

NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF DEVELOPMENT
AND CULTURAL RESEARCH (N.I.R.) *

University College of Botswana

I. INTRODUCTION

The National Institute of Development and Cultural Research (N.I.R.) was established in 1975 and is an integral part of the University College of Botswana (U.C.B.).

The first part of the Institute to become fully operational was the Documentation Unit. At the beginning of 1978 the stage was reached that the Institute was going to develop its major function as an inter-disciplinary research unit, and as a policy instrument in the development and direction of research at U.C.B. in general, and to improve the research capacity and capability of itself in general.

The Institute will be required to undertake and coordinate research into problems of policy and procedures of both long and short term concern for Government, the University College and other public institutions.

The research work will be development-oriented and will be designed to focus attention on development in Botswana in its totality and to urgent development issues in particular.

The research training of Botswana graduates and students will be of immediate and main importance in the activities of the Institute.

II. MAIN AIMS OF THE INSTITUTE

The main purpose of the institute is to stimulate, coordinate, implement and follow-up research that will contribute to processes which ultimately will benefit large and less privileged parts of the population of Botswana and/or promote the self-reliance of the country as a whole and/or its peoples.

In order to enable the development and implementation of a self-generated research policy, it is felt that the Institute should give the highest priority to the training of local research staff.

III. FUNCTIONS OF RESEARCH

The research programmes to be carried out under the aegis of the Institute may have the following functions:

- (a) To broaden the knowledge and understanding of the dynamics of development processes in Botswana and Southern Africa.
- (b) Providing recommendations and advice with regard to development issues and problems, both of short and long term concern, to Government, U.C.B. and other public institutions.

* Former National Institute for Research in Development and African Studies.

The function concerning the Government in particular includes two categories of research:

- (1) Research that is complementary to research carried out by government bodies, e.g. in-depth studies additional to national surveys.
 - (2) Research that is anticipating government policies or that is monitoring the implementation of such a policy in an independent way.
- (c) Stimulate and coordinate the training of Botswana graduates and students in order to institutionalise research in the country in general and in U.C.B. and N.I.R. in particular. The moulding of Botswana research staff will ultimately enable the Institute to design and implement its own research policy in the most appropriate way, i.e. by local staff.
 - (d) Provide relevant reaching material for the faculties and departments of U.C.B.

As an integral part of the University College, the Institute will provide relevant teaching material resulting from research programmes, seminars and other activities, to the faculties and departments.

- (e) Provide in an appropriate way relevant information resulting from research activities for special target groups, e.g. population groups, which have a direct relationship with the problem that was investigated.

IV. RESEARCH PRIORITIES

The Institute will give priorities to the following research activities:

- (a) Projects which contain a substantial training component of Botswana graduates and students.
- (b) Projects which are related with educational and/or training activities of faculties and departments of U.B.S.
- (c) Projects which form part of a broad approach of development problems in the country.
- (d) Projects with a multi-disciplinary approach to development problems.
- (e) Projects which aim at improving the living conditions of the less privileged population groups and/or areas of the country.

V. PUBLISHING POLICY OF THE INSTITUTE

In compliance with and as a consequence of the aims of the Institute, the results of research activities carried out under the aegis of the Institute have to be made available to the Institute.

VI. THE DOCUMENTATION UNIT

The Documentation Unit, the first integral part of the N.I.R. to come into existence in 1975, complements and backs up the research and training activities described above.

It continues to build up a highly specialized research library which attempts to acquire research materials out of the « invisible » part of the development literature « iceberg » concerning Botswana and Southern Africa. In this respect, cooperation and division of labour exists with the College library and the Botswana National Archives. Besides this national cooperation, the Documentation Unit is part of the international information networks, which link together major development research and documentation centres in Africa and overseas. Materials are exchanged with at present approximately 100 such centres. An accession list is issued quarterly.

Besides the more « passive » documentation work (processing, cataloguing), the Unit is actively engaged in transforming research information and results by providing special information services such as the compilation of bibliographies, working materials, summaries, etc. The selection and transformation is done on request from individual and/or institutional research projects, as well as with regard to felt needs.

In 1976 the Documentation Unit started with the compilation of a Botswana Research Directory, which included information on completed, current and planned research projects in Botswana, and a reference Section. The Directory 1976 was published in 1977 and it is intended to continue this work, which would eventually result in an annually-published Research Directory. This is seen as a useful instrument for research clearing and coordination.

Concerning the Unit's publication programme, 25 papers have appeared so far. It is planned to continue the publication of occasional research papers. Priority will be given to findings and results which originate from projects carried out within or under the auspices of the N.I.R. It is also planned to produce a social science journal which would provide a forum for the presentation and discussion of Botswana and Southern Africa related research issues.

At present the N.I.R. publications are distributed free of charge among university staff, local scholars, planners and decision makers, as well as to foreign development research and documentation centres. However, it is envisaged that we shall utilize the production and distribution of publications for generating income.

Another major field of N.I.R.'s activities is the mounting and organization of conferences, workshops and seminars. These events will serve as platforms for the dissemination of N.I.R.'s and other agencies' research findings and their transformation into action (in the broadest sense). The target groups to be reached are local and international research personnel and scholars as well as local planners and policy makers. The Documentation Unit has already set an example by collaborating with ENDA/IDEP, Dakar, in the organization of the « Workshop on Rural Environment and Development Planning in Southern Africa » in July 1976, the proceedings of which are presently being published in a joint effort.

The Documentation Unit will be also involved in running and evaluating the methodology seminars referred to above. In this context the Unit intends to produce a social science methodology manual for research personnel which also could be used as teaching material at the U.C.B.

Concomitant with the execution of the activities described above, however, the Documentation Unit emphasizes the training and further education of Botswana counterpoint research fellows in the field of training and research, with the aim of localizing the posts presently filled by expatriate staff. The first counterpart to be trained will start working on 1st March 1978. After an approximately one year on-the-job training period, the staff development fellows will be abroad for a post-graduate degree after the fulfilment of which he/she would return to the N.I.R.