. The three country departments, for which the library was made, account for less than a quarter (23 %) of all requests. So the important users were those who work in the central policy departments. Those departments who are working in the international scene, as the DIO and DMP departments working with international organizations, are also very small users of the library. This can be caused by the fact that they have access to other libraries or get a lot of information from international organizations.

The third question: which central policy departments are using the library the most?

The largest user was the central policy planning department, 13,4 % of all requests come from there. In other words, a small number of people was responsible for a great deal of the use of the country library and the central departments were using it the most.

The fourth question was: how do the requests per person in each department compare?

The result is remarkable. The minister himself is the most important user, not only minister Pronk, but also his predecessor minister Bukman (we started our inquiry when minister Bukman was still in charge). The second biggest user is the IOV, that is the evaluation department. The third one is the department of central policy planning. Those are the three largest users. Not the people who are making or executing the policy in the ministry, but the people who are preparing the policy, are the main users of the library. An other remarkable finding is that the average for all the country departments is almost the same: about three requests a year. That is very little and there also is very little difference between the various departments.

This findings brought me to the following hypothese: the closer a department is to the minister, the more use is made of information. This is not so surprising, considering the fact that especially our present minister stresses the need for every official to read up and to be informed.

In summary we can state that the general impression out of our study is that the library is very little used and that those departments who should use it, use it in fact very little.

We should wonder why this is the case. Let us compare it with the use of research. DGIS is one of the biggest research financiers in the Netherlands, as far as development cooperation is concerned. Much research on this subject at Dutch universities is financed here. One could ask if the people who are not using the library are perhaps using results from research they have commissioned themselves. However an inventory of all the research financed by DGIS last years brought us to the conclusion that this was not the case. Our international evaluation of research and research use in DGIS shows that policy preparation in the different country departments is not benefiting from results out of research commissioned by those departments. We in fact even found out that the project officers often even did not know what the results of that researches were. They did not have the time, it was too difficult to study the thick research reports and therefore the benefit of that research is for the policy departments very little.

I think that the above sketched situation is not just typical for DGIS. I have already talked about the fact that SIDA has the same problems and I know also from colleagues in other countries that they have the same problem. African colleagues tell me this.

If this is true and if this is the general impression, then we should ask ourselves the question: why do the policy makers make so little use of this information.

On the basis of the papers and the books I received I would like to draw some conclusions.

The first is that the transfer of knowledge between different parties only occurs when there is some kind of correspondence between those parties.

A Dutch researcher, Van de Vall, has done a lot of studies in which he investigated why advisers to the ministry are misunderstood or not understood, or why their suggestions are not accepted. His main conclusion is that an adviser only will be accepted if he works from the beginning onwards with the people he is going to advise. You have to prepare the people for your advise. If you don't do it the advise will be misunderstood or not accepted. Otherwise the people for whom the advise is meant will just refer to the huge piles of paper on their desks and say that they don't have the time to look into your advise.

The second point which has come out of the literature and has also been stressed by SIDA, is the fact that the use of information by policy-makers is very strongly determined by the style of the leader, by the way - in this case - the minister does or does not urge policy makers to use existing information during the process of decision making. It is a very evident thing, but all too often forgotten or overseen. If projects are being judged during their preparation, they should be judged on the question how much information has been used or not used. If the information is inadequate or if evaluations not have been used, then the project should not be agreed.

The third point is that there exists a huge difference in mentality between the user, the project officer and the information specialist. Interaction is necessary, and we are in DGIS in my opinion very lucky to have within DGIS information specialists who are willing to take that step. I hope that the project officers will become just as open minded. But unless that mentality changes, very little is going to happen.

The fourth point is that when information specialist ask which information is needed, much development administrators and policy makers do not have the slightest idea how to specify the needed type of information. They give general answer, real communication does not occur. It is only when very specific questions are asked that policy makers do tend to give answers, that information specialists can use.

And one general conclusion - already drawn before today - is that it does not depend so much on the hardware or software, they are in fact the least important things. More computers, more networks, don't form the key to the solution. Even if they exist, they are not used.

Let us try to give a synthesis and go back to the theme of this day.

First. What is not the problem. The adequacy of the material in the Netherlands is not the problem. Kees Breed has calculated that in the Netherlands between 2 and 3,5 million volumes are in 214 libraries. That is more than in the whole Koninklijke Bibliotheek, where there are 2 million volumes. Neither is the adequacy of the hard- and software to retrieve this material the problem, as Paul Osborn has remarked this morning. Most Dutch libraries have excellent access. And that is also the case for most of the libraries in the rich countries. But we should watch out that we don't fall into the technology trap, created by those media. CD-ROM and satellite connections are too beautiful not to be used. As the chairman already mentioned I did a research, my first research on technology development, for educational television in Brazil. And it struck me how easy it was for the radio to become the medium in the thirties and forties, when Phillips set up large radio stations in Brazil. Radio was pushed as the medium for information. Then in the sixties and seventies it had to be television. And in the seventies and eighties it had to be satellite television. Each time educational specialists could fall into the technology trap. Here again the same problem occurs.

The real problem is the relation between the provider and the user of information, the client in Paul Osborn's view. The final user is still rather marginal in our discussions, if we recognize the fact - as Paul Osborn remarked this morning - that one of every ten users of the types of networks he described was a real end user, and that about nine out of ten were information specialists communicating among each other. This does not mean that the information is irrelevant, but it does mean that those networks were not directed to end users. My own recent research is about knowledge networks on the local level, on the level of the local male or female farmer who grows rice or cassava. Where do these end-users do get their information from? Not from international information networks, nor from a NGO representatives, and certainly not from agricultural extensionist, at least not in the countries where I have worked in Latin America and also not in Africa and Asia. Most of the time these cultivators got their information from local knowledge networks, especially traders and representatives of fertilizers and insecticide companies. This I think is problem number one. It is who is the end-user and how do you get to him or her. Problem number two is immediately related: how do we reduce the gap between the provider and the user. Ms. Corrêa made an important remark in that respect this morning. She made an argument in favour of local knowledge. That knowledge should be used and exchanged in wider networks. The social and cultural gap between the small and African farmer and the modern African information specialist is tremendous. This has to do with communication, as she said the oral communication versus the highly coded written form of communication which we often use. But it also has to do with the imagery which surrounds those two types of persons. A few years ago, when I visited Cameroon, I asked one of those bare foods extensionists in Cameroon, who was trying to inform the cultivators about small scale adaptive farming systems, how he was called in area where he was working, in the local language, in Owondo. He was quite surprised, and he was wondering why I asked the question. He said: 'it is quite evident how they call me. They call me: 'le blanc du café''. Le blanc du café ! He was not particularly white, and he was not particularly working in coffee either. He was a local young extensionist,

coming from the village where he worked, and he was called 'le blanc du café. This shows a little bit what the social distance was between the (female) farmers and this young extensionist, who brought the message that those farmers should somewhat change their ways to cultivate their cassava. I think that as long as we have those differences and those distances, we should be very careful.

Let me go to the third problem. Our development specialists are not very information oriented or information minded, at least according to the above mentioned data about Dutch policy makers, who see themselves surrounded by a threatening sea of information. The same impression comes out of the literature, for example Allcock's study about African policy makers, who do not have a high regard for information and information use. The real point therefore is to see what information needs really exist. For that, different approaches are possible, as Paul Osborn has argued on behalf of Satis this morning. However, information is no merchandise for most small entrepreneurs: they can not pay for it and they have no means to judge the value of the information offered to them. Therefore we as information specialists shall have to adapt us to the needs of the end-users. An old story, but I don't think it is bad to repeat it again.

In the paper 'Een Wereld van Verschil' the minister has tried to outline that serious changes will have to occur inside our ministry. One: as far as information requirements are concerned, no project can be agreed to any-more, if evaluations and other relevant data - all relevant data - have not been used in the preparation phase of the project. Two: information is an keystone, therefore all the project officers should be trained in its use. And three: exchanges between institutions should, if possible, occur, so that our officials can go to institutions to learn what the latest information is and how they can use it for their work. In this way we hope to change our own organization. But we realise that a lot of other things still will have to be done. We hope that we can contribute in different ways to the formation of information specialist, but also to a better preparation of information users elsewhere. We are certainly going to press for a greater cultural adjustment as far as information use is concerned, and we are certainly going to press for information systems which have that degree of adaptation. And if they are not adapted, I don't think they will have much chance to get financed by the Dutch government. And we are certainly going to press for a greater link with NGO's and if such linkages don't occur, I think that there is little change for Dutch financing.

But let me go back to the theme for which we are here today. I think that if we are going to set up networks, local networks, regional networks, international networks - like Satis which has become a highly respected international network - we have to take into account one the problems that confronted also CTA: how we are going to prepare the end-users in the countries we are serving. That is a key problem. It is not just the case of bringing information to individual researchers. That would be counter productive. It is preparing countries, as in the case of CTA for agricultural and rural information. We should use our inventiveness to prepare others to use the information we have gathered and will continue to gather. And let us try to use our inventiveness to try to stimulate the exchange of information in local knowledge networks, and make this information usable for users elsewhere. To make for instance specific African farmer knowledge about the cultivation of a special crop just as precious, useful, widely used and patented as, to name an example, the knowledge of a Dutch farmer who invents a new kind of potato.

I would like to leave you with one remark which Donders put as a thesis in his dissertation:

'If networks don't work just, because they just work, the results won't be far reaching nor will THEY reach far'. (Als netwerken niet werken, daar netwerken NET werken, zal dit verwerken via netten, alsmede VER werken beletten.)

Question:

I am afraid that I have to raise an issue and maybe have to give some critic. I am missing today an institution which is very strongly linked with DGIS, and that is CBI in Rotterdam, with their tremendous library information and their database linked with the developing countries and well known there as well. I have contacted CBI, and there was at that time no information available out of DGIS. That is my first point. My next point is that I would like to recommend - because LOME IV is almost beginning - to organise in a short term a high level meeting by decision makers, from the government, NGO's and other institutions in

the Netherlands to discuss a closer cooperation on behalf of the exchange of information with the developing countries.

Answer:

I am more than aware of the existence of CBI and have great respect for the work they do. I have not mentioned them because I did not want to tire you with an enumeration of all the different departments in our ministry we are working with. But what I want to ask the last speaker is to specify the question more. What type of information you are referring to as far as CBI and DGIS are concerned?

Question:

What I wanted to say is that CBI is quite often organizing seminars on information exchange. That kind of institutions with their kind of information should be present at this meeting.

Question:

How can the user be made to ask better questions?

Answer:

Well the main point I have tried to make this afternoon, is that we have a responsibility for the good formulation of questions. And we are going to work with different kind of users in different countries, then is it up to us to educate the user in such a way that he or she can use the type of information we are providing. Most importantly - and that is, I think, also what CTA is trying to do - is to create regional centres, where this information can be provided. We talk about very different types of information, but very much should be conceptualized locally. I don't want to go into the issue how users can be made to ask the right questions. That is a very difficult issue. It took for instance quite some time before I had learned to use those highly automated information systems. In Wageningen there are special courses for the students to learn them to ask the right questions. And that takes a lot of times and costs a lot of money. If it is already so difficult for students, then it will be very difficult for other users, such as small entrepreneurs, to formulate the right questions so that they will get relevant information out of our information services. And I think it is that very important transmission service which we should address. We should - as mister Osborne said this morning - not stay in the library, but go out and try to find out how people can buy or get, or whatever you want to call it, our ware. This is the real question. There we should develop special activities, so to say prepare such interfaces.

Question:

I would like to ask the speaker, if it is possible to compare the results of his research on local networks, in Africa I believe, with the results of his survey inside DGIS on the use of information. Is it not so, that also inside DGIS, the information users have their own small informal information networks, bypassing in this way all the official and formal structures? Is that not the problem with all that automated and fascinating organized and structured networks, that people don't know what to get from it and have their own little phone book with useful addresses. Or have you not looked at that in your survey?

Answer:

First, my research was in Costa Rica and the Dominican Republic, not in Africa. But I know from Paul Richards that the same type of phenomena also exist in Africa.

But to answer your question. Yes I do think that these informal networks exist inside DGIS as well. The problem is to what extent the exchanged information is adequate. Our feeling is that much more information could be used and that it would not be such a bad idea to tap more information out of those formal networks. That is one part of the answer. The second point is that we should ask more specified information about the area we are going to work, to have a better social and cultural embedding of those activities. This informal networks may be adequate up to a point, up to now, but they are not sufficient enough for the huge variety of the problems in the quickly changing world we are facing now. Therefore we will need extra studies, and that will be an important point of innovation. Many donors are already making this step. And we will certainly press for that. Little local networks surely do work. And mind you, oral cultures do not only exist in Africa, as Ms. Corr ea did underline this morning when she was talking about the oral culture in Africa, but also here, inside DGIS, where the oral network is very alive indeed.

Question:

I would like to have your reaction on a statement. Today we discussed the need for more coordination between researches, policy-makers and information specialists. We all recognize that we have to try to meet the demand of the people in the South. This day was organized by information specialists and we invited researchers and policy makers to contribute. Now I wonder, considering the fact that so much organizations are recognizing the fact that there is a need for closer cooperation and narrowing the gap, is this a sign that there is a need for a Dutch development information policy, in addition to the topics which are already stressed by DGIS, like the sectoral and thematic approach. What I mean is there a need for a more general information policy which covers the topics we have talked about today?

Answer:

I know that this question is living in your Working Group, and that it in fact was one of the reasons why this day was organized. I thought about the question, and I must confess that I found it very difficult to come up with one specific line. But to give a straight answer: yes, there must come an information policy. Still the problem remains what it is going to cover. I have told during my presentation, that the ministry is certainly going to attach much more importance to the circulation of information, within DGIS. So far our internal policy. The other question is the external policy. How can for example information available in the Netherlands be transferred to other countries? I think that it is not so much the information policy we are talking about, but it is a general policy: with whom we are going to work to do what type of activities. And following that line I think that we could do more. It would also be good to hear from you also, perhaps in the elaboration of this meeting, what kind of thoughts. You have in this respect, I understand that until this far, you have worked on an informal base, as a working group, almost on the sideline, on a voluntary base. You are wondering what kind of professional status there is possible. I think it would be good to go deeper into this matter, but I don't think that I am the person to go deeper into that. It would be very interesting to see what proposals do live in your own group in this respect on behalf of the improvement of the information management and the information exchange, and bring these to a higher level.

CLOSING REMARKS

J. Pronk

Minister of Development Cooperation, The Hague

Coming to the end of this meeting, I have come to the conclusion that I have missed an interesting day. Let me start with apologizing for the fact that I could not open the meeting this morning and had to ask the director-general Mr. N. Biegman to take over. He did, I presume.

I presume, because listening to you, the last twenty minutes or so, I got more and more confused. Was this a meeting reaching its end, with people longing for that end, or was this a meeting just started, with lively discussions, in other words did I have the time wrong, did I still have to open the meeting?

But let me, after this small joke, say the following. I am not an expert on information. When I first started as person working in the field of development, as a development planner, one of the books we were told about, was the book 'Planning without Facts'. A rather important source of expertise on how to plan, without facts. Later on, I became a policy maker, and I often felt that a lot of policy making went on in the field of development without real communication. Planning without facts, policy making without communication. I have the impression that underneath is a lot of theorizing about development without information. Planning without facts, policy making without communication, theorizing without information. The three go to a certain extent hand in hand and perhaps that also has resulted in the present state of affairs, as far as development is concerned. When I was listening to you the last twenty minutes, there are more questions than answers, also in the summary, I was eager to listen to. For instance about the way to ask the right questions or about the question if there ought to be an official information policy, here in this house. Questions on which there were no answers so far, also due to the fact that there is something behind information, beyond information.

What I feel that is extremely important is firstly curiosity. Curiosity, in order to get the facts, to know really what is going on. Secondly, eagerness. Eagerness to learn how to ask the right questions, to get access to facts, not to teach others to ask you or information systems the right questions, but to teach yourself to ask the right questions. And on the basis of curiosity and eagerness, expertise. But that is more expertise on the translation of information, being the result of a combination between curiosity and eagerness, into action, than just being an expert on facts.

Here in this house we try to teach ourself to become more curious, more eager then we ever have been. I particular because the whole development world is changing so rapidly. On the basis of that increased expertise, increased eagerness and increased curiosity, perhaps we can also become better experts in translating information. We can do it ourselves, in so far as an information policy really would be necessary. Maybe you are providing the answer to this. It would be more an information policy in creating incentives to get an overall information structure policy process, whereby all experts, supplying, asking and working with information, should be involved. If that is considered to be necessary by all the other experts, we would be interested in giving you a hand on the basis of such a desire. Thank you for your contribution so far today. I really will read your report personally. Thank you.

CONCLUSION

Dirk Hoftijzer

Institute for Development Studies (IVO), Tilburg University

Thank you very much. I think that your last point is well taken and will certainly be given a follow up.

Coming to the end of this meeting, I would like to thank a number of persons and organisation. First of all, the director-general for hosting us today, and Minister Pronk in person for taking the effort to speak to us. DGIS, NUFFIC and IFLA have given us some support for this meeting, which enabled us to invite at least one lecturer from overseas. I would like to thank the lecturers for expressing their thoughts and ideas to us, and to take the time to be with us. As already has been said, the report of the meeting will be sent automatically and free of charge to you. Furthermore a number of organisations have made manpower available on a voluntary basis, for preparing the meeting and the discussions of today. This concerns the Third World Centre in Nijmegen, the ITC in Enschede, the ECDPM in Maastricht, the NUFFIC in Den Haag en the KUB in Tilburg.

There are two persons I would like to name in person: Tanny van Berkel - it has been said before, that she could not be here, because she was ill - and Annemiek Hoeksma, both from the DGIS library, who took upon their shoulders the practical preparation of today. Thank you very much.

SUMMARY OF THE PROCEEDINGS

Kees Breed

Member of the staff of NUFFIC (The Hague) and member of the Working Group on Information and Third World

Five years ago librarians and documentalists in the Netherlands met for the first time to discuss issues in the field of development information. Since that meeting, a growing interest in these issues could be seen and many activities were initiated. A working group has been set up, a newsletter is now published regularly and an inventory has been compiled of all libraries and documentation centres in the Netherlands that provide information on development issues and countries.

The fourth meeting was organized by the 'Werkgroep Informatie & Derde Wereld' (Working Group on Information and Third World) on 3 October 1990. The Ministry for Development Cooperation kindly hosted this meeting. About one hundred specialists attended the seminar, mainly information experts, but also policy makers and researchers were represented. Minister J. Pronk addressed the audience and for the first time information experts from Africa could also be welcomed. This was made possible by a cooperative effort from the working group, the ministry, IFLA and NUFFIC. Dirk Hoftijzer, coordinator of the European part of the International Development Information Network (IDIN), chaired the meeting.

Important issues were discussed, related to information needs in developing countries and of development experts in the Netherlands itself. The general purpose was to explore the demand for information in order to be able to develop concrete plans and policies for the improvement of the supply of information in support of the development process. This approach should be stimulated to countervail supply-led strategies and information policies.

From the meeting, the conclusion can be drawn that there is a growing acknowledgement of the importance to improve information services in developing countries as an integral part of policies for sustainable development. Also, information is seen more and more as a crucial element to support effective policies and relevant research by experts in the North.

The 'Working Group on Information and Third World' plans to broaden further the scope of its activities in the coming years, and will draw up new proposals and ideas for concrete projects. This includes the development of the working group itself into a more professional and formalized platform for consultation, coordination and cooperation between institutes and experts in the field. In this way we hope, in the emerging Information Age, to contribute to sustainable development policies, and to stop the widening of the information gap between the North and the South in the years to come.

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