

FIELD NOTES

KIFF/FS End-Of-Program Seminar
East Lansing, Michigan
September 16-23, 1989

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The final program of the KIFF/FS project was for the purpose of finishing up a variety of tasks, particularly in the interest groups. There were three Fellows absent - David Blandford who was ill, Nguyuru Lipumba of Tanzania who had a family crisis to deal with, and Tomas Uribe, now in the Colombian Embassy in Washington, who had to be present during a visit of the President of Colombia. Two Steering Committee members were also absent - Maurice Rolls of England who was on a mission in India and Bryant Kearl who was working in Indonesia. All other Fellows and Steering Committee members were present.

Most of the work during the week was done in the interest group setting. There are four interest groups, as follows:

1. Food Systems in Transition
2. North-South Grain Policies
3. Food Programs for Feeding the Poor
4. Agricultural Production and Food Technology

All of the groups had publications to complete.

The first event was a picnic at the home of Harold Riley on Sunday evening. A recognition dinner took place at the Kellogg Center at MSU on Wednesday evening. Fellows received certificates for their completion of the Fellowship. The meeting was attended by officials from Michigan State University and the Kellogg Foundation. A Steering Committee meeting took place at the MSU Student Union Building on Thursday at noon. Displays of publications, graphs, charts, and project results were placed on the second floor of the East Lansing Holiday Inn, where the meetings were held.

One of the highlights of the week was on Thursday morning during which each Fellow gave a brief presentation on what the Fellowship had meant to him or her. Several major themes were elaborated:

1. Knowledge gained - Fellows testified about how their perspectives had been broadened through the introduction of information, insights into various ways to organize food systems and by gaining perspective on one's own situation by learning more about how other people handled common problems and challenges.

2. Networking and communication - Fellows expanded their networks of interaction through gaining friendships within the group and making the valuable contacts with resource people.
3. All testified about the importance of individual projects. These were very useful for making advances in food systems in the Fellows' own countries and helped solidify their positions of leadership.
4. The study travel opportunities were reviewed and judged to be very important. Cross-cultural understandings and appreciations were gained.
5. The multidisciplinary character of the interaction was judged to be very important. People gained a better appreciation of the contributions of other disciplines to the job of improving food system operations.
6. Growth in personal leadership confidence, skills, and efficiency were noted as an important dimension of the total experience.

During these recitations, I was struck by the similarities in testimonies to the outcomes of the agricultural and rural leadership development projects that have been supported by the Foundation in the United States and elsewhere.

On the last day of the program, steps were taken to form alumni groups. One Fellow in each continent was selected to serve as a chairman of the subgroups for future communications, exchanges of information, and continuation of professional relationships.

Fellows expressed gratitude to the Kellogg Foundation for program support and helpful advice and counseling, to Michigan State University personnel for outstanding program planning and administration, to the Steering Committee for professional guidance and assistance, and to other members of the Fellowship group for useful exchange of information, for facilitating progress in the interest groups, and for substantive communications.

In the Steering Committee meeting, members expressed their gratification at how the program developed and produced successful outcomes. At the beginning, they were a little unsure about how the program would develop. They concluded that the idea of taking professionals in mid-career and providing opportunities for them to broaden their perspectives, gain professional experience, establish communication networks, and learn about how other countries addressed problems were all very valuable and developmental features which made this program different from those conducted by universities and other foundations. All agreed that the focus on food system operations was appropriate because of the vital area of importance of this concern for all countries, particularly those in the third world. They felt that this kind of program was and is of great importance for rejuvenating food system professionals.

About the only criticism that anybody offered concerned the Foundation's decision to not repeat the program for the benefit of other similar groups of mid-career professionals in food system operations. Although they understood some of the rationale surrounding the changes in Foundation policies, several of the participants urged the Foundation to consider implementing another similar program. They felt that such opportunities for in-service growth and development on the part of those developing policies and procedures relating to food production are very valuable and not available in other programs.

It was said many times that the beneficial effects of the program would continue in the foreseeable future. Fellows expressed their very positive estimations of program benefits to themselves and their countries.

GWK/jkf