Dear Friends:

On June 5th, 55 people from food production cooperatives in three SADCC (Southern Africa Development Coordination Conference) countries gathered in Harare for a week-long grass roots conference. The objective was to share grass roots experiences, problems and successes and to see if the ground could be laid for further people-to-people exchanges. In fact it seemed to be first, in SADCC, a break with the usual conferences which gather experts and elites to discuss development of the southern Africa region. (Even so there were complaints in some sessions by grass roots participants that bureaucrats and academics were talking too much.)

By evening, 12 Mozambicans from four provinces and from Maputo Green Zones and ten Tanzanians, including two from Zanzibar, had settled into their quarters at the University of Zimbabwe's excellent guest facilities. They were welcomed at a reception hosted by the Zimbabwean delegation representing 20 cooperatives, joined by the Executive and Staff of the Organization of Collective Cooperatives in Zimbabwe (OCCZIM) which co-sponsored and co-planned the conference with AFSC and the University of Zimbabwe Co-op Support group.

Opening speeches the next morning, which highlighted the food crisis in Africa and the key role co-ops could play in solving it. The conference delegates settled down to a briefing on country experiences. In many ways, their eyes were opened to history that they had never heard before. The sharing of experiences had begun.
Country Reports

Mozambique: The Third Congress of Frelimo in 1977 had urged that people be organized into aldeis communais, collective villages, which would be based on agricultural cooperatives. The motive for this emphasis was not only economic but political. It was felt that collective political organizations could build "peoples' power." Cde Angelo Raul, Director of Rural Development in the Ministry of Agriculture and the leader of the Mozambican delegation, explained:

"It is through the cooperatives that the peasants can discuss and help build the country."

The State through the Ministry of Agriculture gives financial support to the family and cooperative sector. A People's Bank for Development lends to co-ops on lenient terms. Centers for Rural Development provide technical training. A recent innovation is to allow most agricultural products the co-ops raise to be sold on the free market prices.

Progress has been slow. There are at present only 200 agricultural production cooperatives with 40,000 members. In rural areas where 12 million peasants live, two million live in 1300 communal villages.

The emphasis now is not to force people into cooperatives. "The peasants have to do it by their own will," Cde Raul said. Development is "very gradual and slow." (Although he did not say so, many critics fault the government for repeating the Tanzanian experience of forcing peasants into communal villages with a consequent loss of support for their related co-ops.) The government is therefore concentrating additional support on the small family farmer who produces 70% of needed food.

Another factor holding back cooperatives is the war. With MNR's armed bandits committing atrocities, kidnap, rapes and killings, the government has had to relocate rural people into more secure areas where there is adequate water or other conditions for production.

Another problem is the attitude of technicians trained in the country's agrarian schools.

"They are not disciplined to work with rural people but are technologists... There is too great an emphasis on organization and technology. We have to form the technician to work with the peasants."

One of the most dynamic sectors of the co-op movement is the Green Zones of Maputo, formed to meet the food crisis in the city. Ninety-five per cent of its members are women. Albertina Damao, vice president of the Green Zones General Union, told of their development in a way that brought heartfelt applause, laughter and enthusiastic support.

"Our men did not want to be told that the women would go and work in cooperatives. But when harvest time came, the women started bringing home the tomatoes, the cabbages, the onions... they were more pleased."

With the strong backing of Frelimo, they got seeds, pumps and tools. Later, the party persuaded the Development Bank to lend the co-ops money for pigs and ducks.
"When we started having pigs... even the men came to ask for employment."

(In the south, most peasant agriculture has been done by women while the men were often employed in the mines of South Africa.)

Today there are 181 cooperatives with 10,000 members. Only a few can afford to pay salaries although sometimes a special case may be made for a single woman.

"If you want to work, you have to give your strength. That is your salary."

At the end of the month, a small distribution goes to each worker.

The General Union has a mechanics' training center especially for youngsters who are unemployed school leavers. It has also organized 14 creches where young women are trained to look after children.

Cde Damao was scornful of the bandits and thieves who interrupt production by night raids:

"These people, who are they? We try to fight hunger but they come and destroy what we are cultivating. But we don't mind. We still carry on. We will never stop... Where are they going to be once the problems are solved? They are Mozambicans but they have sold out."

Tanzania: The cooperative movement in Tanzania, in eclipse from 1976 to 1982, is now in a phase of rebuilding.

The earliest co-ops were promoted in 1932 by the colonial government in order to market African cash crops such as coffee and cotton in Britain and Europe. Marketing and supply co-ops were an alternative to Asian traders who had monopolized buying from Africans.

After independence, the ruling party, TANU, and the government began to mobilize people for cooperatives. People were urged to live in communal villages, which would form the base for collective production, better schools, water and facilities. The Arusha Declaration of 1968 proclaimed a policy of Ujamaa, or self-reliance and voluntary cooperative socialism.

By 1975 more than 8,000 so-called Ujamaa villages had been formed. (Many critics would dispute that these villages were truly UJAMAA in that coercion rather than voluntary persuasion was used. EL) At this point, the government changed policy toward cooperatives. All registered villages were deemed automatically to be multi-purpose cooperative societies while at the same time exercising governmental and party powers.

Then in 1976, all of the regional cooperative unions and primary marketing societies were abolished by law. That left the villages and the apex organization with nothing in between. Parastatals took over marketing.

Following the enactment of a new Cooperative Act in 1982, co-ops grew again. By 1985 there were 4280, of which 1907 are rural primary societies, and 23 cooperative unions had been reestablished. The apex body was re-formed as the Cooperative Union of Tanzania, CUT.
Cde J. Mwabuki of the University of Dar es Salaam outlined problems resulting from the 1976 dissolution of the unions, problems which led to their reestablishment:

- experienced cooperative agricultural specialists were replaced by ineffective crop authority extension staff.
- fertilizers were expensive, often delivered late or to places that didn't require them.
- loans to villages by the Tanzanian Redevelopment Bank, which replaced the Cooperative Bank, went unpaid for a variety of reasons: political loans, poor records, ignorance by recipients of what their loan obligations were.
- producer prices that were low compared to producer costs.
- delays in transport, lack of trucks, congested harbors.
- farmers were not involved in decision-making.

The cooperative movement itself demanded that the cooperatives be reestablished to aid food production. Delegate Philip Ndahi, member of parliament, on the Central Committee of the party and chair of CUT, was one of those who listened to the demands of the farmers and acted as the co-op spokesman in government circles.

According to Cde Mwabuki the new structure insists on the active participation in decision-making of cooperators themselves. A cooperative bank was reestablished in which the cooperative movement has shares and directorships but not the full control they want. Cooperative unions are again responsible for marketing crops and supplying inputs and consumer goods.

Primary societies remain multi-purpose and may embrace as many as six villages scattered over a wide area. But membership is no longer automatic for persons over the age of eighteen.

Zimbabwe: The Zimbabwe collective cooperatives are unique in that the core of the movement is composed of ex-combatants from the liberation war. Many of them had seen or worked on collective cooperatives in socialist countries. They came out of the war with a vision of a new society based on worker-owned and run enterprises.

They knew that if they were to survive in competition with commercial farms and the "old order", they must unite. After two preliminary meetings in 1982, the Organization of Collective Cooperatives in Zimbabwe (OCCZIM) was formed on September 4, 1983 and registered in December. From eight cooperatives in 1982, 77 in 1983, it now embraces 300 collectives (100 more are not members). Peasants, farmworkers and unemployed persons have now joined the collective cooperative movement either by joining collectives whose core is ex-combatants or by forming their own societies.

The apex body now has offices in Harare and three other cities. A six-month Motor Mechanics Course in Bulawayo and administration courses at Kushinga Pikelela school in Marondera teach relevant skills.
Marketing, transport and farm equipment are major problem areas. Although district unions have been formed, they are still at an embryo stage, only one now has trucks and tractors to serve member co-ops. Other hopes are for a cooperative bank and a cooperative college.

One other problem is that the movement has two differing apex bodies.

In colonial days the government fostered marketing and supply cooperatives to assist the better-off African farmers in African Purchase Areas and Tribal Trust lands. In these societies the individual member owns and controls the means of production. The apex body, the Central Association of Cooperative Unions (CACU), represents over 500 primary societies formed to market produce and to bring inputs to the farmers who operate as individual entrepreneurs. (Through USAID, CACU has been able to build an extensive warehousing system at a cost of more than $7 million. EL)

While the government has urged CACU and OCCZIM to unite and form one organization, OCCZIM feels that until CACU is involved in a socialist-oriented collective production system there is no platform on which to build unity. Until there is one apex body, however, Zimbabwe's movement cannot be full members of the ICA, the International Cooperative Alliance.

Another key problem is lack of training and education, as Cain Matema, Chief Training Officer in the Department of Cooperative Development explained:

"(N)ot a single school in Zimbabwe (at Independence) ever taught cooperatives... We took Form 4s... and said 'Go and train, go and advise cooperators.' They had never heard the word cooperatives!"

Even those intellectuals educated in the methods of European cooperative movements were unprepared for the task of training and education for cooperatives in a country where the vast majority of the population are peasants accustomed to small holdings and few modern facilities. At Independence few peasants were educated or even literate. They had few of the skills required by the modern sector. By and large, the hoe and other hand tools were their only implements for farming.

Cde Matema urged OCCZIM to go slow in its zeal for collectivization. He urged them to be very tactful:

"(T)here is no way that you can go out and say, 'All peasants must belong to villages which have become collectives. Come and join collectives. All your your land is together. All your houses, all your cattle belong to the collective.' Remember the Rhodesian propaganda: Communism wants to take away from you your children, your wives, your everything."

Religion and traditional attachment to land that had been in their ancestors' possession for centuries made peasants conservative.

He felt that it would be better to start with where peasants really are and to say to them:

"These bits and pieces, why don't you start by buying a tractor? Plowing together. Why don't you start by marketing your goods?"
This sort of development exists in Plumtree in Matabeleland and Mzarabani in the Zambezi valley, for example.

He pointed out that most peasants in resettlement schemes have chosen Model A, a single plot ownership scheme, rather than collectives.

Cde Matema's talk reminded Cde Babere of Tanzania of his own country's experience. Tanzania had abolished marketing societies as too capitalistic and insisted on production-oriented village societies and parastatal marketing boards.

"We got a lot of problems. A lot of education must be provided in order to make sure you do not make a lot of mistakes that we made."

He felt that Zimbabwe must have a clear policy of fostering a cooperative socialist system of production. Cde Matema acknowledged that in the absence of such a clear policy, CACU-style cooperatives could create a new class of African capitalist farmers.

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSIONS

One of the difficulties in holding small group discussions on an international basis was translation. With few Mozambicans or Tanzanians speaking English, and with few Zimbabweans speaking Kiswahili or Portuguese, small groups had a hard time understanding the issues they were asked to discuss. Discussion was slow, laborious and often unfocused. Consequently, the steering committee decided to switch to country-oriented small groups on selected themes, followed by plenaries where inter-country oriented discussion could take place with the aid of simultaneous translation.

The formula we used was designed to draw out problems and solutions related to them centered on six themes. Here is a summary of what emerged from the discussion:

Finances: Tanzanian and Zimbabwean delegates complained of a lack of financial credit facilities. Commercial banks either don't lend to cooperatives or lay down long and difficult procedures and/or demand high interest rates. Cooperatives therefore find themselves without working capital to buy seed, fertilizers and other inputs or investment capital for equipment such as tractors, transport and so on or for infrastructure such as housing. Nor does state policy create a sheltered scheme for taxation. Co-ops are expected to compete on equal terms with long-established businesses.

In Mozambique this problem does not arise because of the State policy of favorable credit terms for cooperatives.

Sometimes financial problems reflect mismanagement. Production may be disrupted when a management committee is fired in mid-season. Sometimes there is a general lack of responsibility and commitment. A chairman may siphon off funds for his own account or spend foolishly or extravagantly.

Sometimes finances deteriorate when markets are glutted.

"The good times can be bad," Jimmy Moyo of Bulawayo complained. Cabbages produced in abundance can end up rotting when there are no buyers. Pigs end up
being sold at distress prices. In Rungwe, Tanzania, co-ops produced 80,000 tons of bananas but there were no buyers from them either.

When there are droughts or floods, money lenders still want their money back.

Zimbabwe and Tanzania co-ops were clear that a co-op bank of their own was needed, a bank "with a heart" rather than a profit orientation. They also wanted government and party backing for protective laws against commercial bank exploitation. Better producer prices were also seen as a solution although in Mozambique improvements in market prices had to be matched by commodities in the stores if co-ops were to benefit.

One observer commented that glut conditions could be solved if there were a better distribution system and central planning. In Tanzania, Cde Mwabuki observed, cooperatives use a reserve fund to support farmers when prices are abnormally low.

In improving management of finances, a financial system is needed as well as managers with a reputation for honesty. A management committee must prepare a budget broken down by periods for approval by the general meeting. A finance committee should monitor spending, approve any changes over planned levels and devise market and cost-reduction strategies. It should report to members every month. If this system is to work, it requires day-to-day record keeping by trained bookkeepers equipped with books, calculators and adding machines so that the committee sees what is going out and what is coming in. Control also requires periodic audits by internal and external auditors.

District unions can play a role in training auditors, teaching primary societies how to prepare budgets, helping them to prepare loan applications and to develop management skills.

Production and Marketing: Production difficulties often stem from the same under-capitalization referred to under finance. Without shellers, for example, maize crops may be slow to come to market. Without transport, inputs may not be delivered on time or may be too costly. Parastatals are often slower in dealing with co-ops and show no preference in prices for seeds, fertilizers or other inputs when dealing with co-ops.

Managerial skills are also in short supply. Production requires knowledge of agricultural inputs--what fertilizers to use to match crops and soils for instance--ability to plan crops and how to organize and distribute labor effectively. Often co-ops lack a sense of what is commercially viable.

With an acute shortage of foreign exchange in all countries, spare parts are hard to come by. A current problem is a shortage of bags and sacks.

Cooperatives often have difficulty in marketing due to unpredictable or unreasonable pricing. Prices sometimes do not reflect even the cost of production (Tanzania), and there often is no consultation by government when prices are set by parastatal marketing boards (Zimbabwe).

"We grow crops as blind men," Philip Ndaki of Tanzania's CUT complained. "We cultivate crops without being sure of prices."
Marketing is also hampered by a lack of warehouse and storage facilities and refrigerator or freezer equipment.

Although government was often seen as slow and unresponsive, the co-ops felt that apex bodies should press government harder for help in getting more transport, spares, implements and inputs and perhaps in creating special markets for co-op products. Government and NGO's were also seen as key factors in training and education.

A further difficulty in achieving better market conditions is that some crops like cotton reflect international supply and demand. The cooperative movement's production is too small to have much influence at present. Still, it was agreed that the voice of the cooperatives needed to be heard when government bodies deal with price questions.

In Mozambique the key problem is not prices but lack of goods.

"The industry cannot give goods that the peasants need. So it is not the money that is important, for us it is the exchange, for clothes, for things the peasants want."

(Raul)

Education and Training: Perhaps the most educational and dynamic discussion of the conference grew out of a consideration of the role of education and training.

Morris Mutsambiwa of OCCZIM outlined some of the contradictions which Zimbabwe's collectives face:

As a result of the colonial heritage, the educational level of most cooperatives is low. They have little scientific, agricultural or business knowledge. Many ex-combatants sacrificed education to risk their lives for liberation. Many co-ops cannot keep even basic accounts. The highest education level in one co-op is Grade 7 (the secretary).

Cooperators brought up in capitalist-oriented schools and institutions often exhibit individualistic values. Free choice, mobility, gratification of personal whims and a desire for personal "space" are regarded as more important than building community. The nuclear family concept tends toward individual production on small plots rather than toward collective production.

Conflicts also arise around the issue of incentives. The individual member who works harder may receive the same share from the "Big Pot" as one who is slack. Some argue that this kind of equality reduces productivity to the lowest common denominator.

Strong and forceful people often struggle for power and may feel the organization belongs to them rather than the group. One chairman of a co-op, for example, refuses to stand down when defeated in an election. A former sub-chief, he believed the land had been given to him for life.

Farm workers and peasants, even though they may be landless, tend to reject collective production.

In the absence of strong ideological or religious commitment, cooperatives tend to deteriorate with members taking a casual attitude toward collective work and property.
Why then do collectives work at all? Once again, the role of committed ex-combatants with knowledge of collective theory and practice emerged as a key element. Hard times can also open people to new ideas. The unemployed are looking for options. Some successful co-ops come into existence when an owner abandons a business and workers are forced to take over in order to survive. Women are another important element. They are often more cooperative and community-minded than men.

Cde Mutsamwita's paper left many unanswered questions. What role could education play in building a stronger movement? Are small individual plots complementary or antagonistic to collective production?

For Cde Cain Matema the answer lay in the development of the cooperative movement's own bureaucratic apparatus. It must develop its own highly trained professional staff at the apex: market experts, lawyers, auditors and inspectors with salaries competitive with private sector. Coops should be able to compete with private sector in lobbying ministers directly. To be viable businesses, they must have managers, engineers and technicians.

But where was the money for this professionalism to come from?

Cde Bugali of Tanzania cautioned that Zimbabwe needs a deliberate policy of material support to the collective cooperative movement of Zimbabwe. "It is not just a question of leaving the cooperatives to fend for themselves," he said.

Support for training in business and vocational skills comes primarily from nongovernmental sources at present. Zimbabwe Project sponsors a one-year course at Kushinga Pikelela in administration, office practice, bookkeeping, typing and communications English and a carpentry and metalwork course at Adelaide Acres. In Bulawayo a CUSO-sponsored course trains motor mechanics for co-ops. The government, however, has recently been able to strengthen Kushinga Pikelela's staff with cooperantes from the Italian cooperative movement. In addition, it is launching a member education campaign for 400 cooperatives which will focus on basic co-op philosophy, principles and history.

Meanwhile, government staff are themselves undergoing training in bookkeeping, accounting, management and development.

There seemed to be a gap between the rhetoric of Zimbabwe's Government and ruling party and budgetary priorities. A cooperative college which had been proposed for Mutare by the Lands Ministry remains a dream gathering dust for want of funding. Training would have to be done "under the trees", Cain Matema promised. But it would be done.

"The money that is given to collectives is infinitesimal compared to what the commercial farmers get." (Matema)

Meanwhile, one observer pointed out that multinational corporations are "deepening their roots" in Zimbabwe and developing a dangerous paternalistic program for cooperatives.

As in Zimbabwe, training for cooperatives in Mozambique is limited. Short courses are run in various districts on co-op administration, democratic procedures, and accounting. Regional and district administrators are given political training in support of cooperatives. Conscientization of agrarian technicians in their schools is also being carried out to make them sensitive to the needs of
cooperatives and the rural sector. But the process, complicated by the strains of the war, is very slow.

On the other hand, Tanzania has a very extensive cooperative education system. The Cooperative College in Moshi, established in 1962, has trained "thousands of functionaries." There are two to three month courses in bookkeeping, accounting, management, economics, transportation, audits and law. In addition, two-year courses are offered in management and professional accountancy. The college also runs regional courses. Co-operators can also take correspondence courses at home with the aid of radio programs. In addition, the regional development fund conducts on-the-job training.

"Who selects the people to be trained?" a Zimbabwean asked.

In some cases, the Prime Minister's office selects candidates to fit the cooperative movement's requirements. In others, the societies themselves make the selection.

The Tanzanian presentation left the two other country delegations uneasy. So did Cain Matema's explanation of Zimbabwe's training plan.

"Are we talking about training for cooperators or are we talking about training a bureaucratic class which will control cooperatives?" Coordinator Clever Mumbengegewi asked.

Cde Cain Matema defended Zimbabwe's emphasis on training government staff first as necessary for the implementation of policy.

Cde Mshare of the Tanzanian Prime Minister's office explained that "cooperatives are the only means to arrive at socialism in Tanzania." All villages belong to cooperative societies. "Everybody is talking about cooperatives." He denied that the government selected or dictated to co-ops who they should employ.

Still, a Zimbabwean delegate wanted to know, is Tanzania just training managers and accountants while leaving the cooperators themselves uneducated and at the mercy of an elite? This question then raised the further question of whether cooperatives should employ outsiders as professional staff rather than cooperative members.

In Tanzania, clearly, the 23 cooperative unions, the most powerful units in the movement, are managed by professional staff selected by the unions' oversight committee: a manager, a chief accountant, procurement manager, accountant, assistants, experts, cashiers, et al. Primary societies, which may embrace as many as six villages are broken down into committees which oversee various crops: tea, bananas, beans, maize, rice or coffee. If there is not a trained tractor driver among members, they see nothing wrong with hiring in a skilled tractor driver who is not a member. Daily activities can be carried out by employees or by members but under the supervision of a committee member.

For the Mozambicans and Zimbabweans this seemed a shocking revelation. If a co-op is controlled and run by salaried employees who hire non-members to do the work could this be called socialism or a worker-controlled and worker-run enterprise?
Albertina Damao was critical:

"This is very wrong. In the cooperatives those that work must be the members of the cooperative... For the person from outside to come and work in my cooperative, no, we Mozambicans do not accept that.

"... it seems that it is a mixture of cooperatives of socialism and cooperatives of capitalism but in Mozambique we have only one side... To work like this, I am not understanding."

Another delegate added:

"It is the members of the cooperative who are the only ones who choose who is going to do the accountancy, the marketing... We can always ask one of our sons to go and study... when he comes back, he must be a member because we are not bosses. So we cannot pay one to do the work for us. If the Ministry of Agriculture (sends some one to work in the cooperative) the person is going to demand a salary. Then (we) will be like slaves."

Luke Macebo of Plumtree in Zimbabwe warned that "the sons of the rich will get educated and then come and supervise the cooperatives." In his view, all levels of cooperators must be developed and educated if a dominating and controlling elitism was to be avoided. Dr. Joe Made, an observer from the Lutheran World Federation, cautioned that professional qualifications do not guarantee against losses and that the issue was whether key skills were in the hands of cooperative members themselves.

For the Tanzanian delegation the differences of view reflected different stages in the historical development of cooperatives, not divergence from principle. Mozambique was dealing with very small businesses. Zimbabwe's movement was still young. According to a Tanzanian delegate:

"It is because their societies are very young. That is why everybody wants to do the job which I think they would not be doing very efficiently rather than getting the right person to do the right job at the right place."

He pointed out that primary societies are run by village people and the worker are usually members unless an outside skill needs to be hired in. The big unions are necessarily run by highly trained persons. Philip Ndaki explained:

"In (my) region, my union is very rich. We are running our own projects. One of them is a 1.5 billion shilling enterprise. If you don't employ proper personnel, then... theft will take place. If we have industries, we will need engineers. If we don't have them, those industries will go to hell. We employ local people or if they are not available, we employ Indians or Europeans because our industries must be and they are efficient... We pay salaries to these employees but the profits belong to the members."
"To some degree, the discussion seemed to be at cross purposes," Cde Mumbengegwi commented. The Tanzanians were not against upgrading the skills of cooperative members. Nor were the Zimbabweans or Mozambicans denying the importance of expertise and professional skills.

Controversy seemed to revolve around the issue of whether the cooperative movements could develop within their own membership the business skills necessary to succeed or even to survive in a competitive capitalist environment. If it did not manage to do so and do so rapidly, then would outsiders, whether they be government, NGO's or MNC's, "rescue" the situation by bringing in professionals at the expense of democratic control of the movement, presently in the hands of a relatively uneducated membership determined to learn and grow together?

Cooperatives are in a double bind. Their growth out of being a mere survival mechanism on the periphery of the "real" economy may rest on training members in skills they cannot purchase. But once trained, the cooperator who becomes better off educationally may be unwilling to return to the cooperative as a mere member when he or she can command a much higher salary in government or industry. Only 7 of 20 cooperators trained in the course at Kushinga Pikelela, for example, have stayed on in the cooperatives that sent them.

To the Mozambicans and Zimbabweans, the Tanzanian model seemed to show that efficiency may have its own pitfalls. As a cooperative grows larger and wealthier, it may differ little from capitalist relations of production. The members become shareholders in enterprises which are run by salaried bosses who then employ wage labor. Are these worker-managed and democratically controlled businesses? How can this be socialism?

Without a clear commitment by state and party to support a socialist path of transformation through worker-controlled and worker-managed enterprises, a commitment which would involve resources and not just rhetoric, cooperatives would remain an interesting but irrelevant and peripheral experiment or a poverty program for the destitute with no other options, a program to be left as soon as a poor person can get a marketable middle class skill.

A VISIT TO A COLLECTIVE COOPERATIVE. NOW WE SEE WHAT YOU MEANT.

Nothing helps clarify discussion so much as seeing the reality of what has been described in words. And so it proved to be when the conference took to buses on Sunday and journeyed out to Shandisayi Pfungwa (Use Your Head!) collective farm in Marondera. There the cooperators were able to show us 40 hectares of winter wheat poking up green shoots under rotating irrigation sprinklers. (In other seasons the farm grows maize and tobacco as well as fattening cattle,) It was a level of technical sophistication which impressed the Mozambicans, whose own expertise lay in intensive vegetable cultivation. Visiting the vegetable plot, they had suggestions to offer the Zimbabweans. Why were the cabbages so far apart from each other, they wondered?

"Where are the women workers?," the Green Zones women of Maputo wanted to know. "We don't want to hear only from the chairman. We want to hear and meet people like ourselves." They were disappointed to hear that because this was Sunday, the women were tending the children or attending church. But four women from Botswana, who were visiting the farm for a month to see what a cooperative is like, joined the conversation. And, as it happened, some of the co-op members were Mozambicans and soon there were conversations in Portuguese and Shangaan.
"Now we know what you have been talking about," the Tanzanians and Mozambicans said.

OTHER TOPICS FROM SMALL GROUP DISCUSSIONS

Decision-Making

Mozambique. General assembly must approve the crop plan prepared by the management committee. It meets regularly and also whenever problems arise. Prelimo is sometimes called in when problems are too big to solve without outside help.

Zimbabweans wanted to know what happens when a management committee loses the confidence of membership and is dismissed by the general assembly. The Mozambicans said that the old committee stays on to brief the incoming committee for several months. They don't leave. They stay on as workers.

Angelo Raul explained that management committees are sometimes composed of peasants of "social importance" or composed along tribal lines or composed of peasants who are richer in cattle or chickens. "The class struggle is not just at a high level," he said. To get democratic management is a very difficult and slow process, he admitted.

With work operations broken down into brigades with specific responsibilities, it is possible to reward the brigade that achieves the most.

Management meets to review work each week and at the end of the month there is a general assembly to hear management's report.

Zimbabwe. The management committee is elected by the general membership. All committee proposals must be presented at general membership meetings for approval. Minutes are kept and form an important record.

Project leaders meet daily with the production manager to see that jobs are done according to plan. Problems of discipline arise around the definition of individuals' responsibilities. When responsibilities are not clearly defined, communication may break down. Members may leave the cooperative after attending courses. Perhaps one answer might be to provide specifically in the bylaws for a guaranteed period of further service after training.

Many cooperators are unaware of the principles of collectivism and socialism. OCCZIM and the government ministry concerned should assist in arranging membership education.

Tanzania. Decision-making in Tanzania is complicated by the size and geographical spread of the cooperative societies. One village may have as many as 3,000 people in it. The cooperative may embrace several villages spread out over a wide area of undulating land with many rivers.

Consequently, a general meeting of membership is an infrequent and costly affair because money has to be spent on food and transport. Questions that require such a meeting include changes in bylaws, welfare benefits, distribution of surplus or setting aside surplus for development, new member applications and legalizing the budget.

Day-to-day functions rest with a committee member who makes small decisions. Big decisions are left to the full committee or if unresolved at that level, to the assembly.
Conflicts between ordinary members and the management committee can be appealed to the Registrar of Cooperative Societies or, ultimately, to the Minister responsible for cooperatives.

Tanzanian rural societies are multi-purpose. They embrace not simply agricultural production but small industries, retail trade, savings and credit schemes, carpentry and services such as education, transport and health.

Work is organized according to the skills and experience of members under a committee supervisor. The biggest problem is "loitering."

While government prescribes methods of discipline and requires internal audits and inspections, the number of cooperatives far outstrips the number of available auditors. The solution lies in more training of auditors and bookkeepers.

Income Distribution

Tanzania. The general meeting decides how much of the surplus earnings should be used to continue projects or to start new ones after first setting aside reserves required by law and reserves for share refunds, education and other purposes. The remainder is then distributed to members in accordance with how much each member has contributed.

Problems are never experienced in regard to equity of distribution because careful attendance records are kept.

Although the issue was equity in distribution, Zimbabweans wanted to know how much money on average was distributed to members of Tanzania's co-ops. (Very few Zimbabwean co-ops earn enough to have a distribution.)

This was a difficult question to answer on a national basis. Cde Mshare gave an example. He had recently attended a meeting where 600,000 shillings was distributed to 250 members. That sum came to about 240 Zimbabwe dollars apiece. In the case of a recently formed cooperative the results were less--the equivalent of 40-50 Zimbabwe dollars. Mr. Bugali from Iringa cited the case of an old and very good producer co-op in his area in which members got as much as 40,000 shillings (roughly 4,000 dollars in Zimbabwe) plus 600 shillings (60 Z dollars) and housing.

Cde Babere pointed out that cash distribution is not the only benefit received by co-op members. Commodities distributed are important benefits in times of poor harvests.

The Zimbabweans were amazed. "How do they do it so they can have continuous salaries and a better share at the end of the year?," they wanted to know.

Mr. Bugali replied that the cooperative he had cited had been working a long time and had accumulated funds and resources over the years. They include a minimum wage for member workers as a cost of production when approaching the bank for a loan.

Zimbabwe. Most cooperatives in Zimbabwe have never had sufficient income to make it possible to distribute surplus funds. Most don't have share capital although in some cases the demobilization pay of ex-combatants went into the purchase of capital assets such as farms.
A hypothetical case was presented as follows:

$40,000. gross proceeds from crops  
30,000. running expenses  
$10,000. surplus  

Fifteen to twenty-five percent is set aside for reserves for income-generating projects and services such as education. Depreciation may be another five percent. A bonus may be two percent. The remainder is then for distribution according to how much contribution each member has made in days worked.

Careful registers are kept by three members so that absences are either accounted for and excused or deducted.

Mozambique: Distribution of surplus is done at the end of the year or the end of the season after all expenses have been paid. Again according to the number of days worked.

In Josina Machel Co-op in Gaza distribution amounted to 3,200,000 metacais (74,418 Zimbabwe dollars at official exchange rates) in money, 3,000,000 metacais (69,767 Z$) in cereals plus lower prices on food such as chickens, ducks and other animals. The Guevara Co-op in Maputo distributes 1,500 metacais (34 Z$) to each member monthly. Members also do get discounts on prices of produce from the co-op.

As in the other countries, reserves are set aside for housing, stores, better machines, creches and schools. Cash in pocket is not the sole criterion for benefits. Social benefits are equally important.

OTHER ACTIVITIES OF THE CONFERENCE

One evening early on we showed films of Samora Machel's visit to Zimbabwe and Prime Minister Mugabe's life and views. These were very popular. But others we planned to show we were unable to screen due to a misunderstanding of the University's booking system on rooms.

Another evening a popular grass roots drama group from Zimbabwe put on four plays on the role of women in Zimbabwe. Some of the Zimbabwean delegates were embarrassed that their internal problems were opened up to the eyes of strangers and visitors. Others found it very appropriate. Our visitors found the plays very provocative even if they didn't understand Shona. They could understand the action very well.

Monday afternoon was spent shopping, a treat for the Mozambicans and Tanzanians who found Harare a shoppers' paradise. In addition to the 50 dollars in Zimbabwe money the conference allowed to our visiting delegates for a spending allowance, the Mozambique government had provided additional money for its delegates to purchase materials for clothing, boots and shoes, which are in very short supply in Mozambique.

RESULTS.

Perhaps the most important conclusion we came to was the widely expressed view that "this is just the beginning." The Mozambicans were particularly anxious to have the next conference in their country.
The conference resolved in its concluding session to set up an Interim Committee of four members from each movement plus one government representative. It was to meet soon to establish further exchanges:

Country visits and education tours by grass roots cooperators.

Exchanges of newspapers, magazines and literature on projects and programs.

Exchanges of technical expertise.

In addition, the committee was asked to look into the organization of research on how to cooperate in production, marketing trade and technical expertise. It was also asked to investigate linking other SADCC countries into future meetings and cooperative programs.

Zimbabwe was selected as convenor of interim meetings. Each country is to raise its own funds for its delegation's attendance.

With time running short, substantive recommendations were difficult to formulate as final resolutions. The following points were proposed:

1. A cooperative bank should be established in countries where such institutions do not exist.

2. A cooperative college should be established in each country that does not have one.

3. All members have a right to receive financial reports regularly and preferably monthly.

4. Apex bodies were urged to establish transport networks and pre-season market research.

5. Governments were urged to set reasonable prices for produce and to allocate a percentage of foreign exchange to cooperative apex bodies for their procurement needs.

6. Governments were urged to increase support for cooperative education.

CONCLUSIONS

In closing the conference, the Langford Chitseke, Permanent Secretary of the (then) Ministry of Lands, Resettlement and Rural Development pointed to the lack of financing, training and services which impose severe constraints on production under the cooperative system, notwithstanding his government's grants of land to some 30 production co-ops. In his view, training was more important and basic than simple lack of funds.

He recommended that production cooperatives should learn how to manage modern enterprises from the private sector, especially neighboring commercial farms. The private sector in Zimbabwe is keen to start joint ventures with cooperatives, he said.
He argued that in future visits to Mozambique, Tanzania and Angola exchanges should be frank and to the point.

"We must face the real problems, the real issues and with that spirit of togetherness we will succeed."

Our own evaluation of the conference was positive although it is hard to be objective about an event that took a year of scouting, diplomacy, fundraising, logistic planning and hard work.

Clever Mumbengegwi, the coordinator of the conference, felt that the major objectives had been met. There had been a good exchange of views and perspectives. The basis had been laid for future cooperation. He felt, however, that the small groups had not worked as well as they might have. Too many issues had been posed to be fully grasped. "Too much time was spent discussing what to discuss." Assumptions had been also made about the co-op structure of other countries which proved unfounded. In the case of Mozambique, for example, the state acts as apex body and principal funder. This led to misunderstandings.

Cde J. Mwabuki, who had helped to organize the Tanzanian delegation, also felt the conference had been a successful "milestone" in the history of the cooperative movement in the region in sharing common experiences and problems. He felt that the critique of his own country's shortcomings and the discussion of the nature of cooperatives had been particularly useful. The conference could have benefited from being two weeks instead of one.

Cde Angelo Raul of Mozambique felt that the conference was a success but that it could have been more practical. Peasants were not used to "economic jargon".

"We should have been involved in seeing as many cooperatives as we could and even participate in some forms of production. Also cooperators at grass roots should have been more involved. I noted that officials took a leading role.

While I agree with most of the foregoing comments, I would like to add a few points of my own. It was disappointing to me that so few women were chosen to attend the conference as delegates particularly from Tanzania and Zimbabwe (which had only one delegate apiece from women workers who were often praised for their contributions but are still often not elected to leading roles). I also felt with Cde Raul that more on-site visits to co-ops should have been included and earlier in the program. A less academic approach to stimulating group discussion needed to be found perhaps through the use of role plays and dramas.

Another point I would stress is the importance of simultaneous translation equipment. Without it, a three-language conference is really out of the question. We were blessed with a translator from the University's Department of Portuguese Literature and Language, Lucilia Salbany. She pitched in with verve and commitment and enthusiasm that made her the perfect choice even though she is not a professional translator. So too, without Cde Babere and Cde Mshare of the Tanzanian delegation, who volunteered to do English-Kiswahili translation we would have been hopelessly lost.

I want to express special gratitude to HIVOS, CUSO, OXFAM-AMERICA and the Mozambican Government for their generous financial and moral support for the conference. Without them, it would not have been possible. Despite initial
doubts, the Zimbabwe Government proved most cooperative in seeing that the conference was welcomed and that a senior staff person was in attendance for most sessions. Cde Moven Mahachi, now Minister of Lands, Agriculture and Rural Resettlement, gave it his own personal blessing, a blessing which was critical to government approval.

Clever Mumbengegwi proved to be an able and unflappable coordinator for the conference. He kept us moving and was responsible for the shaping of the conference program and for drawing together the team that did the planning. He will soon be completing a fuller official report of the conference. OCCZIM staff provided critical services in logistics, particularly Cde Humphries Runyowa.

As yet the Interim Committee has not met. Perhaps our target of three months after the conference for a follow-up meeting was unrealistic. I am still confident that this important beginning will be continued when the proper groundwork has been done and the correct moment has arrived.