PN-ABT-415

Higher education and regionalism; higher ...

AFR
378.6 American Council on Education, Washington,
H255a D.C. Overseas Liaison Committee.
Higher education and regionalism; higher education and the challenge of rural development. C.W. de Kiewiet and Frederick H. Harbison. July 1969.
20 p.
Contract no. AID/afr-505.

1.Education, Higher - AFR.2.Education and development - AFR.3.Rural development - AFR.I.de Kiewiet, C.W. II.Harbison, Frederick H.III.Contract.IV.Title

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378.6
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AMERICAN COUNCIL ON EDUCATION
1785 Massachusetts Avenue, N. W.
Washington, D. C. 20036

Overseas Liaison Committee

PN-ABI-415

Report No. 20
30 July 1969

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# HIGHER EDUCATION AND REGIONALISM; HIGHER EDUCATION AND THE CHALLENGE OF RURAL DEVELOPMENT

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We think that the time has come to take a look at the present stage of development at the concept of regionalism. The concept of regionalism in African higher education continues to have validity. In the Korry Report there was no single or sovereign definition of regionalism that could be used as a measuring device. In fact the illustrations given in various sections of the report indicated a flexible and diverse and even innovative approach to the encouragement of cooperation between the different African countries.

At one point AID and the African universities with which it worked set as a goal an extensive student interchange among countries on the basis of a recognized and accepted regional specialization in unique and unduplicated units and facilities. In the course of time several facts began to emerge. The first was that it was not feasible to have a close correspondence between the program of scholarships and those academic programs or institutions designated as being unique, and characterized by an agreement that they would not, in the near future at least, be duplicated. As an American with long experience in Nigeria expressed it, "Washington is wrong if it thinks it can any longer select regional sites and direct the international flow of students

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This is a final report of a draft submitted by Dr. de Kiewiet in December, which at that time also included a section "The Nigerian Background" which has been incorporated in Report F, "The Nigerian Universities." This paper brings out, as OLC sees it, the relevance of the regionalism concept to the three strategic areas for AID support suggested here and referred to in the Nigerian paper: rural development, technical training, and teacher training. Professor Harbison collaborated on the section on rural development which he revised in Report No. 17 dated June 15, 1969.

to them." The second fact is contained in the quotation just made. There are unmistakable signs that the African universities are less and less willing to be partners in such an endeavor. Any given university will be willing to have designations like regional center, or center of excellence, applied to one or more of its operations. But it would be quite unwilling to have this interpreted as an agreement not to develop facilities available in another regional center. In other words, policy constraints in the interests of a long term development of a pattern of international specialization are not feasible. In the African political world, as it actually is, no nation is prepared in principle to be dependent on some other political unit for an educational facility which it considers to be vital or valuable to its own development. Nor are universities going to give up their traditional stance of pressing for new programs and new responsibilities whenever these seem to be in the interests of the institution. It is altogether remarkable that at this moment of financial embarrassment in most of the African countries, university development programs maintain a full and ambitious pattern of expansion.

It is an important fact, of course, that governments and the universities in their countries must operate under some real constraints. Not everything that a country feels that it needs, or that a university aspires to develop, can be readily satisfied. Therefore there does exist at the moment a de facto situation where some unevenness of facilities exists, and where in consequence a constructive use of this circumstance can be made. How constructive this use is will depend on a variety of conditions. Sometimes these conditions are exceptionally favorable to the concept of regionalism. They can be encouraged or supported with confidence that their usefulness transcends purely local lines. Veterinary medicine at Kabete in East Africa,

and veterinary medicine at Zaria in Nigeria are excellent examples. At the moment it does not seem likely that these facilities will be duplicated in the very near future. With less emphasis but along similar lines a case can be made for other facilities useful over an area of varying extent. The Nigerian report of the OLC identifies pharmacy at Ife and forestry at Ibadan as examples. Earlier comments by OLC teams have indicated an acceptable degree of regional usefulness at Njala and, prospectively, another at the Federal University of Cameroon.

The OLC has a membership and an experience which it has continuously directed to a much wider form of assessment or strategic evaluation. This is an indispensable part of its activity. Appraisal of individual institutions must always proceed against a broader background provided by economic, political and above all educational change. At this moment, and looking forward to problems and opportunities in the next few years, it is clearly appropriate to place the AHEP program against a strategic background.

Even though the scholarship program is much less than originally intended an integral part of the AHEP Program as conducted by OLC, some observations are in order. There is no lack of interest in foreign students. Administrators feel that they help the university guard against provincialism. Professors feel that they are a stimulating force in the teaching process. Governments seem to recognize the long-term investment in international understanding that student exchange can bring. But it would be unrealistic to overestimate the impact or the growth value of student exchanges financed by external sources. Almost everywhere the Committee has observed a note of caution behind the expression of adherence to a student exchange program. A university is so large and visible a national expenditure that none wants to be found neglectful of serving the students and interests of its own nation. When university funds are scarce,

the idea of two-way student exchange becomes less attractive, and there is the risk that the presence of large numbers of foreign students will be seen as the displacement of qualified nationals. In many, perhaps in most African countries, the secondary schools are capable of oversubscribing available places in the universities. Programs of genuine appeal on a regional basis tend also to be much sought after on a more local basis. In the case of medical schools genuine regional use can only be minimal.

It must be observed that scholarship programs are not full cost programs. The element of subsidy by receiving countries is considerable. In all advanced countries this subsidy is absorbed as a wise investment. But in countries with universities that do not consider themselves fully developed, both the subsidy and concern about the placement of the home student are quite certain to generate demands for full cost support, and probably also requests for assistance in building capital facilities. Nothing is more certain than the presentation of these requests in the very near future. In the light of limited resources available to foreign donors, in the light also of some very difficult questions about the place of universities in present day priorities of educational development, in the light above all of certain very urgent national and regional priorities, the OLC would look with serious concern at the expenditure of large resources in this manner. Any expansion of the scholarship program as such, or any expenditures found necessary to sustain it, should be the responsibility of multinational or multilateral support. At the moment this support is not available, and not likely to be available.

One other caution might be noted. There is a likelihood that more African universities, and especially the larger ones, will be drawn into the arena of political, social and economic problems. One committee member terms this the "inevitable sorting out of university relations with society and government."

This is not intended as a casual comment. The list of African universities involved in controversy imposed upon them or provoked by them has already acquired some length. It is our opinion that the signs of further difficulty are increasing. Close study of these phenomena are warranted. The point in this specific context is that significant numbers of non-nationals in the student body may heighten the risk of disagreeable confrontation. The University of Dakar illustrates this danger in the clearest form. Uganda's hesitation to send students to study law in "radical" Tanzania is a simple illustration. A sending nation will have second thoughts if its expectations for key manpower to be trained in another African country were upset or delayed by student problems in that country. A receiving country would re-examine its hospitality if it felt that its "troublemakers" came from abroad.

To return to AHEP and the identification of programs and institutions of special merit, two facts should be mentioned. In the first place the resources that can be devoted to AHEP centers are very limited. At an earlier period there was a somewhat unexamined assumption that centers of excellence would thrive under the dual stimulus of students and investment. A dozen or more of such centers did not seem to be out of reach. Hence the fairly long list of possible centers. But those were other days, and financially less grim. Today the limitation of funds and the length of the AHEP list create a problem. What does, or what can the recommendation of an AHEP center mean in terms of concrete and reliable action? Is there any longer any equation between the determination of excellence and the creation of support, any equation, that is, that would be discussed with a vice chancellor or a dean?

We must be aware also of a discrepancy between the country and the regional programs. When it was obvious that AID had to withdraw from a number of countries, and maintain programs in a limited few, the regional program was seen as a means

of dealing with a sort of vacuum. But for known reasons the regional program has not developed the significance and extent needed to fill such a vacuum. There has therefore increasingly been a question about the relationship between country and regional programs. It is a tribute to the good will of mission directors and their staffs that this question has been raised in an amicable and indeed entirely cooperative spirit. We know of no exceptions. But in its work in Nigeria, Ghana, Ethiopia and the East African countries, the OLC felt that it was a necessary and important part of its deliberations to consider the relationship of a regional program to country programs. It was never possible to make clear distinctions or set up separate compartments. The Committee therefore is increasingly disposed to seek a way to avoid discrepancy, and seek a real, not a factitious, compatibility between regional and country programs.

It is more plain, not less plain, that there are problems, needs, opportunities of high priority that transcend national boundaries, that are manifestly common to the countries of Africa, that are susceptible of treatment on a broad basis. However great the sense of separate nationalism in the African countries, the reality of region and continent persists. In this the debate launched by President Johnson in May 1965 is still fully meaningful. The search for directing assistance to those points where a number of countries derive benefit has not lost its urgent quality. Or rather the reduction of funds raises it to a yet higher level of urgency. It is possible that an assumed distinction between regional programs and country programs can be removed only by a sort of conceptual merger. This would be done by giving country programs a greater regional or African meaning and influence. This is not a semantic juggle. We have observed a distinct movement towards a choice of priorities and a concentration of assistance that has broad influence and

applicability. By giving special attention to the provision and topping up of staff the IUC-ODM leaders have devised a coherent program that helps both individual countries and the whole of that part of Africa which they are related to. It is neither conclusively regional nor country-bound in its emphasis. It is both. Therefore they can comfortably avoid the embarrassment of distinctions that are politically difficult. In an entirely different way Ford Foundation has invested major funds over a lengthy period in a single institution, known as the International Institute of Tropical Agriculture [IITA]. As noted elsewhere in OLC reporting, the concern of the IITA is to deal entirely with the problem of more adequate food production in quantity and quality. In a geographical sense this is regionalism of the most convincing sort. As a choice of a priority shared by most, perhaps all African countries, this is judgment of a high order. The location of the IITA at Ibadan in Nigeria detracts in no sense from its international value.

There are other illustrations available of the sort given. In the area of education in a broad sense, and in the area of higher education in a more specific sense, the OLC has given very considerable attention to examining those needs that are marked by the same urgency in Africa as a whole, and then to listing those needs in the order of their priority. We have mentioned the criteria by which we were guided, and re-emphasize the fact only that in reaching our conclusion we took our stand in the total area of development, rather than within education or within a special sector of education.

Within individual countries, in the writing and discussion of experts who are well acquainted with underdeveloped countries, there is now an impressive consensus on the urgency of dealing effectively with the following: [1] rural transformation [2] the technical training of supportive or middle-level manpower [3] teacher training, with very special emphasis on primary

education. The evidence is altogether overwhelming that these three areas, in a negative sense, refer to major impediments to development of all African countries. In a positive manner, which we prefer to emphasize, they contain valuable growth points, or points of significant leverage, to which assistance can be effectively directed.

The Committee contemplated the production of a policy paper on each of the three areas. Technical training is greatly needed throughout all sectors of African society, modern as well as traditional. There is not an African country that does not seriously need trained teachers at every level from the university down to the village school. We focus at this moment on rural transformation with several thoughts in mind. As the following statement will undertake to show, the backwardness of the traditional and agricultural sector is the greatest handicap to development. Within this most complex undertaking, for which rural transformation is simply a title, two very considerable components are actually technical education and teacher training. In considering the Africa-wide issue of rural transformation we segregate or rather bring together the biggest complex of African needs, as the following statement makes plain.

## HIGHER EDUCATION AND THE CHALLENGE OF RURAL DEVELOPMENT

More than four-fifths of Africa's inhabitants live in rural areas and depend upon agriculture for subsistence. In this sector levels of productivity, income, purchasing power, education and health are extremely low. Despite rapid growth in the "islands of modernization," i.e., the major cities, seats of government and scattered modern plantations, the rural economies of most African countries are stagnant. Per capita agricultural productivity is probably less today--and certainly no greater--than it was ten years ago.

Worse yet, population is increasing at the same time that the food supply is failing to keep pace.

## The Problem Areas

### Low Absorptive Capacity of the Modern Sector

African planners and political leaders today are faced with the hard facts. The myth that rapid industrialization and import substitution could by themselves provide the impetus for "take-off" into high speed, self-sustaining growth has been exploded. Without prosperous rural economies to provide expanding markets for manufactured goods, industrialization in the urban areas will grind to a halt. Unemployment and underemployment of manpower in the modern sector enclaves already have reached alarming proportions and no alleviation of this situation is in sight. Modern factories can absorb only limited numbers of workers and the capacity of governments to employ more civil servants is limited by growing financial constraints. Despite the impressive growth of output in the modern sectors of most African countries, wage and salary employment has increased only slightly in the past decade; indeed in some African countries it has not increased at all. Even under the most optimistic estimates of economic growth in the modern sectors, therefore, industry, commerce, and government will be unable to absorb more than a fraction of the annual increment in the labor force of most African countries. Despite rising aspirations of African peoples, the proportion of persons likely to gain access to employment opportunities in the modern enclaves is not likely to rise in the next ten to twenty-five years, given the already high and increasing rates of growth of population. The combination of a modern sector filled to bursting with job hunters who cannot be satisfied, and a stagnant rural economy has a potential for political unrest.

The probability is that over 80 per cent of all Africans will be attached to the rural economy for the rest of this century. It is now obvious to planners and political leaders alike, therefore, that agricultural and rural development must have priority in national planning. A country unable to develop its rural economy will find that it cannot develop much else. Industrialization offers no quick and easy way out. Rural development and industrial development are complementary, and progress in each is a necessary condition for progress in the other.

In the early years following independence, top priority was given to the growth of the modern sectors--the building of the infrastructure of the cities, the creation of modern factories and impressive universities, the construction of hotels, apartments, and dwellings for the more affluent city residents, urban public works, and the expansion of central government organizations and services. Relatively little attention was given to agriculture and rural development. Today, fortunately, there is growing recognition of the need for a change in priorities. But unfortunately, although Africans are now aware that a rural transformation is complementary to and probably must precede an industrial revolution, they are uncertain about a strategy to bring it about. Knowledge about how to effect changes in agriculture and rural life is perhaps the most underdeveloped area in the entire field of development economics.

## Improper Orientation of Education

During the past decade, progress in building educational systems in Africa has been impressive. Indeed, the expansion of primary, secondary, and higher education in most countries has been exceeding the highly optimistic expectations of the Addis Ababa conference of 1961. Post-secondary school enrollments in Middle African countries increased three-fold from 1960 to 1965,

and no let-up in the rate of expansion is in sight. However, most education in Africa, and practically all at the post-secondary level, has been oriented to the medium and high-level manpower needs of the modern enclaves. Only about 5 per cent of students in higher education are in agriculture or related fields, a percentage which has not increased during the past ten years. Very little research and only a handful of students are concerned with the social, political and economic problems of rural development. If anything, the educational systems of African countries, far from encouraging involvement with the problems of rural development, have directed brainpower away from them. In its present state, therefore, African education is improperly oriented, poorly organized, and inadequately equipped to contribute significantly to African nation-building, if rural transformation does indeed become a top-priority objective of future development.

## Facing the Problem

The central theme of this paper is that African countries are now searching for ways to gear their educational systems more closely to rural development. The least developed area of African education is that related to agricultural change and rural improvement, and hence priority should be given now to more effort in this area.

Rural development encompasses but goes far beyond an increase in agricultural output or productivity. It requires extensive village development as well, including extension of health and education services, expansion of rural trade and commerce, organization of cooperatives, the provision of credit, the creation of local industries for processing of agricultural products, the improvement of housing, water supplies, sanitation, roads, and other public works and services. In short, rural development requires large-scale investment

of human and financial resources in both agriculture and in development of related activities. A sizable part of the necessary resources may be generated within the rural areas themselves, for experience has shown that rural inhabitants are willing to devote both labor and tax monies for projects from which they can clearly derive tangible benefits. A more difficult problem, however, is likely to be the identification, education, training and motivation of the human agents needed to lead, manage and direct the rural transformation. And perhaps most complicated of all will be the design and building of the appropriate organizations to undertake the task.

The faculties of agriculture, veterinary medicine and forestry in African universities are building capability to prepare persons for senior posts in ministries of agriculture and natural resources. They may also be able to produce the high-level professional and administrative personnel for research institutions. The prospects for technological discoveries which would dramatically increase the quantity and quality of agricultural products are indeed bright. In collaboration with their colleagues in other parts of the world, scientists now being trained in African universities are bound to make spectacular progress in developing technologies suitable to African conditions. The delivery of new technology, however, is likely to pose more serious problems. The extension agent, no matter how knowledgeable about new techniques, is usually faced with the reluctance of farmers to accept change, as are the extension assistants who work under his supervision. Thus, change will not come merely by increasing the technical knowledge and the numbers of extension officers. It will demand close cooperation between government, the agricultural colleges, the universities and local communities, and it will require new organizational machinery to "package" and deliver the contributions of each.

## Essential Conditions for Rural Improvement

### Energetic Leadership

As stated earlier, rural development encompasses much more than improvements in agriculture. It is probable that for every person needed in agricultural extension, two or three additional trained human agents may be required to organize and lead related activities. These would include organizers and supervisors of rural public works programs, small enterprise experts, community development workers, credit supervisors, managers of cooperatives, public health agents, agricultural science teachers in schools, and many others. There is a need also for better trained, more sensitive, and more energetic leaders in local and regional government. And there must be "model farmers" to demonstrate better farm management. In all of these fields, the scarcest resources of all are those of innovators and organizers. But these are hard to develop. It is much easier to train manpower to organize a large industrial enterprise than it is to select, train, and motivate leadership for rural development projects.

### Organizational Architecture

But even if technology and skills could be specified with more precision, the problems would be far from a solution. Rural development requires organization to mobilize and integrate the efforts of many specialists who provide educational, health, agricultural, community development, and other services. Their efforts must be directed to achievement of the goals of a local or regional plan. And most may need retraining to perform this task. This kind of an organizational problem was explored in some detail at the Kericho conference in Kenya in 1967; it is of central concern in planning the six pilot projects in rural development which are an outgrowth of the conference. The highly successful Comilla project in East Pakistan demonstrates the strategic role

of new local-level organizations as well as the need for retraining of nearly all public officials, civil servants, extension agents, and school teachers for the task of rural development.

We do not minimize the importance of determining skill requirements, as well as the role of various government ministries, schools, training institutions, and universities in relevant skill and knowledge generation. The most critical factor, however, is the building of appropriate local and regional organizations. Knowledge about the "organizational architecture" for rural development is presently lacking; it may be expanded by careful evaluation of pilot projects which are now being started in many parts of Africa as well as those undertaken elsewhere for longer periods of time.

To summarize the argument up to this point, the need for greater emphasis on rural development in Africa is generally recognized. The African countries are probably prepared to raise the priorities for investment of both financial and human resources in this area. But they do not know yet how to organize the effort. Nor can they import the required technology and know-how, as in the case of the modern sector enclaves. In broad terms, the technology for rural transformation must be developed by the African countries themselves. The organizational machinery for implementation of rural development programs will have to be designed and constructed locally through trial and error, experience with pilot projects, and imaginative thinking by indigenous leaders. No panaceas can be imported from the advanced nations nor from the international aid agencies.

## Priorities for External Assistance

The Committee has examined and fully discussed the proposition that the traditional character and the modern sector orientation of the universities might make them inappropriate agents in a national program of rural transformation.

In this discussion the Committee has had the benefit of an extensive exchange of views with members of the Inter-University Council and representatives of high level technical training institutions in the United Kingdom. The Committee is now persuaded that the universities have an essential role and furthermore, that their capacity to play this role is constantly improving. As is clear in Committee comments on the universities of Ibadan, Ife and Kumasi, the universities are beginning to recognize the gravity of rural underdevelopment. They are also examining the contributions which it might be in their power to make in such directions as middle-level technical training and the rural economy. On paper at least they are showing a flexibility and a sense of realism that could hardly have been attributed to them ten years ago. In any event one cannot get away from the fact that the university and government are the principal institutions in a developing country capable of mobilizing significant change. In a meeting of university vice-chancellors to be held in Malta in April of 1969 the related themes of technical education and rural transformation are to be major agenda items.

It is our conviction that higher education in Africa must meet the challenge of rural development. The functions of higher education are to discover and extend knowledge and transmit it to individuals. A major responsibility of African higher education is to discover, extend and transmit knowledge which is relevant to African nation-building. And, in this framework, among the highest priority objectives is the discovery, extension and transmission of knowledge which is relevant to rural development. But in this area African higher education cannot advance on all fronts at once. Nor can the donors of external aid respond positively to every project which is submitted to them. In the face of limited resources, priorities must govern hard choices. In the light of the problems identified earlier, we offer now some specific suggestions of priorities for external assistance for the next few years.

1. Agriculture and Veterinary Medicine

Faculties of agriculture and veterinary medicine in universities are important. Highest priority, however, should be given to building those programs which provide the best linkages with appropriate government ministries, extension services, applied research institutions, lower level sub-professional training institutions, and rural development pilot projects.

A serious weakness of the system which produces technicians is its organic connection with the modern economic sector. The recognition that the modern sector is handicapped by poor and insufficient middle-level manpower training is very likely to deepen this connection. There are already a number of ambitious and well thought through proposals for dealing with the needs of the modern sector for middle level technicians. A clear danger exists that only marginal and individual efforts will be made to provide training for technical skills useful in the rural environment. What is obvious in an urban environment is much less obvious in a rural environment. This means that special thought and innovative approaches should be encouraged in a variety of university departments, such as engineering and commerce, to develop training adapted to rural requirements. This means also that the technical training adapted to a changing rural environment must be the object of especial attention and encouragement, and not left to chance.

2. Economic, Social and Political Research

At the university level, research in economic, social, and political development is important. High priority should be given to such areas as manpower requirements, economics of crop production, preservation and distribution, community organization and development, entrepreneurship and small business, marketing and transportation, public works, and public administration as related

to rural development. Highest priority should be given to research projects in the above areas which provide for maximum participation and involvement of students from both universities and the technical colleges, particularly in connection with pilot projects.

3. Education in Rural Areas

The expansion of education in rural areas is important. Highest priority should be given to studies of curriculum which is most appropriate for rural areas, evaluation and development of agricultural science courses in secondary schools, experimentation with "village polytechnics," and specialized teacher development for rural schools. Particular attention should be given to the supporting role of schools in areas where improvements in rural life are already taking place. Here, the institutes of education in the universities should be given support for extended research and experimentation.

However it should not be assumed any more in the area of formal education than in the area of technical training that Departments of Education and Institutes of Education can readily cope with the special requirements of the rural environment. The orientation of teacher training to the modern sector, and to the axis that leads to secondary and university education is very powerful. Most reports whether written by Africans or those who investigate African conditions, are at their best in dealing with continuing education with a terminus within the urban and modern sector. Quite obviously the challenge is to experiment inside and outside the system of formal education in an effort to influence the rural environment.

4. Public Administration

Education and research in all areas of public administration are important. Highest priority should now be given to the study of research on local and

regional government organization and administration and to the identification, education, training and retraining of local and regional government personnel. The orientation should be toward the introduction of change rather than to handling the existing situation. As noticeable in public administration as in teacher training is the tendency to take one's cues from the modern sector. For the rural sector new attributes, approaches and practices will need to be devised.

5. Sub-Professional and Middle-Level Manpower

The greatest shortage of trained manpower is at the sub-professional and middle-levels. Thus expansion of technical colleges in areas related to rural development should probably be given to those programs most closely integrated with on-going activities in extension, research, demonstration projects, and direct contact with farmers and village dwellers. As has already been said, the most active concern is still with modern sector requirement, and still looks to imported institutions such as the polytechnics for implementation, or to imported examinations for evaluation. In the rural context the answers are not that obvious, so that experiment and trial are still needed.

Those programs which encourage exchange of ideas and cooperative activity between several of the activity areas described under 1-5 above should probably be accorded the highest priority. One example might be joint research undertaken by teams composed of members of education, agriculture, social science, and public administration faculties. Another would be the organization of interdisciplinary teams to design, monitor, and evaluate pilot projects in rural development. In Africa, as indeed in most other parts of the world, research, education, and government operations tend to develop in separate compartments. They are concerned

with the pieces necessary for a program. Rural development, however, must have packages as well as individual pieces. The key to progress, therefore, is not a massive effort to provide more of the same pieces, but to design the appropriate organizations and to find the most effective combination of services for inclusion in packages appropriate for rural development.

The criterion for further external aid to education in Africa must not be "more of the same." In the future, priority should be shifted from aid for education which is primarily oriented to modern sector development to aid for education and research more closely geared to rural development. And in this area, the best strategy is not simply to provide more support for existing or planned university faculties in agriculture, veterinary medicine, forestry, or related fields, though some may be needed. Nor is the concept of helping to build regional "centers of excellence" by itself a valid criterion for aid. More important, we feel, is relevance of research and education to the problems of social, political, and economic development, and involvement of students and staff in the processes of design and implementation of programs for improving the way of life of the vast majority of Africans who now live and are destined to remain in the rural areas.

It should be plain that an effort to deal with the challenges of rural transformation can only be made by a combination of national and international resources. In the international field government agencies, the World Bank and the foundations have an opportunity to focus upon a variety of aspects of a complex undertaking. Any effort, applied at any point and in any country, has the merit of being useful to Africa as a whole. Distinctions between country and regional programs disappear.

A first task is to find the best growth points for developing an attack upon the problems of rural transformation. The Committee has knowledge of

thinking in West Africa as well as East Africa that would warrant investigation and clarification. A sudden and massive undertaking is neither likely nor desirable. What is however eminently desirable is first a recognition in principle that what has been presented in these pages is a program of developmental assistance at the highest and most rewarding level, a program easy to justify before a critical public opinion. What is needed in the second place is a first step in an unfolding strategy that could give a much needed compactness and direction to international assistance.