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The need for an operational thrust to human resources development

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1. Introduction

The current debate on human resources development covers a wide range of issues, from the broadly philosophical – the dual role of human beings as both the instruments and the beneficiaries of development, and the meaning of the development concept itself – to the specifically technical and operational – the "how" of the process. But if the debate is to yield concrete results, it must be given a *greater operational thrust*, and focus on a number of areas where concerted action by individual countries and the international community can be expected to produce a measurable impact within a reasonable period of time.

Human resources development should not, however, be viewed in isolation, and we need to consider some of its more important linkages with national economic and social policy. Nor can we ignore the major global influences currently affecting it or likely to do so in the near future. After considering that context, we will examine some of the operational issues and problems involved in putting in place coherent policies, plans and systems for human resources development in response to changing economic and social conditions. Our discussion – which focuses on a limited number of key questions – looks first at issues arising at the *national* level, and then at a number of issues concerning *international action*.

2. Human resources development in the context of social policy and a changing world

Human resources cannot stand apart from other aspects of development. The word "resources" implies the contribution of human skills, talents and aptitudes to achieving wider objectives. Moreover, human resources development policies are largely ineffective when they are not incorporated into a more broadly based social framework which includes policies for employment, agriculture and industrial development, policies bearing upon the

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conditions of working life, and educational and training policies. Indeed some would argue that human resources development is not so much a component of development policy as a way of looking at other aspects of development policy.

Its relationship to other factors may impose conflicting demands on policy-makers. The rationale for setting up national training systems is often expressed in terms of the economic demand, actual or anticipated, for skilled manpower, but such systems are also influenced by a growing recognition of the social role of training. For instance, in the case of young people, national training systems may be expected to compensate for the shortcomings of formal education as a preparation for working life or to provide employable skills that can be used in a variety of economic settings. They may also be viewed as instruments for mitigating the negative consequences of population growth or restricted employment opportunities. Such diverse objectives tend to pull training policies in differing directions and weaken their impact.

Furthermore, the relationship between human resources and national development has undergone significant changes in response to the evolution of the global economy, and planners find themselves confronted by new realities. Instead, for example, of a steady growth of demand for labour in industries using established technologies, the new need may be for smaller numbers of workers with higher-level skills, perhaps combined with elements of entrepreneurship training to support self-employment. The transformation is from relatively static systems, using tried and tested methods, to more flexible approaches able to respond to rapid shifts in skill needs and levels of specialisation.

Demographic pressures on the labour market and on human resources development systems will continue to increase, at least in much of the developing world. The problems are not, however, confined to creating jobs for the millions of new entrants to the labour market. The broader issue is how to direct the energy and enthusiasm of a whole generation of young people into the national development process, rather than let them succumb to the frustration and cynicism that can turn them into a destabilising and destructive force. Hence the need for human resources development efforts to reach those on the margins of or completely outside the existing system, to equip them with at least basic skills and aptitudes to increase their chances of earning a living and of helping to better the lot of their communities.

If human resources development systems to meet these challenges are to be devised, social policy-makers will have to reconsider the fundamental relationship between formal education, the development of skills for working life and the role of wage employment as a means of livelihood. The growing youth population of most countries and the need to retrain workers displaced by structural and technological change require the expansion of human resources development efforts, often in conditions where government expenditure on education and training has already reached its upper limits. The next section examines some of the operational issues associated with the

consequent imperative need to improve efficiency and effectiveness at the national level.

3. Some operational issues at the national level

In concentrating on the most critical short-term operational issues we do not mean to suggest that longer-term transformation is not important. There is obviously a close relationship between specific actions and the society's value system, culture, attitudes (towards work, for instance) and structures that constitute the general framework within which those actions will succeed or fail. There is also a growing awareness of the impact of changing social values on human resources development, as there is of the importance of the latter in bringing about these changes.

Nor should the potential for using labour market mechanisms, such as differential remuneration and labour mobility, to accelerate social change be minimised. If, for instance, manual labour was rewarded at rates approaching those for certain white-collar occupations, social and personal attitudes towards blue-collar jobs, and skill acquisition for such jobs, could change quite rapidly – a good example of the interdependence of human resources development and other aspects of social policy.

Incorporating the human resources element into national development

Despite growing recognition of the significance of human resources for virtually every aspect of development, much remains to be done to "sensitise" those responsible for development policy, planning and implementation to their parallel responsibilities in that regard.

The problem, essentially, is that human resource questions are often artificially isolated from the mainstream of economic development and to some extent even from broader social issues. How many economic planners pay serious attention to the availability of suitably skilled manpower, including managers, when formulating policies for industrial expansion? How many targets for improved health care, shelter or agricultural output are based on a critical examination of the human resources needed at all levels for their attainment? And even if the human factor has been considered, how often is it translated into a specific plan to develop skills for which the necessary resources are allocated?

The manager in charge of project implementation knows only too well that the availability of suitable skills is a key determinant of success or failure, but even his attitude is likely to be: "My job is to build a dam/maintain a network of feeder roads/extend an irrigation scheme/service a network of rural health centres/run an administrative district; human resources development is somebody else's job." Where sectoral ministries – industry, public works, health, housing and so forth – have felt the need to provide skilled manpower for their programmes, their reaction has often been to establish

training centres, which in many cases quickly become isolated from the main project effort, thus perpetuating the notion of the marginal role of human resources development.

This points to the need for a major change of attitude on the part of skill users. Concern for human resources can and should be translated into a perspective, a way of looking at problems of development. In other words, just as an environmental impact analysis is increasingly accepted as an indispensable part of project planning, so a form of "human resources impact analysis" should be built into development policy formulation and project planning.

This practice should be followed at all levels. National development plans often contain a chapter in which the *principle* of human resources development is recognised as the *sine qua non* of development in general. Much rarer is the plan in which targets of economic and social development are seen as attainable only if certain clearly defined human resources targets are also met, and in which specific provision for that purpose is made. The sensitising of national development planners should aim at creating a conviction that the job of specifying human resources targets and of planning for their attainment is, despite all its inherent difficulties, essential to the success of development efforts. Thus, whether one is dealing with a short-term emergency programme or a longer-term regional or sectoral development plan, the human resources component must be incorporated from the outset, for without it nothing, not even emergency aid, is going to work for very long.

The operational prerequisites are: first, the fostering of greater human resources "awareness" among sectoral and regional planners and project designers, supported by appropriate budgetary allocations; second, recognition that planners and project designers must be qualified to determine manpower and skill implications with some precision; third, efforts to improve the availability and flow of information on skill needs and skill supply and to improve local-level co-ordination between development agencies and the skill supply system.

Of course the responsibility for building such relationships is not unilateral. It is imperative that human resources development planners establish *horizontal* linkages with other sectors and actively seek out the best available information on manpower and skill needs. The criterion of *relevance* (to society and its broad aims, to local needs and development aspirations) is critical, and needs to be applied by human resources development planners to all aspects of their work. At the same time *vertical* linkages with both macro- and micro-level policies are essential. Human resource policies must reflect, support and be guided by the main features of national economic and social policy, and should not be interpreted solely in terms of training, narrowly defined.

Labour market policies, too – for example those concerned with mobility, remuneration, job security and advancement – can help to create a

climate conducive to the promotion of certain types of skills development through the transformation of social attitudes. Policies on the provision of vocational guidance also have an important role to play in this process, and in minimising supply and demand imbalances. Other relevant areas of social policy include health, nutrition and shelter. There is a need to translate into operational terms the relationships between components of economic and social policy so that the incorporation of the human resource element into national development efforts is realistically perceived and effectively implemented.

Demand considerations in human resources development

Human resources development policies and systems seem increasingly obliged to accommodate both the "pull" of the labour market (for specific and changing kinds of skills) and a growing social "push" for skills training to fulfil a number of roles not directly related to labour market demand.

The necessity of developing tools for the assessment of training needs at all levels of development and investment planning has a number of far-reaching implications for national authorities (as well as for international aid organisations). In the first place, recognition of the importance of human resources has to be translated into action. Funds must be allocated for human resources development planning, and personnel be trained to carry it out in a professional manner, whether on a full-time basis or as one of the responsibilities of sectoral planners, project directors and others concerned with development and investment. This suggests that national authorities should devote more attention and resources to developing and maintaining their capacity for training needs assessment in the context of labour market demand.

Secondly, given rapid shifts in the skill profile of the labour market due to structural and technological change and a generally more volatile economic and social climate, there is a need to move away from heavy dependence on mechanistic techniques of manpower planning and skill demand forecasting to the more realistic practice of regularly reporting, analysing and highlighting imbalances in labour and skill supply and demand in different sectors, occupations and areas. In other words, there is a greater need for such pragmatic techniques as regular labour market signalling and the corresponding orientation of analysis to problem solving.

In addition to concerning themselves with the *quantitative* aspects of skill demand (i.e. how many lathe operators, tractor mechanics, supervisors, managers, etc., will be needed, when and where) national training authorities are having to adjust to the demand for a much wider variety of levels and types of skills. Instead of requiring specific training for a "standard" occupation, current demand in many countries is for workers who possess a broader technological background on the basis of which they can acquire "customised" skills to meet the specific – and changing – needs of their job. For the worker himself, this new type of training opens the way to greater

occupational mobility and should lighten the retraining burden so often associated with structural adjustment.

Of course this broadening of the skill base is needed to support not only technologies and processes that are new to a region, an enterprise or a worker but also those that are new in an absolute sense. Rapid technological change, in particular the application of microcomputers to industrial processes – computer-aided design and robotisation – is affecting the job content and training needs of many existing and potential occupations. Without a reorientation of human resources development policies to accommodate technological change and innovation, countries run the risk of reinforcing the tendency towards polarisation of the workforce into the "technologically literate" and the "technologically illiterate", at the same time as they experience shortages in the critical skills needed for the application of new technologies. New management skills and aptitudes are also required to master the process of technological change and innovation, and to plan, organise and direct the activities of a "technologically literate" workforce. Many of the traditional boundaries between the technical and the managerial aspects of work are breaking down, which implies – in some cases – a radical departure from the conventional views of the manager's role and from established practice in management training and development.

At the same time human resources development planners and skill providers are coming to realise that it is totally unrealistic to develop manpower policies and plans that disregard the needs of the informal sector, and to make skill forecasts that take no account of income generation through self-employment or of the needs of rural communities to improve their living standards. Likewise the potential of entrepreneurship training for promoting self-employment and employment creation in the small enterprise sector should be recognised and appropriate provisions made – while recognising of course that other forms of support for small enterprise development may also be needed.

The overall imperative is to provide human resources development planners with flexible methodologies – and the expertise to use them – so that they can keep track of manpower and skill demand when and where it arises, regardless of sector (formal or informal) or level; and with facilities for passing on such information quickly to skill providers, who, in their turn, must have the flexibility to adjust their training at fairly short notice.

A brief comment should be added about the social "push" on human resources development systems. We are witnessing the collapse of the somewhat simplistic notion that formal education responds to the "social pressure" for human resources development – by providing general education and the "life skills" of literacy and numeracy – while skills development (training) is entirely a function of labour demand. A related and equally fallacious assumption is that the vocational training system transforms the outputs of the general education system into useful inputs for the labour market along a well-ordered learning continuum.

The current reality is quite different. A very high proportion of young people in developing countries never go to school, and of those who do many drop out before they have acquired a firm grasp on literacy. Efforts to "vocationalise" curricula or to combine education with work experience have also often failed to produce the expected results. Vocational training systems are therefore obliged to cope with growing numbers of young people who lack an adequate basic education and whose prospects in the formal labour market are, as a consequence, extremely poor. However, since most of these systems and institutions were not designed with a view to overcoming youth unemployment or dealing with school drop-outs, human resources development planners are having to reorientate the training they provide towards new "markets" (principally training for income generation and self-employment) and new objectives (for example, providing the broader-based, flexible training needed to adapt to technological change or, conversely, imparting a more limited employable skill).

Making better use of the skill supply system

Perhaps the most obvious area for closer collaboration is between training institutions and skill users. Training centres are not always very successful in determining sectoral or local skill requirements, either quantitatively or qualitatively; they tend to deliver a standard range of courses in a limited range of occupations (sometimes displaying a sublime indifference to the market for their graduates); they posit technological or production environments that have more to do with the machines in their workshops than with the technology in use locally; the neat occupational and organisational divisions reflected in course structuring and much training material are not typical of many smaller enterprises, especially in the informal sector. Enterprises complain that the training offered is too specific, or is not specific enough; that there is too much theoretical content, or not enough; that trainers lack sufficient practical experience; and so on.

The solution to many of these difficulties lies in fostering a partnership between training institutions and skill users, a partnership recognised and encouraged by national training authorities or those with overall responsibility for human resources development. This implies a *shared responsibility* for training that can be exercised in a number of ways, including *(a)* alternance training, whereby trainees spend periods in both training centres and the workplace; *(b)* training centre assistance to apprenticeship schemes, which may also involve periods of in-centre training; and *(c)* other forms of training centre assistance to in-plant training, for instance analysing training needs, training instructors and developing testing criteria and training materials.

Through such arrangements training institutions and skill users develop a clearer understanding of each other's needs, potential and problems; each performs those aspects of the training task for which it is best fitted and equipped (the obvious example being in-centre initial mastery of particular

industrial skills and their theoretical components; in-plant adaptation to particular machines, processes and technologies and to the real working environment). Training centre staff can update their technical knowledge and refresh their practical experience through periods of attachment in industry; enterprises can obtain assistance in identifying their training requirements and developing their capacity to meet them. Most importantly, the training problems posed by rapidly changing technologies can be partly overcome by using the equipment installed in client enterprises.

Of course, the partnership may not develop so easily or fruitfully as suggested above. For one thing, under existing conditions most arrangements of this type are confined to the often narrow modern sector; furthermore, few organisations are willing to train workers in excess of their own probable needs, and in periods of economic, structural or technological transition even these needs are difficult to forecast with any degree of assurance. Moreover, establishing similar arrangements with or on behalf of entrepreneurs in the small enterprise or informal sector is often much more difficult; and yet it is virtually essential since few smaller enterprises have the resources, experience and expertise needed to organise systematic and effective training on their own.

The policy aspects of this partnership are, however, probably the most important. Firstly, human resources development planners have a responsibility to promote and support the supplier-consumer partnership through measures such as legislation and various forms of incentives including, where appropriate, grant/levy schemes. Secondly, *co-ordination* between all the elements in a country's skill supply system is a prerequisite for an effective and efficient human resources development policy and the arrangements that support it.

Of course the need for co-ordination and better exploitation of available resources and expertise is not restricted to the training institution-enterprise interface, though the latter serves as a good example. There is need for co-ordination and more efficient use of resources among the multiplicity of training activities carried out under various departments of government, even if, as it is argued, they each serve their particular sectoral purposes. There is likewise a need to take into account the contribution of private training institutions, ensuring wherever possible that they train to nationally acceptable standards and can participate in national testing and certification schemes.

Cohesion in human resources development planning and policies, and co-ordination and comprehensiveness in the training delivery system, are indispensable. It is not always easy to achieve these goals, as there are often strong vested interests militating against any one body being given overall responsibility for the co-ordination of training. Indeed, if responsibility for co-ordination is interpreted as centralisation of responsibility for training itself, the effort is almost bound to fail. The role of co-ordination in human resources development is to ensure that all the components in the skill supply

system are functioning *(a)* in accordance with national policies and, where appropriate, national standards; *(b)* with recognition of their contribution by human resources development planners, and with support and assistance from central and local government; *(c)* in a manner that complements and enhances the work of other components; and *(d)* in close co-operation with other development policy instruments.

Overcoming practical obstacles to effectiveness in human resources development

Financing of human resources development. In many countries, as already noted, public expenditure on training has reached its upper limits. If the burden is to be eased, there must be a change of attitude towards financing that will result in a more equitable sharing of training costs between skill providers and skill users. This can take the form of sharing the training task itself or obliging skill users to help finance the necessary facilities through grant/levy systems, skill development funds and similar arrangements.

Where the supply of trained manpower is a critical element in capital investment projects, special provision should be made for financing related human resources development activities from investment funds. At the same time the tendency to set up new training facilities – when existing ones may well be underutilised – should be examined critically. Similarly, if new "social" roles are attributed to public training institutions – for example in providing basic income-generating skills to large numbers of school drop-outs or the illiterate – then a policy decision to divert resources from the formal education system may be required. A clearer perception of the role of publicly financed training within overall human resources development policies and provisions will in turn illuminate the issue of the resources to be allocated to it.

Improving the cost-effectiveness of training. There is a need to pay more attention to the organisation and management of training, an area that demands both resources and appropriate skills – and, in many cases, a training effort. Much also remains to be done in fostering low-cost, innovative approaches to training, although the shift towards modularised instruction and competency-based training is yielding useful results. These approaches, together with the growth of techniques for self-instruction and autonomous group learning, are helping to improve the capacity utilisation of training institutions and to achieve greater programme flexibility. In the long term they also reduce overall costs. Finally, since most training institutions are finding it impossible to keep up with the rapid pace of technological change, it is essential to promote active collaboration with industry so that training in the use of "high-tech" equipment can be carried out either in the enterprise or in common facilities (such as an industry-supported CAD/CAM training centre).

Extending the scope of training. Special delivery systems are needed to reach the informal sector and rural areas and thereby bring opportunities for skills development to those reluctant or unable to go where training is to be found. A variety of distance-learning techniques should be encouraged, combined where appropriate with an expansion of mobile training facilities to provide practical instruction. There is a need to look closely at possibilities for utilising school premises and their facilities for skills development activities, perhaps in conjunction with distance-learning approaches, for the benefit of the community at large. Where there is a pressing need to make large numbers of people alive to the role they can play in overcoming development problems – for instance to provide the community with the rudiments of knowledge on basic hygiene and sanitation – the use of mass media should be promoted. Such approaches should be brought into the mainstream of human resources development efforts and closely co-ordinated with more conventional delivery systems.

Improving the quality and effectiveness of trainers. A partnership with clients would provide opportunities for craftsmen, technicians, supervisors, managers, extension workers and other practitioners to inject their skills and experience into institution-based training, and for trainers to benefit from periods of technical updating. But the scope for such a partnership will remain limited if steps are not taken to improve the status and employment conditions of trainers. Low salaries and poor career prospects often make it difficult to recruit or retain competent staff with sufficient practical experience and the ability to innovate, and few incentives are offered to take on work in rural areas or urban slums. Insistence on formal qualifications, or the payment of lower salaries to those without them, creates obstacles to using skilled workers in a training role, thus depriving training bodies of valuable first-hand knowledge of what skills are actually in use. The low status accorded to trainers can be said to typify the disregard for human resource questions that until recently has characterised much development policy.

Enhancing the role of the social partners

Participation in development by those most affected is nowadays considered indispensable. Oddly enough, however, in human resources development (where beneficiary involvement ought to be fairly easy), little appears to have been done to involve the client (the trainee or the skill user) in determining what ought to be done, and how. To ask a few pertinent questions: How often are skilled workers consulted on the content of vocational training courses? What voice do young people have in the design and implementation of special programmes for out-of-school youth? How closely involved are employers with the local training institutions? Do representatives from the informal sector have a chance to influence the scope of training for self-employment?

The majority of national training institutions have set up some form of advisory body on which employers' and workers' organisations are represented. But experience indicates that many of these bodies meet infrequently and have little authority. A much more active role for employers' and workers' organisations should be envisaged: indeed such organisations have a vital role to play in persuading enterprises to take a greater interest in training and to share the responsibility for skills development. Workers' organisations could be closely involved in programme design and in demonstrating the benefits of higher skill levels in terms of improved job opportunities and higher wages. Furthermore, the involvement of trade unions in human resources development activities would help to create a climate of acceptance for training efforts, particularly in potentially delicate areas such as the expansion of apprenticeship schemes, and could draw attention to the need to incorporate subjects such as industrial safety into skills training programmes.

Many employers' organisations already run educational programmes, mainly in the fields of labour legislation and industrial relations, and trade unions organise worker education programmes, again mainly in the area of industrial relations, collective bargaining and trade union organisation. There is obvious scope here for utilising this experience and potential to provide skills training that responds directly to perceived needs.

Training offered by employers' and workers' organisations should be eligible for grants under grant/levy systems, and public facilities should be made available for trainer training, the development of training materials, and trade testing and certification. Dialogue between the social partners on the formulation of human resources development policy should be seen as one of the most effective means of designing workable responses to real needs.

4. International action through technical co-operation

A prime focus of international technical assistance in human resources development should be those national mechanisms that facilitate a more *co-ordinated approach* both to national action and to supporting international aid. More emphasis needs to be placed on international assistance for the all-important tasks of formulating human resources development policies that are comprehensive, realistic and practicable, and of establishing truly effective co-ordinating structures backed by fast-acting information systems. External aid needs to be considered not only in relation to individual sectors but also intersectorally. An essential first step, of course, is to bring home to high-level policy-makers the need for such mechanisms and structures. Once that is achieved, however, it should be easier to gain support for technical assistance to develop *national capabilities* for the planning, implementation, co-ordination and evaluation of human resources development, including the preparation of appropriate legislation, standards and certification systems, and financial support measures.

It is, of course, extremely difficult to formulate a coherent external technical co-operation policy for human resources development without a parallel national policy and structure. One approach might be through national "aid co-ordinators" who, while dealing with overall aid co-ordination, would be assigned special responsibilities in the fields of education and training. Such an arrangement might indeed constitute a starting-point for international technical assistance, since in many cases it may be necessary to begin by strengthening national capacities for co-ordinating aid in human resources development.

National *human resources development aid co-ordinators* would ensure, first of all, that *all* external aid projects had a *professionally* prepared manpower and human resources development "impact analysis". Where that analysis revealed unmet manpower and skill requirements, the next task would be to determine which skill needs could be met from internal resources and which would require external aid to build up local capability. Secondly, they would play a role in *sensitising donors* to the importance of a co-ordinated human resources development strategy. One way to do this would be to hold periodic human resources development aid "workshops" at which donors and major clients met representatives of national human resources development planning and co-ordination bodies. The main objectives would be: to ensure maximum complementarity between technical assistance efforts in human resources development; to avoid duplication and identify significant gaps; to establish priorities; and to achieve a necessary balance between interventions to overcome here-and-now problems and longer-term action to prevent the same problems arising in future.

Improved co-ordination should also help to achieve a better balance between the *components* of external aid for human resources development. Lack of a clear aid strategy and fragmentation of donor inputs have led to time lags between capital inputs for human resources development and the availability of expertise, training software, staff training, etc. All too frequent are the case histories of expert teams who are in place but have no workshops in which to begin training, or of effective work in curriculum and software development going to waste because of a shortage of instructors (or because they are absent on overseas fellowships). The problem lies partly in the management of individual projects; but many projects have a multisectoral or interdepartmental dimension offering scope for improved co-ordination. The difficulties may arise from decisions on resource allocations that could have benefited from the broader vision of an "aid co-ordination workshop".

As regards technical co-operation among developing countries (TCDC), the view still seems to be prevalent that if the required resource – expertise, material, etc. – is not available locally, then it must be sought in developed countries. This is a mistaken view which needs to be corrected, first, by creating an awareness of resources available in a particular region or group of countries and, second, by facilitating an exchange of experience that will

demonstrate that local resources may prove to be more appropriate and more effective. Despite much rhetoric on the subject and lip-service to the principle, TCDC rarely seems to get off the ground without some external impulse. Here there is an opportunity for a more coherent external technical assistance strategy to take into account the potential of TCDC and to allocate appropriate resources. To cite an example from Asia, some years ago the ILO and the UNDP helped to found the Asia and Pacific Skills Development Programme (APSDEP). While APSDEP enjoys financial and technical support from these organisations, the Government of Japan, the Asian Development Bank and other sources, its major resource is the expertise and experience available through the national training services, which act as its country focal points and as the "lead institutions" for TCDC activities. Such activities might be even more effective if human resources development aid co-ordinators bore in mind the potential of national institutions for participating in TCDC, and for their countries to benefit from it, given the "pump priming" provided by relatively modest external assistance.

What, for their part, can *technical assistance donors and agencies* do to improve the impact of their work? Let us single out a few of the more important steps they can take.

1. They can upgrade their *"institutional memory"*, so as to reap the benefit in planning and implementing technical co-operation of acquired experience, which often proves stubbornly inaccessible when wanted. Prerequisites for developing an institutional memory include a frank evaluation of the whole process of identifying precise needs for assistance; the way projects were designed and negotiated; the appropriateness of their objectives; and the practical issues that influenced success or failure. This evaluation should form part of an efficiently organised and easily accessible data base.

2. They can guard against obsolescence and ensure free access to new ideas by establishing working contacts on a regular basis with *"centres of excellence"* and with high-calibre *professionals in human resources development* in both developed and developing countries. These contacts can be cemented through the involvement of centres of excellence in technical assistance work, through joint activities in applied research, through the establishment of networks for implementing work programmes, and by encouraging the establishment of information systems in human resources development.

3. They can actively pursue a policy whereby their technical co-operation activities in human resources development are inspired and guided by international *norms and standards*, such as those contained in ILO instruments – standards that aim, for example, at promoting equal access to training for women, ethnic minorities and the disabled; at ensuring that apprenticeship schemes and training in the informal sector do not become merely a source of cheap labour; at incorporating into training activities

instruction in occupational health and safe working practices, and social and civic education in general; and at ensuring that those trained will become responsive agents in the production process and in development as a whole.

4. They can help to strengthen the administrative and technical capacity to backstop and follow up both policy and operational aspects of their technical co-operation activities. Not only is this essential to the proper functioning of ongoing projects, it also supports the growth of institutional memory by ensuring the evaluation of project experience and the translation of lessons learned into guide-lines for future action.

5. Finally, they can use all the means at their disposal (ranging from desk research to in-depth needs assessment missions and a variety of ongoing contacts, formal and informal) to remain in touch with the real development priorities of their partners and the general environment (with its constraints and potential) for technical co-operation in human resources development.

Conclusion

If we are to reap full benefit from the revived interest in human resources as a critical element in sustained and equitable growth, it is essential to address some of the practical difficulties that have often frustrated the emergence of the necessary professionalism in human resources planning and implementation. The preceding discussion has drawn attention to some of the issues involved at the national level and has suggested ways in which international technical co-operation can assist in this task.

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