

PART III: THEWORKSHOP

An Overview of the Grassroots Approach

The African Development Foundation was mandated by the United States Congress to provide funds directly to grassroots populations in Africa, in order to assist African countries in their development. ADF's non-interventionist approach has allowed grassroots beneficiaries to share with their development co-workers in the United States the successes, failures, problems and solutions that they have encountered in the course of project implementation. This method of project support, which is characterized by regular monitoring done by in-country nationals who work with ADF in Washington, has stimulated a body of knowledge about how grassroots people conceive of themselves as they work toward their own development; the approaches that they have used; and the problems that they themselves consider important.

ADF has learned other things as well from its beneficiaries. Timing of project activities has most often reflected the sense of time that is the reality for the beneficiary, and this does not always coincide with the calendar of the donor. Through the mechanism of disbursements, according to project plans as conceived by the grantee, and through the use of the amendment process, ADF has covered new ground in the search for new development paradigms. Appropriate project implementation and funds disbursement schedules are challenges that face both the grantees and ADF as a donor organization, since written documentation of project financial activity and implementation progress are required for each grant agreement.

Although there remains much to be refined in this approach, working with grassroots groups such as the herders who gathered in Tanzania for this Workshop has inspired the agency to continue searching for alternative, more efficient approaches to providing direct financial assistance to African grassroots groups. This two-way learning process has also encouraged ADF to collaborate with its national project-support network, the Country Liaison Officers (CLOs), in designing improved systems of reporting for functionally literate or illiterate grantees.

The past year has demonstrated that the difficult challenge of transportation costs for project monitoring and development in the pastoral zones is one that faces grantees and ADF staff alike. The Foundation is involved in an on-going process of self-evaluation and documentation regarding the cost-efficiency of motor vehicles for project support in this zone. As the following texts will indicate, various grantee groups have tried many solutions, from the use of camels and donkeys, to the use of four-wheel drive vehicles for project implementation and monitoring. As the Foundation's Resident Evaluator system gets underway in conjunction with the CLO-monitoring system, ADF looks forward to new data that will be useful to improved project planning and analysis.

With all the current issues that ADF and its grantees are facing as they continue to work together in directly-funded grassroots projects, the Herders' Workshop was timely in providing a forum for ADF grantees from pastoralist zones to discuss their issues and to share solutions. The Workshop re-affirmed ADF's commitment to the concept that *decision-making and local technology among grassroots development workers are crucial elements in fostering local control and ownership of the development process.*

The Agenda

Tentative schedules and programs were organized according to project title and the country from which representatives came, rather than by explicit topics of discussion. This allowed for a greater flexibility in the choice of subjects for extended discussion and left the selection and ranking of topics to the nomads themselves.

In keeping with the Foundation's grassroots philosophy, the organizers of the Workshop insisted that no agenda be handed to the Workshop participants, but that they be given the opportunity to determine the nature of the discourse in which they wished to engage. There was much resistance to the idea during the planning of the Workshop, because some feared that the group might waste too much time groping. The only aspects that were pre-planned were those aspects that concerned logistical questions such as facilities, transportation, and food. The participants were somewhat surprised when we told them that we had no agenda for them. After a few anxious moments, the participants began to articulate their ideas about the substantive issues to be discussed and the procedure to be followed. In other words, the participants very quickly shifted from asking the organizers of the Workshop, "what they were supposed to do," to taking charge of the Workshop and using the organizers as helpers and facilitators.

With regard to the substantive matters to be discussed in the Workshop, the committee encouraged the participants to look beyond the narrow confines of their specific projects. This was characterized by the following opening statement by Dr. Asmarom Legesse:

In presenting the program, what Ali [the Workshop Coordinator] has been saying what is expected during the one and one-half hour presentation, is a description of your project. My hope is that more will happen than just that; the people gathered here have a great deal of common problems, problems associated with nomadism. One thing that Thad Kaminski (ADF Regional Manager for East Africa) said earlier on is that we were very hesitant to produce a list of topics for you to discuss, because we wanted you to decide what the issues are that are most important in your mind. Nomadic peoples everywhere, as they embark on new patterns of development, find themselves localized and sedentarized. Part of their families are nomadic; part are sedentary. There are problems that arise because of the separation of families and of lineages between nomadic and sedentary (lifestyles). How do you view that problem? How do you come to terms with it as you embark on new development projects? That is the kind of issue that is not just project specific, but universal among nomadic peoples.

It should be noted that all participants were sensitive to time constraints and respected the importance of allowing each other a chance to present and discuss. The Workshop organizers found that all of the participants were accustomed to working with government veterinary and range management specialists, for example. For this reason, and contrary to what the Advisory Committee anticipated, less time was spent on this subject than on issues of cultural integrity and new strategies for managing reduced animal herds.



Workshop participants prepare for evening “mishawa.”

The Role of ADF Country Liaison Officers (CLOs)

Many people have asked ADF representatives how we managed to bring nomads from diverse areas of Africa to Arusha, Tanzania; certainly the first of such an attempt to bring together pastoralists from grassroots communities in different parts of Africa. This coming together would certainly not have been possible without the support of the Foundation's Country Liaison Officers (CLO's). The Herder's Workshop Coordinator, Dr. Aliou Boly, traveled throughout Africa to visit all ADF Country Liaison Officers to discuss the goals of the Workshop, and to meet with grantees to discuss their presentations.

In terms of development approaches, the significance of the participation of the CLO's cannot be ignored. The level of confidence demonstrated by participating grantees reflected the good working relationships they enjoyed with the CLO's, but more importantly, expressed the confidence that grantees developed by managing their own projects with periodic assistance from CLO staff.

The ADF Country Liaison Officers helped in refining the focus of the presentations and in preparing audio-visual support materials. They had the primary responsibility of confirming travel arrangements, procuring passports, visas, and official government clearance. The participation of country nationals in the preparation activities was what ensured the attendance of ADF grantees, many of whom were nervous about traveling in an airplane, traveling so far from their homes. Grantees knew that there would be someone of authority from their countries who understood their needs and concerns. Indeed, many of the attending grantees had never traveled in an airplane before, and had no notion of how to go through an airport. In spite of some of the travel hardships that participants underwent, the high quality of their presentations created a learning experience for all who heard their stories.

During the meeting, the CLOs performed the role of cultural and linguistic intermediaries. To a great extent, this paralleled their roles at home. They were available to the grantees during the proceedings as resource persons, to assist in translation, and to provide an observer's point of view of the transformations that are taking place in the pastoral sector.

The Task of Translation

When the Advisory Committee first began meeting, the task of translation seemed ominous and perhaps the most difficult and problem-ridden issue in the programming of the Workshop. However, at the Committee's first meeting, it was realized that the herders were, by nature of their way of life, accustomed to living in at least two language worlds, and translating for each other at markets, in livestock transactions, etc. Many of the ADF Country Liaison Officers and Advisory Committee members were multilingual, and could readily adapt their linguistic skills to the situation at hand.

The Committee made elaborate sketches and diagrams of the seating and positioning of grantee participants and key translators. It was decided that a circular seating arrangement would encourage the kind of conviviality and spontaneity that we hoped for. Language groups would sit together, with attention to seating related languages in contiguous groupings, taking into consideration the availability of bilingual intermediaries. In this sense, related languages did not mean necessarily languages from the same linguistic group, but also those languages that had geographic proximity or which shared heavy borrowing from another language, such as French, English, or

Arabic. Nearly all translators were multilingual, and came from the Committee, from ADF Staff, or from among the grantee participants themselves.

As the Workshop evolved, much of the elaborate planning that we did of the translation matrix and of the seating arrangements, turned out to be quite unnecessary. People found their own natural groupings around the available interpreters and the configuration changed dramatically from session to session.

During the planning phase, we incorrectly thought that translation would significantly slow down the Workshop pace. In fact, we found two important things during the course of the Workshop: the herders were quick to assume translation responsibility themselves wherever possible, and the time that was required set a natural pace for discussions. Many of the interpreters did not wait for the English-French or French-English translation, because they spoke both languages. Likewise, they skipped other stages of the translation process, because they spoke more than one of the African languages. The exchanges went on during question and answer periods, and during presentations. It was an amazing, simultaneous, multi-channel communication far more efficient than we had anticipated. The Workshop was clearly more characteristic of the pastoralist world than of the conferences we were accustomed to; it had a reflective and participatory atmosphere.

The philosophy of project participation was evident throughout the Workshop. There were no insidious distinctions, based on social rank or position of leadership in the administration of the projects. By far, the most important determinant of the seating arrangement was the translation network. All participants sat together and changed their seating arrangement at will, from one meeting to the next. The same informal seating arrangement was later extended to include government officials, representatives of donor organizations, and ADF officials.

Formation of Group Spirit and Familiarization

At the opening session of the Workshop which was held in Arusha, a memory game was held, in which all participants tried to remember each other's names. This played an important role in encouraging people to get to know each other.

The Sahelians brought their tea to Tanzania, and conducted the "Tea Ceremony," which is so well known in their region. The gathering of coal, the setting up of the three glasses, and the preparation of the tea, quickly became an activity that brought different nationalities together, and long sessions of discussion and exchange took place over tea, mornings, afternoons, and evenings.

The key, we felt, was the promotion of indigenous recreational activities as part of the Workshop's informal activities. The Advisory and Planning Committee, as well as ADF staff, regarded such activities as opportunities for cross-cultural communication. In every case, the Committee members found that the format of the Workshop program encouraged cultural sharing and exchange of project information. Costumes, cloth, artifacts, jewelry, and herding sticks were compared and exchanged, as were home remedies using ostrich fat and the various gums derived from acacia trees.

The Advisory and Planning Committee

The coordinating function of the Advisory and Planning Committee was significant in insuring sensitivity not only to behavioral messages, but also the content of dialogue



Tepiliti Ole Saitoti, Director of Albalbal Project (second from right), makes a point during presentation.

and presentations. All professionals from pastoral regions of Africa (Kenya, Somalia, Eritrea, Burkina Faso), the members of the Committee brought considerable expert knowledge about development in pastoral economies. They encouraged the participants to talk about their concept of indigenous expertise, the rationale behind their selection of particular development strategies, and to assess the success or failure of those strategies.

The Committee also served to “watch dog” behavioral and attitudinal changes during the implementation of the Workshop. In concert with ADF staff present at the Workshop, such as the ADF Evaluation Officer and the Project Manager, the Committee monitored various sessions and made program adjustments as deemed necessary. The significance of their role was observable in the rapidity with which the grantees came to rely on them for advice and input during formal sessions and during informal gatherings.

The Committee met daily at 7:00 a.m., prior to the general sessions in both Arusha and at Ndutu. They reviewed the past day’s discussion and the logistical problems, and made plans for the discussions and activities for the following day.

Proceedings at Ndutu: The Main Site of the Meetings

Following the first day’s sessions, the Workshop was held in Ndutu, located in the Ngorongoro Conservatory Park. The remoteness of the location and the savannah terrain which was familiar to all participants, led to a productive atmosphere, far more appropriate than the hotels which normally serve as Workshop centers for such meetings.

The location was conducive to the participation of Maasai herders who happened to be in the area at the time of the Workshop. Curious to know what was going on, yet recognizing some Maasai among the participants, young warriors spent two days as unexpected participants. The herders from the western Sahel and from Somalia were delighted to have an opportunity to interact with the newcomers. Jewelry was examined, exchanged, and bartered. Several Wodaabe purchased herding sticks from the young Maasai.

Several Maasai warriors came to the Ndutu lodge to report a crisis to the Tanzanian Conservation Officers who were attending the meeting: a lion had attacked and killed eight of their cattle. This episode gave us an excellent opportunity to think about the relationship between pastoral life and game reserves, and the many tensions that develop between the two ecological systems. The fact that Maasai live on the edge of the Serengeti, one of the great game reserves of Africa, creates problems of adaptation and development that are unique to them. The other participants were extremely intrigued by the account of the lion; many could remember encounters with game in past years, but they no longer live in such close proximity to an abundance of wildlife and predators. Additionally, the herding societies in west Africa manage their herds with much more emphasis on sale of dairy products to neighboring farmers ... a use of surplus milk which is not practiced as much in comparable east African communities.



Workshop members engage in session at Ndutu campsite.