

In Australia in particular, agricultural scientists have selected the strains of Rhizobium that fix the most nitrogen in specific conditions, and have developed techniques for inoculating these into seeds of legume pasture plants. In the ACIAR project on the management of nitrogen fixation by Casuarina species to be used for fuelwood and agroforestry, CSIRO scientist Dr Glyn Bowen and his collaborators in the Queensland Department of Forestry and in research groups in Africa and Asia will be attempting to do the same thing by selecting the most efficient Frankia strains and developing appropriate seed inoculation techniques. In this way it should become possible to ensure that the Casuarinas planted anywhere in the world produce the maximum possible growth.

ACIAR's Program in Perspective

These are the ACIAR projects currently approved for Africa. Others are still under consideration, but in line with the recommendations of the Jackson Committee the Centre will continue to devote only a relatively small proportion of its research program to Africa. All of these programs are new, so it will be some years before they yield useful results.

Nevertheless, they provide examples of how Australia can use its particular areas of expertise to assist developing countries at relatively little cost.

During the financial year of 1982-83 the total Australian aid budget for all countries stood at \$840 million. Of this, about \$50 million went to countries in sub-Saharan Africa - 0.005 per cent of the \$10,400 million of aid reaching the region from all donor countries. The one sixth of its research budget that ACIAR is spending in sub-Saharan Africa represents a mere 0.5 per cent of the total Australian aid budget, yet these projects should provide large pay-offs.

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MAKERERE 1984: THE PROBLEMS OF RECONSTRUCTION

Earlier this year I spent the best part of a month at Makerere, the longest of three visits I have made since Uganda was liberated from the Amin military regime in April, 1979. As on my earlier visits I felt almost overwhelmed by the kindness and friendliness of Makerere staff, and their generosity to the visitor at a time when they themselves are in great need. As before I also came away with great respect for the tenacity with which they seek under extremely difficult conditions not merely to survive but also to restore Makerere to its former preeminence as a teaching and research institution respected as one of Africa's foremost centres of academic and intellectual excellence. It would do them a disservice to gloss over the decline that has occurred, or to pretend that morale has not suffered over the past few years; for that would be to minimise the difficulties with which they grapple. It is all the more important therefore to be aware of the many positive activities that are also part of the university scene, such as the Mawazo Workshop held while I was there, or the efforts of the Uganda Federation of University Women to reestablish their bursary scheme for schoolgirls' education. Staff are realistic about the situation, and they do not evade their own responsibility for Makerere's rehabilitation. Teaching continues - staff are not simply sitting around waiting for others to resolve their problems. There are however serious limitations to what they can achieve without external assistance. Makerere's experience demonstrates with great clarity the constraints imposed upon university development in Africa by economic crisis and institutional neglect. In Makerere's case the neglect and decline derive in the first place directly from the particular nature of Amin's rule. But they are also part of the complex process of development that faces every African state. The significance of Makerere's experience thus goes beyond Uganda, for it presents in extreme form many of the problems of other African universities as well. It raises questions also about the appropriate assistance that the international academic community may still be able to offer to these universities in the 1980s.

Makerere was a major casualty of the economic decline and breakdown of civil order that took place in Uganda under Amin from 1971 to 1979. The physical facilities suffered from nearly ten years' neglect, as decreasing funds and then the lack of foreign exchange meant that neither maintenance nor construction was possible. Although student numbers increased 50% during the seventies no new buildings went up and pressures on accommodation contributed in turn to further decline. Equipment could not be maintained or replaced. Halls of Residence were by the late seventies without water and proper kitchen equipment; by 1979 virtually all the cooking was being done on charcoal stoves, and sanitation presented serious problems since there is a limit to the number of pit latrines that can be dug on the hill! The library became increasingly unable to purchase books or keep its periodicals collection up to date. Nor was it only the physical plant that suffered. The arbitrary rule of the military regime spilled over into the university and staff and students alike were victims of the terrible insecurity that increasingly characterised those years.

Many staff, and a significant number of students, had to flee for their lives. Between 1972 and 1979 Makerere had six successive Vice-Chancellors, three University secretaries, and for six years no substantive Bursar. By 1979 there was an acute shortage of staff at all levels, although the gap was filled, in part by the increased employment of teaching assistants, who assumed a heavy load. Research virtually came to a halt. The regime's disregard for intellectual and academic values challenged the integrity of the university itself. Makerere became isolated from the wider East African intellectual community and from academic institutions abroad. Morale suffered deeply, reflecting the malaise that encompassed Uganda as a whole.

The University was not seriously damaged during the liberation war, and was also saved for the most part from the looting that occurred in the wake of the war throughout most of the country. (Due not least to the courageous manner in which the then Vice-Chancellor handled the situation). The years of institutional neglect had never left their mark and in 1979 Makerere's material and staff needs were enormous. The estimate of capital needs given in the Seers Report in 1979 was 800 million shillings, and to the Bellagio Conference in 1970 1,000 million shillings, which at the then exchange rate was £62,500,00.¹ Virtually every building on the hill required major repair if not reconstruction. The library's collections had huge gaps for the seventies, the students had few text books, and the bookshop did not have the foreign exchange to buy them. In March, 1979 there were 307 staff *in situ* (two thirds of them expatriate) out of an establishment (for 1978/79) of 617. There had been no long-term planning for nearly a decade. It would be surprising if there had not been some deterioration in the quality of teaching over these years.

The five years since then have seen some recovery, and it was good last February to see some of the signs. There was once again running water on the hill (although the supply was subject to interruptions). Some repair and reconstruction has been managed and at least the front of the Main building has had a coat of paint! The Kampala City Council's inability to restore its refuse collection services means there is still a major problem of uncollected garbage, but it is more under control. The acute shortages of basic office supplies, such as stationery, and of office equipment, have not been eliminated but they have eased (although stationery and office equipment remain hard to come by in general). There have been additions to the library stock, and I was delighted to see that the late Dame Margery Perham's books, which she left to Makerere, had arrived, and been catalogued and shelved in a special section. The collection was officially handed over to the university by the British High Commissioner while I was there. The Politics Department guards the small stock of books it has built up as a departmental library in an effort to overcome the pressures on library resources, as I am sure other departments do as well. The bookshop does have some stock. Indeed while I was there they closed their doors for a week while they dealt with a large newly arrived consignment.

1. The Rehabilitation of the Economy of Uganda. A Report by a Commonwealth Team of Experts, Commonwealth Secretariat, London, June, 1979, Vol. Two, pp. 243-249.

The staffing position has also eased a little. Whereas in 1979 some departments had no more than a third of their staff, and a 50% establishment was considered an achievement, now 60% to 65% of the posts are filled. A number of former Ugandan staff (although by no means all) have returned. A number of Staff Development Assistants (who contributed a great deal to teaching in the difficult period of the late seventies) have been sent abroad for graduate studies (including to Australia, which provided thirty very welcome scholarships immediately after liberation) and a few have by now returned to take up posts. The university is beginning therefore to fill in its depleted ranks, from the bottom up. A succession of visiting academics who have gone out for short or longer periods, often during their own university vacation, has made it possible to restore or maintain a number of courses that could otherwise not have been mounted. Liaison with other academic institutions has been resumed and although the impact of years of isolation has not yet been overcome, isolation itself has been greatly reduced.

Nevertheless, there is a great deal to be done before the University can function properly, and play its full role in development. There are still two hundred unfilled posts, half of them in the Medical School, which creates a serious bottleneck. Graduate studies has scarcely revived. There are still Staff Development Assistants for whom graduate training cannot be provided, because there are no funds to go abroad and Makerere cannot as yet in most fields provide the training at home; some indeed have left the university to go to other jobs. And there is still the need to rebuild morale among staff who were isolated for years and who need to bring themselves up to date with the developments in their discipline. The cutting edge of intellectual endeavour needs to be honed fine again. The day to day working of the university continues to suffer from the lack of a whole range of supplies, as well as low morale that results from the situation itself. Finally, five years after liberation there is still the mammoth task of the physical rehabilitation of the university.

The present constraints upon staff and students are not simply those of dilapidated buildings and inadequate books. In the past indeed the limitations of buildings and books did not stop Makerere from reaching the heights. The university operates today however within a country struggling for economic recovery, in circumstances which impose severe pressures upon virtually all Ugandans in their everyday life. The first two years after liberation were years of acute shortage of even the most basic commodities, in a rampant magendo (blackmarket) economy in which inflation spiralled and money lost its value. In the last year or so supplies have greatly improved and basic commodities (as well as luxury items whose availability at this stage is somewhat surprising) are much more readily available. The market is full again, of fruit and vegetables and meat, and petrol is in ready supply. While inflation may have come down, the open market ensures that prices remain very high, at a time when wages and salaries have not moved to keep pace. (A bunch of matoke in February, I was told, fetched 1,360/-, which was then the minimum monthly wage for an unskilled labourer). The result is that no-one on a fixed income in Uganda at the beginning of 1984 could live on his or her salary, and

Makerere staff were no exception. Lecturers' salaries were quite simply not enough to live on, so that all staff, professors included, needed a second source of income or supplies apart from their salary. Some have been more enterprising than others. A good deal more food is also grown in Makerere's gardens now than was the case twenty years ago, and chickens, and in one case cows, provide some families with the necessary additional income. The problems of daily survival add enormously however to the demands upon the individual and to the pressures on working time, and most often it is research that has had to give. The fact that the recent June Budget finally made significant increases in civil service and academic salaries suggests that the problem had finally to be recognised.

It is not only the economic difficulties that frustrate the University. Makerere is subject like everyone else to the habit of violence in the country at large that continues to threaten all Ugandans, and which results in a pervading insecurity of life and property that presents the most fundamental constraint to the whole country's recovery. The university is also directly affected by the deep political cleavages that continue to plague Uganda five years after liberation, and which reflect Ugandans' inability to achieve a political consensus. Party politics have intruded into campus life since 1959 and this remains so. National political cleavages continue to challenge the university's independence and integrity and to threaten its ability to restore a community spirit, among students as well as staff as the events surrounding this year's student Guild elections demonstrated.

Students also have to function under difficult conditions. A Task Force set up in 1982 by the Minister for Education and the University Council to assess university facilities and recommend levels of admission acknowledged clearly the overcrowded halls of residence with leaking roofs, and faulty plumbing, and lacking proper kitchens and sewerage system. Such conditions of overcrowding, poor food, lack of study facilities, had earlier been seen by staff as a contributory factor that led to student strike action in 1980 and to subsequent upsets and troubles in the Guild. Nevertheless the external pressures upon the university to increase its admission increases. There is also talk of a second university.

All these continuing difficulties impose severe pressures upon staff and students. Some respond better than others. The capacity for renewal that exists was brought home to me forcibly during my recent visit by the Mawazo Workshop which I was invited to attend. Mawazo is the Journal of the Schools of Humanities and Social Sciences, begun in the early sixties, but brought to a halt in the hard days of the mid-seventies. Last year, 1983, Makerere staff brought out the first issue in eight years. The Mawazo Board, led by the editors, have also, with financial assistance from the Canadian International Research and Development Council (IRDC) initiated a series of Workshops to explore major issues facing contemporary Ugandan and East African society, planning also to use a selection of papers presented as the basis for an issue of the Journal. The first Workshop was held last year. The second, on Agrarian Change in Africa, took place in February while I was there.

The Workshop was immensely successful. There was a small number of participants from the two universities in Dar es Salaam and in Nairobi, and a few from further afield as well. There were twenty or more papers altogether, some from Makerere students, as well as staff and academics from other institutions. Attendance was not restricted to those presenting papers, and there was a large student audience at most sessions. The meeting was held in Makerere Main Hall, and at the peak there must have been nearly four hundred people present. Although the undergraduates greatly outnumbered staff and other social science researchers, the occasion was for me reminiscent of the East African Social Science conference, especially at the height of the intellectual debate about development that enlivened the East African universities in the early seventies. There was a distinct ideological tone to much of the debate, and academically both papers and discussion were uneven. What is important however is that the Workshop took place, in spite of considerable difficulties (limited administrative resources, secretarial assistance and duplicating facilities to mention only three). It showed what can be done, if the funds are available, and how a comparatively small amount of external assistance can facilitate a genuine staff endeavour. A third Workshop is planned for October, 1984, on A hundred years after the Berlin Conference: Perspectives on Africa's Liberation.

The Mawazo Workshops are not the first such conferences that Makerere staff have organised, and to which they have invited participants from their sister universities in East Africa and further abroad. I remember when I was there in 1981 Margaret McPherson had just organised a very successful English Literature Conference (at a time when conditions were considerably more difficult than they may be today). There was also in 1981 the Conference on Rural Rehabilitation and Development organised by the Faculty of Social Sciences with financial assistance from the Ford Foundation, the Commonwealth Foundation and the Uganda National Research Council. Those occasions, and the Mawazo Workshops, demonstrate the importance of even small levels of external assistance, in making it possible for Makerere staff themselves to take on the business of intellectual renewal.

This was essentially the Vice Chancellor's point when I talked to him before I left about Makerere's continuing problems and needs. Makerere reflects in microcosm the problems of reconstruction that face Uganda as a whole, and of which she is part. Economic recovery may have started, but it has yet to be won, and finance and foreign exchange remain severe constraints. The country's recovery programme puts Makerere back on the national agenda, but it also gives priority to the productive sectors of the economy, and at this stage only the most urgent needs of education can be dealt with, at the tertiary as well as at other levels.

External assistance is thus essential, and Makerere has not since 1979 lacked supporters and donors. But as the Vice Chancellor put it, the magnitude of the capital investment required for rehabilitation is daunting. Major physical reconstruction will need

major donors and will inevitably take time. Nevertheless there is much that can be done if the reconstruction programme can be broken up into small, manageable projects, and he sees a number of areas where there is scope for assistance of a more modest nature, which would make a world of difference not only to morale but also to performance. At one level, given the effect of current financial constraints on supplies, a gift of six months' stationery to a department, or three typewriters, could make a world of difference. At a different level, external assistance for the restoration of teaching and research continues to remain vital. First, there is a continued need for support for Staff Development training. On the one hand this means scholarships to enable young staff to study abroad; on the other hand, it means assistance to restore Makerere's own capacity for graduate training, all the more important given the problems sometimes encountered of persuading graduate students to return from abroad. Second, short and longer term fellowships in other universities to enable staff to counteract the effects of years of isolation, would make a significant contribution to the restoration of the university's teaching and research capacities. Third, the Vice Chancellor would welcome senior expatriate academics on short term secondments to assist both in teaching and in departmental development. Finally, the library remains very much in need.

Makerere people remain appreciative of the assistance Australia gave them in the immediate aftermath of liberation in 1979, including office equipment as well as scholarships. They are sad however that the Australian contact seems now to have been lost. Although ADAB's training programme still includes Uganda along with other African states, AUIDP is precluded, as members of the Association will know, from spending any money on activities in Africa. Ironically, the Book Appeal for Third World Universities, which was established by ACPAD (the Australian Committee for Publications Acquired for Development), largely as a result of inquiries from Makerere's Vice Chancellor, has not yet benefited Makerere, since the committee administering the fund decided that initially its efforts should be directed towards developing universities in Southeast Asia, PNG and the South Pacific.

Nevertheless Makerere remembers with gratitude the manner in which Australia gave assistance during the crisis of 1979 and is modest and realistic in their suggestions as to how we might help further. Recognising that an Australian contribution will of necessity be small, they nevertheless, suggested five categories of possible assistance:

- First, some additional scholarships to enable Staff Development Assistants to do graduate studies abroad;
- second, some short-term fellowships to enable teaching staff to have a period of intellectual renewal abroad;
- third, short-term secondment to Makerere of senior academics to assist teaching and departmental development;
- fourth, basic office equipment, such as Australia gave in 1979;
- fifth, books and journals, to help plug the library's gaps.

I would add, as a personal feeling, how good it would be if more direct links with individuals could be created by those of us with past associations and common interests with Makerere staff.

Makerere more than almost any other Commonwealth University inspired great affection and loyalty in those who worked there, as former Makerere staff now in Australia demonstrated in their response to Makerere's need in 1979. Yet it is not only those of us who have a Makerere connection who should be concerned. At one level Makerere's present needs reflect the national crisis in Uganda of which she is an integral part. At a second level, however, they symbolise, albeit in extreme form, the problems that today face a significant number of African universities. Political crisis has challenged both institutional and individual academic freedom, and in turn affected the capacity of the universities to participate in the development process. Economic crisis has resulted for many of them in rundown equipment, cramped accommodation, the run down of libraries especially their periodicals, and staff shortages. If however African manpower and human resource needs are to be met, the Universities must play a central role. All of us therefore with a concern for the future of Africa, and of its universities, need to consider the questions Makerere's problems of reconstruction raise.

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