

WORKSHOP ON RURAL SOCIOLOGY AND FARMING SYSTEMS

A workshop on the role of rural sociology and anthropology in farming systems research took place at the Ridgeway Hotel, Lusaka, from 27 to 29 November 1984. The government of the Republic of Zambia, with technical support from ODI (Overseas Development Institute, London), undertook local organisation through the farming systems team (ARPT: Adaptive Research Planning Team) in the Research Branch of the Department of Agriculture, Ministry of Agriculture and Water Development. CIMMYT (International Maize and Wheat Improvement Centre), through its East Africa Economics programme directed by Dr Mike Collinson, provided financial support as a part of its regional networking activities.

Participants were practising rural sociologists and anthropologists drawn largely from Southern, Central and East Africa. Each of the full participants presented a paper relating to the main theme of the workshop. A list of possible topics was circulated in advance and participants selected a topic from the list on which to prepare a short working paper. Working papers were discussed in small interdisciplinary groups which included agriculture scientists and agricultural economists. The findings of the small groups were then presented for further discussion at plenary sessions. The final afternoon was spent discussing specific topics (indigenous knowledge, defining units of analysis, bias against women, and interdisciplinary cooperation) selected by participants with a view to formulating general guidelines for practice.

Arrangements are in hand for a selection of the papers to be published. For further details, contact the organisers: Dr A. J. Sutherland and Mr C. K. Chileya, ARPT Rural Sociology Section, Mount Makulu Research Station, Private Bag 7, Chilanga, Zambia.

THE BOOK FAMINE IN AFRICA

On 14 October 1985 the International African Institute organised a one-day symposium in London at which the current, very grave, crisis in the supply of books and journals to Africa was examined. The emphasis throughout was on the academic and tertiary-level. The symposium was chaired by Professor Michael Crowder and the subject was introduced by Dr Arthur Porter, former Vice-chancellor of the University of Sierra Leone. Other speakers included Ian Willison (head, English Language Branch, British Library), Alastair Niven (former Director of the Africa Centre, London), Gillian Dickinson (British Council), Peter Scopes (Education Adviser, Overseas Development Administration), Professor Roland Oliver (SOAS), Paul Richards (Review Editor, *Africa*), Michael Twaddle (Editor, *African Affairs*), James Currey, Peter Warwick, Christopher Hurst and Mark Cohen (all in Africanist publishing).

The tragedy of Africanists divorced from the material needed to pursue their studies, to maintain their understanding of developments taking place in their disciplines elsewhere in the world, and to keep their teaching up to date, was explored. Many such scholars can no longer write for international journals, nor offer papers to international conferences, through lack of access to recent publications. Publishers who, a few years ago, were publishing widely for the African market can no longer afford to do so. The market has contracted so severely that

only books of 'relevance' to the North Atlantic market are still considered viable publishing propositions.

Obviously, the foreign exchange problems of many African governments lie at the heart of these problems. Equally obviously, the problem is hardly being dealt with under existing aid agency schemes, and is fairly low on any aid agency's list of priorities. It was agreed by all present that this was very shortsighted. Quite soon there will be a generation of students taught by lecturers unable to keep up with developments in their disciplines.

The symposium concluded that there were a number of solutions which might be sought:

Journals. It was agreed by all that journals are the best way of keeping absolutely up to date with recent research in various fields. Most African university libraries have been unable to subscribe to any journals for the past five years. Equally, it was agreed that most aid agencies do not like taking on board recurrent commitments. One possible way round this would be to apply for a large sum of money from an aid agency in order to set up a trust fund. The income from this fund could provide a wide number of journals for a large number of African universities. Each department within a university would be asked to submit the names of two journals to an organising committee and there would be a maximum number or total value of journals for each institution. Departments would be encouraged to nominate journals with a good book review section; in this way some knowledge of recent and relevant books in that field would be maintained.

Monographs. A number of suggestions were made as to ways in which the publication of important monographs could be assisted. Much more emphasis should be given to asking for subsidies with which to buy books. Also, mutually beneficial arrangements between publishers in the developed world and the developing world should be pursued. More attempts should be made to encourage indigenous publishing by means of licences and royalty arrangements.

Textbooks. Though not primarily concerned with textbooks, much of what was suggested under 'Monographs' could be applied even more forcefully to textbooks. Indigenous publishers could be encouraged more, aid agencies could widen the scope of their aid.

Tapes/other. Professor Roland Oliver outlined a scheme which he had already submitted to an aid agency, and which was supported by the symposium, for the exchange of cassette and hand-out materials between Africa and the developed world and between francophone and anglophone universities.

A number of other suggestions were made and can be found in the full report, which is available on request from the IAI. All participants agreed that it was important to act fast and to act effectively if African Studies research and scholarship within Africa and, ultimately, in the wider world, were not to be starved to death.

JOURNAL OF CULTURES AND IDEAS

We have received vol. 1, No. 1, of this new journal, published by the Alada Study Circle at the University of Ife, Nigeria, and due to appear twice a year. It invites the submission of articles dealing with the ideas and concepts of non-Western cultures. Articles dealing with the comparative analysis of Western and non-