

## THE ASSEMBLY: Context

Those stories from the field visits are amazing. I am sure there will be more and more and more. I am also sure that you want to go on hearing and telling them. The rest of this afternoon we will continue to debrief on those. But we on orchestration need to answer to you on what we have been doing. We did not take time off for four days. We decided we needed to look carefully at these last four days and decide what really needs to happen now.

This has been a group research process. We do not mean academic research in the first instance. We mean that we are pondering over and weighing up what is happening and what needs to happen in rural development. I found in the last four days as I worked with the orchestration team (including four who were there before and two new people who stayed behind to work with us) that there is a deep underlying loyalty in all of us to see that rural development not only continues as it has been but deepens and extends itself somehow. That deep loyalty is not particularly to this programme we are in. It is not to the International Exposition of Rural Development. It is not a loyalty certainly to the organizing sponsor, the Institute of Cultural Affairs International. It is a loyalty to see that rural development happens. Knowing that puts upon us a great responsibility to deal very seriously with what we do next.

These last few days are going to be very precious to us, I suspect. I am going to point very quickly to what is planned. Then we can get about doing our job.

One way we need to look at it is that we are in the midst of a 3-year programme. The three years are the important part--not just these ten days. You and I are very privileged to be here together. We have a chance to symbolize something worldwide that very few people have had the chance to symbolize on behalf of local practitioners around the globe. How do we savour these last few days in order to capture the wisdom that we have encountered--not for our sake but for the sake of all those others out there there that did not have the chance to come, some who never heard of it and some who are yet to hear about it. Capturing this wisdom is what is crucial for us and for them.

After looking carefully again at what we need to do, I believe very strongly that we are at the point of having one of the greatest happenings that could occur not only in rural development but in the future of this planet. That may be an overstatement, but I do not think it is too much of an overstatement. Unless we somehow stumble or hesitate or lose our nerve as we try to create what we are doing, we are going to find ourselves doing something very, very significant.

This Central International Event began with a symposium. You may remember it as being some four years back. Actually it was only four days ago that you left here. The symposium was a very brief two days. During those two days we produced two products. The first day we wrote over 500 pages each of which describe an approach that works. As I look back on those 500 pages now, they were only our initial impressions about what works. As I listened to you today and to the team leaders this morning I find that you have now begun to discover what is an approach that works. That is what we need to capture somehow!

The second day of the symposium you may remember that we ended with the 30 teams reporting out their 5 to 12 priorities for rural development. We asked



ourselves what are those approach arenas that we need to describe and spell out. What are the particular elements of effective development. YMr reports are here on this board--the ones many people read from in that last plenary. One of the things we did the last four days was to group these priority arenas into something that makes sense of them in relation to each other. We put it up here on this wall so that you can look at what we have done, speak back to it, rearrange them add to them rewrite what you wrote before if it is worthwhile. Now we are not entirely convinced it is worthwhile. That may have only been two days in which we got some initial impressions about what the priorities need to be in rural development. Maybe that is all they are worth for us. Maybe they only got us off to those field visits and now we forget them. I am not sure. We need to talk together about what the initial impressions were that we had. You look at them and we will decide together what needs to be written up directly from this work.

There are seventeen priority arenas. You will notice that the 17th one is called "other". In that last column we can add others from our field visits experience. That may have been the most important thing we have done so far.

We will be talking more this afternoon about the field visits. We will adopt a completely different style called an open process. This is a style that came from you. As we led you through that first symposium, we were so uncertain about ourselves that we had everything planned down to the last minute. That did not work in one sense. And we got a response. Some 100 people are loyal to the future of rural development. That is really all that matters.

Now we are beginning the Assembly. What do we need to do now? Our original intent in the ASSEMBLY after a symposium and some field visits was to come back with our major arenas of priority and write up what now needs to be done in rural development. I do not mean by this that putting things in writing is finally the answer. You and I certainly know that written words are not the only way to catch wisdom. In fact it may not even be the best way. The reason the cameras are here right now is to capture this human drama as it unfolds. This is because human beings are doing it. That is the human element in rural development. It is not some definition someone has of the human element in rural or any kind of world development.

As we look toward our whole time together, we think there are at least eight products that we have been and are producing. The first product is actually each one of us. The most important thing is that each of us as individuals to return to our locations, intensify what we are doing, change it if necessary but do it better. Individual empowerment is one of the most important product that this exposition could have. There are 650 participants here. 400 from outside of India are delegates or team leaders from various parts of the world. There are 150 people here from India itself both delegates and team leaders. There are also 100 people who are support staff, some of whom sang for us this afternoon. We 650 people have the chance whatever role we may be playing to be renewed by this experience. That is important.

The second major product is the group research process itself. Whatever this turns out to be, whatever the book turns out to be, we are in the process of inventing a method of interchange or research. Tomorrow we will go into interest groups. This came as a strong push from you. You felt that you needed



to talk through things with people in your own field of expertise or interest. Or maybe you wanted to talk with people working in an arena you do not know much about but you need to know about. Or maybe you wanted to talk through some arena that you do not know anything about; you only wanted to ask some dumb questions. That will be the opportunity tomorrow. It will be a very free wheeling day. If we don't stumble or lose our nerve, we will allow ourselves to talk about whatever we want to talk about. If you find yourself in a field like agriculture, you may want to spin off into 3 or 4 different groups so that conversation can happen.

We have laid out a plan for us to talk in twelve arenas. WE are very clear that there are more than twelve arenas. There may be 100 arenas that need to be talked about tomorrow. If there are, that is fine. I only request of you, and the only urgency behind this, is that when we spin off in different groups we have someone present to record what we say. That is all we ask. If we can get what we say written down or put on tape recorders or into video cameras, we will be able to capture our wisdom.

Those are the two major arenas. On the next day we will have basically finished the research process. It came as a basic push for you and was in our original plan as well that we spend a day talking through what the implications are for after we leave here. The IERD has a plan for at least the next 18 months, that there will be followup. This is one of the elements we have been very passionate about. The ICAI has been concerned about implementation. If we are concerned about nothing else, we want to see things implemented that are thought and talked about. We have found that is also true of you, that you would like to see something different happen or something additional happen or do more of what you are doing already. That is what our concern is.

We thought we would spend a day talking that through, again using an open process, a way that will let ourselves dream if you will, but dreaming practically about what to do.

Those are the basic two products: ourselves and this research and implementation process. The book will be done simply by taking the notes out of these various groups that will be working and putting them up on the wall behind this stage, so that we can all watch the book unfold. I do not know if 650 people ever wrote a book in ten days before, but we would like to challenge you to do that. You can write it any way you choose. You can put down a quotation, you can record one of these illustrations, you can write a whole paragraph or a page, you can submit your document that you came with -- any way we think is necessary to get down what we have learned. If 650 people can do that, that is our challenge.. to get it written down in black and white.

The other way we are doing this is the film or movie. These video people are working very hard to capture this event as it happens. That is not easy. If you take a video of people sitting around a table talking to each other you will not get much human element in it at all. And people who see it will not understand a thing about rural development. But they are finding ways to capture these events. One of our number in the orchestration team in the last week jumped up in the midst of a labourious argument or conversation last week and went to the blackboard and began writing on top of all the other writing that was on the black board and described an event that happened to him in a project in his country. We wanted a video of that but we did not have one present. I do not know how you get those happenings before a video when they happen in your group. But if we can that will be very helpful.



We also want to envision Phase 3 of IERD. What do we do when we return to our projects and our countries? What in my country can happen? And what might even happen together? That is a product.

The fourth sub-product we have is the computerized database. Now some of you have been worried about the computers. I am very fascinated by the computers but I have not sold out to them. The value of the database is to allow us to continue to do the interchange we are doing now after we are back in our countries. If the computer is what many think it might be, it will help all of us leap over those centuries and centuries it has taken some countries to get where they are today by having a more rapid exchange of information at the grassroots level. If that vision is true, the computerized database will help us do that.

Then we want to have a great celebration on Tuesday night. Some of you came prepared to do performances. I would put that down as a great product. I am a believer in symbol. I am a believer in stories and mythologies--those images that capture our imaginations and get us to move even beyond what we knew and did before. That celebration has that potential..

Another product will be worked on tomorrow. A group is an agency meeting. A further announcement will be made tomorrow. These people are going to meet, some invited to join us for only that day, to talk about funding possibilities and how what we have been doing can be funded around the globe. You will be looking forward, I am sure, to what they discover.

Then there are the individual delegate plans. I am sure that will be a product.

Something has also happened by virtue of being here in India. What is that product? We have been in India and not somewhere else. It has done something for India. India has done something to us. It has been a great experience from what I have heard you say--maybe not entirely pleasant every moment but it has been an experience. Something has happened to us here.

I would urge us to enter into this great festival of exchange of stories and information. Tomorrow as we enter into our interest groups we will learn how to do a style of meeting that no one has ever done before. I have been in all kinds of group processes, open processes and closed processes, I could document back to the 1950's. But I think we are in the process of inventing something new in international conferences. Someone said this is not an international conference at all. It is something else. I don't know. But I hope that this afternoon and tomorrow we can create something new. We don't have any ponderous, complex procedures for you. If anyone is ponderous and complex, it is in their own heads as far as I can tell.

There are no back room orchestrators. We are going to be located in the lobby. If anyone has to contact us for any thing--I don't know why they would, but they might--we will be in the lobby.

There is going to be these 12 empty buckets go up on the wall. There are some categories that came out of those network sheets you filled out. You said these are the twelve arenas we want to talk about. That is what we will work on tomorrow. There are twelve empty buckets. I hope those twelve empty buckets get filled and even flow over so that there will be 24 buckets by the end of the day. I don't know. We want to find out and have before we leave here sum-

mary sentences with illustrations. The book we are planning to write may not be what you would submit to a publisher on Thursday morning. But at least it will be summary sentences with illustrations. Maybe that is the way we ought to publish it. Who knows? Let us talk and be deciding as we do.

I am excited to see what happens in these last four days. To allow that to happen I better stop.