

8.0 The Way Ahead: Recommendations for Action

- 8.1 One way of taking forward the active promotion of institutional links would be to establish a special programme [maybe named LINKS] perhaps within the Health Programme of the Secretariat or attached to one of the major donor countries of the Commonwealth. Alternatively a Commonwealth University or other group or institution might be interested in taking on the responsibility with appropriate financial backing. Money could be sought from WHO, UNDP, the EEC and the Secretariat itself. The programme LINKS could be established as a project with a time-framework and evaluated after an agreed period of time to find out if this was the best framework in which to continue this particular work. The Health Programme of the Secretariat could be given an overall evaluative responsibility.

Full time staff could be appointed including a project co-ordinator, a professional information officer and a secretary. LINKS could develop a system of working relations with individual institutions and with organisations that have already been active in promoting regional or international co-operation and working towards the adoption of a Primary Health Care approach. The collection of information about the activities of other organisations should enable overlapping and competition to be avoided and complementary and joint activities to be promoted.

LINKS could offer regular services to institutions within the Commonwealth; for example:

- o a bulletin on ideas for co-operation, institutional profiles, offers and demands for links.
- o guidance as to membership of other Networks and Associations.
- o technical guidance on priority topics of interest to institutions generally.
- o ad hoc papers and technical notes.
- o technical and financial support to specific co-operative action involving groups of institutions participating in a project.

Initially such services could be free. After a period of time it might be possible to ask registered institutions to co-finance LINKS through membership fees.

8.2 A possible action programme for LINKS could relate to four areas, if not more:

1. Institution Building and Development.
2. Programme Development.
3. Staff Development.
4. New, effective approaches to learning, teaching, consultancy and research.

8.2[1] **Institution Building and Development**

- o to encourage all countries to nominate a focal point for enquiries about possible linkage.
- o to circulate INRES-SOUTH Data Base requirements to all LDC institutions to encourage registration of all health institutions in "South" Commonwealth countries with the Data Base [see Appendix 7].
- o to prepare a comprehensive information service on demand for and offers of linkages, and the expertise available in institutions, also ongoing major research and sabbatical leave arrangements. LINKS could consider the computerisation of this information.
- o to foster a sustained programme of linking through active promotion, participation of staff in conferences, arrangement of liaison meetings utilizing regional and inter-regional organizations.
- o to support the creation of networks of institutions in areas where they do not exist.
- o to consider an enhanced role for the Commonwealth country institutions that belong to the Network of Community-Oriented Educational Institutions for Health Science. [see Appendix 6].
- o to publicize case studies of successful past linkages and what they have achieved.

- o to set up an information base on existing donor resources and to serve as catalyst in mobilizing resources.

8.2[2] Programme Development

Possible actions would include:

- o to publish innovations in curricula and activities (particularly related to a PHC approach) and to consider the setting up of a computerised information source.
- o to foster exchange of experience in priority areas e.g. through forming interest groups in relation to particular topics.
- o to publish working documents on the experience of institutions in critical areas such as informatics, management of new technologies, environmental hazards in relation to health, etc.
- o to facilitate setting up of clearing houses of materials in relation to particular topics in regions where they do not exist.

8.2[3] Staff Development

- o to identify institutions able and willing to provide assistance in specific staff development and training programmes.
- o to identify sources of funding and to develop a programme of fellowships for studies in health and scientific matters, and management and administration of health services based on a PHC approach.
- o to publish a manual on staff training and development in new areas such as individual development plans, standards of performance, institutional policies particularly in relation to PHC.

8.2[4] **New and Effective Approaches to Learning, Teaching, Consultancy and Research.**

- o to document existing research in LDC on the topics selected.
- o to document and disseminate innovative approaches.
- o to promote and identify ways to support the participation of member institutions in innovative programmes.
- o to initiate an identification study on new approaches at inter-regional level and in South-South linkages.
- o to prepare notes for a Bulletin which describes effective approaches.

The approach would be based on action-learning and action-research, modular programmes that reduce the cost of course development, self-learning and action planning, computer assisted training. A special emphasis should be given to mid-career training.

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