

REVIVING THE SPIRIT OF SELF-RELIANCE

I'm not really an expert in the field of human development, but I have a keen interest in it. I would like to share with you some of our areas of concern in Zambia. In looking back, at the method and the thinking which has been going on during the past two days of this august assembly on Human Development, I realize that at almost every state of discussion, both in my Task Force and in the plenary, my thoughts kept moving back and forth between Chicago and Zambia. I was constantly looking at the local situation to see how what we have been discussing could apply. At the end of the plenary session yesterday evening we came up with the mandates for the next 20 years. In light of these I would like to share with you some of the target areas I see for human development in Zambia. Although there are many areas which need the type of development we have been discussing, I shall only dwell on three: agriculture, education, and reviving of a spirit of self-reliance among most of the people. I will start with agriculture as number one. Zambia being a front line state, as most of you are aware, has had a commitment to human freedom for a long time now. It has not only been looking after its own people, but in addition, has looked after some sons and daughters of Africa who have run away from their oppressive governments, besides trying to defend itself from other colonial elements. This has resulted in the country's foreign exchange running low, thus resulting in shortages of some essential foods. Although the country is able to produce enough food for its five million people, it has also 100,000 refugees to share with. This results in not having enough food.

At the moment, most of the refugees from Zimbabwe have started to go back home, but the students who are in schools and colleges have not wished to interrupt their education, so they are still with us. We also have refugees from Namibia, South Africa, and a few from Angola. Therefore, there is need to expand agriculture production, especially in rural areas. So this is one important area of concern.

The second area of concern is education. In Zambia we have a pyramid type of educational structure. We have more people in primary schools than in secondary schools. This eventually results in most of the children not reaching the top because there are not enough places after grade seven, the cutting line after seven years of primary education which qualifies students for going on somewhere. A number of these children, therefore, have nothing to do and there are not enough colleges and training areas for them to be able to develop skills. A number of churches and other organizations have attempted to deal with this need, but the number of primary age children has kept on growing. If people in this Symposium have some suggestions, we from Zambia would appreciate learning what you think we can do with this situation. More children are entering grade one every year. The government has been trying its best to provide enough, but the trends have made it impossible to keep up with the situation. I think there is need for vocational training schools and colleges after the primary level to provide ways of utilizing the unemployed and depressed youth who think this is the end of the world for them. A few voluntary organizations are helping, but the contribution is just a drop in the ocean.

The third concern is the need to revive the spirit of self-reliance which relaxed with the attainment of independence. Independence continues to be misunderstood in many ways. Some people think the coming of independence means they can sit back and wait for the government to bring everything to where they are sitting. Some efforts have been started to correct this, but still more could be done. This could be done through programs and methods of mobilizing and motivating people at grassroots level, encouraging them to utilize the natural resources available. Zambia has tremendous natural resources. We are only about 5 million people and we have over 7,000 square kilometers of land. We have good soil and enough water, but the problem lies in being able to utilize what we have in order to provide for the community. Beyond the government's program, there is a need to assist the people to utilize the natural resources available and to realize the importance of improving their own way of life and future. They need to realize that only local people themselves are the right people to know what they need and to do something about their situation. I think you will agree with me that only when people know how to deal with their own situation and have confidence in themselves, can they lead a fuller life. I think many countries have continued to struggle for independence because they are trying to lead a fuller life. Even with the fuller situation of independence, people still need assistance.

After sharing with you these three areas of concern and why I think the mandates arrived at by this symposium can very quickly arrest the situation, I would like to finish by putting something on record. From what I have been saying you may wonder "What has the ICA in Zambia been doing?" Since ICA came to Zambia, the program of mobilizing and motivating the people has increased with Village Forums, LENS, ITI training and the other human development programs going on in Kapini village. However, I would like, in fact would be happier if more villages could be touched because I think the other villages could be able to help in spreading the news and the assistance to other areas. At the moment we are only one village, but if we tried to touch a few more villages through replication more would be done in the country. There is also need for more Global Women's Forums for, as you maybe know, most of the human development work in the country is carried out by women. The country appreciates what ICA is doing and our President, Dr. Kenneth Kaunda himself, has respect for human dignity and has special interest in rural development and in what is being done by the ICA. A bit more would just be more appreciated. And we can see great things happening in our country. •