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Discussion group report: Roads and communications

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13th WEDC Conference

Rural development in Africa Malawi: 1987

DISCUSSION GROUP REPORT

Roads and communications

Chairman: G.J Chisi

Rapporteur: J.R. Plumb

Discussion paper: D.W. Jennings (tapes/slides)

Mr Jennings' tape/slide presentation was a report on the construction by one of the labourers recruited to work a labour unit. The presentation included among the development benefits perceived:

- (a) the workmans pride in what he had achieved;
- (b) and the availability of access to the community by government officials.

The balance of participants in the discussions was heavily weighted towards experience in Malawi and Lesotho. The general conclusion reached by the Discussion Group were that:-

1. Labour Intensive Road Construction methods are an appropriate form of construction for village feeder roads and rural access roads. Financial cost advantages in using labour intensive methods are not always apparent compared to using plant intensive methods. However, significant rural development benefits do exist for example maintenance of the costs expended on a project withing the community. For labour intensive methods to be used successfully there has to be surplus or excess of labour available for work on the project. Comparison was made in discussion with Uganda where availabilty of labour from normal agricultural activities was much less than in Lesotho.
2. Task Work systems were considered to be a desirable means of controlling and managing the productivity of labour intensive work. Both Lesotho and Malawi have established appropriate work capacities for given task in their road works.
3. The general view of the discussion group was that integrated rural development should be an achievable objective. In this context the road is an improtant and significant component usually because of its high capital cost. The group considered that greater coordination should take place and was indeed imperative for the successful implemen-
tation of integrated projects. This coordination has to be led by the most senior level in government by them setting the general policy for intergration of rural development and coordination. The group attached great importance to the need for regular meetings to take place at district level. The meetings should be attended by all the senior officers responsible for implementing the different disciplinary components of a project.
4. The final plea was made by participants in this group was in recognition of the need for coordination and exchange of information. The group considered the best means for doing this was through more frequent seminars and meetings.