

III The Mission Approach

167 Human resource development covers a broad and complex agenda which involves the institutions of central and local government, the private sector, voluntary associations, and individual citizens both as participants and beneficiaries. It is an on-going process; its success defined by qualitative improvements in the lives of people. It requires long-term commitment and leadership on the part of government extending beyond the lifetime of individual leaders and parliaments.

168 Human resource priorities vary. The Commonwealth includes states where more than half of all young people go to university or college, and others where more than half of all children never go to school at all and where many of their parents are constantly short of food and shelter. The priorities for action cannot be the same for both.

169 Yet whatever the context the five key strategies outlined in this short report hold firm. Human resource development does require well-managed government. Policies and programmes which help to release the potential of women and girls are critical and strategically important components of human resource development in all societies. Governments do have basic responsibility for defining, leading, and delivering human resource development programmes; but partnerships within and beyond government give added strength, credibility and purpose in meeting the specific and local needs of individuals and their communities. Partnerships help to release resources. Whilst government is the main provider, all available resources, whether financial or non-monetary, need to be harnessed in support of human resource development. Furthermore, no human resource development strategy in the 1990s can fail to utilise and strengthen science and technology. Ensuring that these strategies work in concert is the central challenge for government; how to get people, capital and institutions to work in harmony to achieve a common end.

170 Defining common ends and setting achievable targets is a central task for governments. But the history of development over the past forty years is littered with targets which have been set but not met; in some instances targets which never had any chance of being met. Yet attainable targets need to be set; especially in respect of the basic preconditions of life. To quote Anand and Sen (themselves quoted in the UNDP Human Development Report, 1993 p. 107):

The important question concerns the lives that people lead – what they succeed in being or doing rather than the goods they consume... Do they have the capability to live long? Can they escape preventable morbidity? Do they avoid illiteracy? Are they free from hunger and undernourishment? Do they enjoy personal liberty and freedom? These are the basic features of well-being which derive from looking at people as the centre of all development activity.

171 The World Summit for Children (1990) set some international targets in response to questions of this type. **Goals for Children and Development in the 1990s** were recommended for implementation by all countries where they are applicable, with appropriate adaptation to specific national situations. Twenty seven goals were identified in respect of reduction of mortality, women's health and education, nutrition, child health, water and sanitation, basic education and children in difficult circumstances.

172 Both the World Summit for Children and the World Conference on Education for All (1990) have resulted in countries developing national plans, setting targets and putting programmes in place (see Box 16). These plans address important elements in the human resource development agenda. In another context, UNDP notes in its 1992 Annual Report that 28 developing countries (including Bangladesh, Botswana, Ghana and Pakistan)

Box 16 The Children Cannot Wait – Ghana

Ghana's National Programme of Action (NPA, 1992) on the follow-up to the World Summit on Children is a ... clear recognition of the importance of human development in the overall process of economic growth... Setting down strategies for education, health, nutrition and population growth for a decade from 1993, it [The Children Cannot Wait] states the following major human development goals for the year 2002:

- ❖ universal access to basic education and completion of primary education by at least 80 per cent of children in the age group 6-12 years
- ❖ reduction of adult female illiteracy by one half
- ❖ reduction of infant and child mortality rates by 35 per cent; from 77 to 50 per 1,000 live births and from 155 to 100 per 1,000 live births, respectively
- ❖ reduction of severe and moderate malnutrition among children five years and under by one half
- ❖ reduction in the proportion of children in especially difficult situations such as those abandoned or orphaned
- ❖ reduction of maternal mortality by one third
- ❖ increased access to safe water supply in rural areas, from 50 per cent to 90 per cent of the population
- ❖ universal access to safe water disposal facilities from a starting base of 74 per cent of the population
- ❖ widespread acceptance and observance of the Convention on the Rights of the Child

Source: Elizabeth M King, Paul Glewwe and Wim Alberts, PHREE Background Paper, World Bank 1992

have sought UNDP assistance in applying the human development concept to their national development plans. Twenty nine Sub-Saharan African countries are participating in the UN/World Bank Social Dimensions of Adjustment initiative. There are 48 signatories to the Jakarta Plan of Action on Human Resources Development in the ESCAP Region which includes the recommendation that plans of action for human resources development should be formulated and executed at the national level.

173 UNDP's Human Development Report 1993 (pp.19-20) recognises ten significant steps in putting a human development strategy into place:

- (a) Prepare a national human development report (circumstances, statistics and policy concerns).
- (b) Prepare a human development country profile.
- (c) Improve human development statistics.
- (d) Set human development targets (qualitative as well as quantitative).
- (e) Cost the targets.
- (f) Clarify who does what.
- (g) Establish who will pay.
- (h) Design a national strategy.
- (i) Seek external co-operation.
- (j) Build political alliances.

174 This plan of action represents a complex process. No country starts with a new and clean slate. It operates within existing political and economic circumstances. It is a process which in many countries will outlive the present incumbents of political power. It may require shifts in resource allocations, the benefits of which will not be realised for 10 to 20 years and will not be easily measurable because they are qualitative rather than quantitative in character (for example, participation in local politics, life-long learning). It will involve alliances with partners who have had a tradition of uneasy relations with government.

175 The ten steps are technical in nature. However, in part or in sum they are unlikely to be productive unless they are a part of a vision and a commitment which stems from the leadership of government and in many countries from the head of state.

176 One of the things that has impressed our Group is the evidence from rich and poor countries alike of concerted efforts to address specific issues and problems within a set of clearly defined human development goals. This requires some new ways of thinking on the part of governments; new partnerships, new mechanisms and new approaches in relationship to those from whom it draws its authority.

177 In this context the Working Group took particular note of the concept of national missions; an approach exemplified by the technology missions developed in India in the 1980s and developed elsewhere subsequently (see UN Advisory Committee on Science and Technology for Development, 1990).

178 The application of the mission approach to human resource development deserves the attention of governments. National missions for human resource development offer a credible and manageable way of addressing national priorities in a comprehensive but carefully targeted manner. Missions do not involve the creation of new and elaborate bureaucratic machinery. They are a means of utilising existing resources and administrative infrastructure more effectively; of harnessing the institutions of government to meet agreed ends. Their process entails a greater diffusion of responsibility within the system which itself contributes to human resource development.

Figure 1: Defining a national human resource development mission

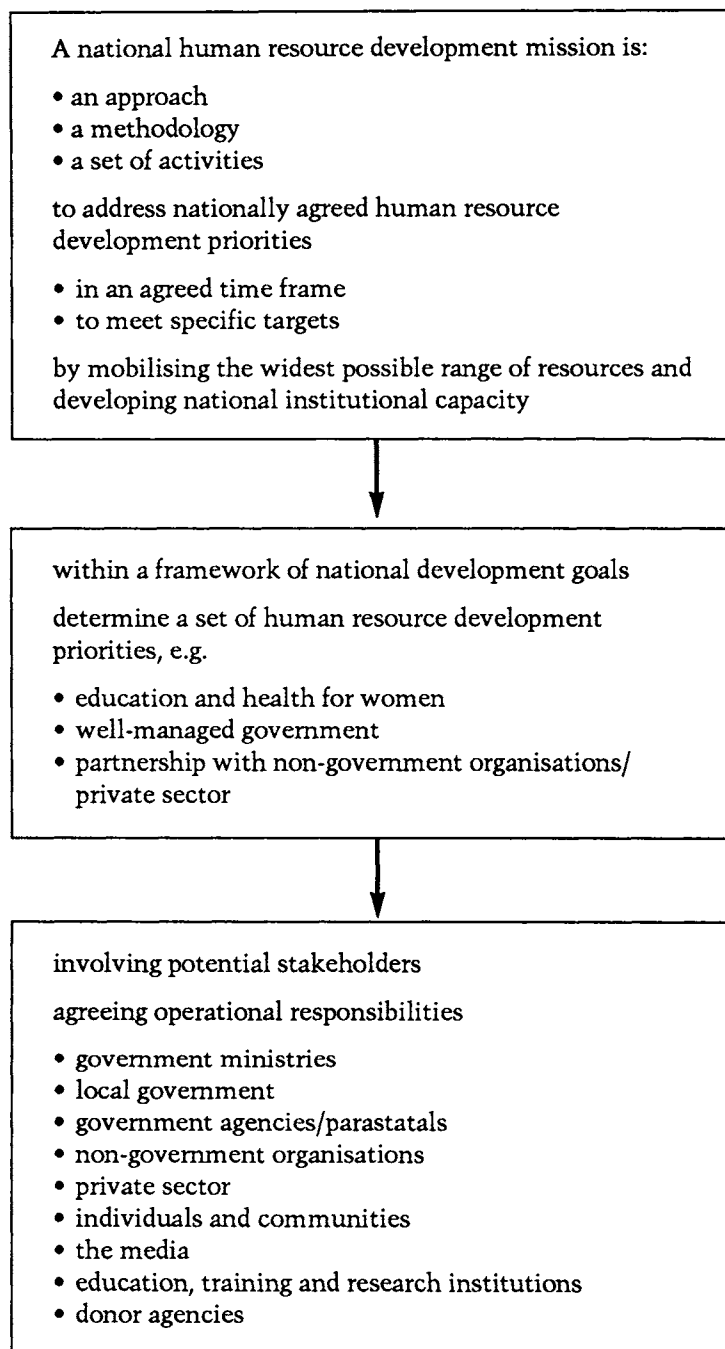
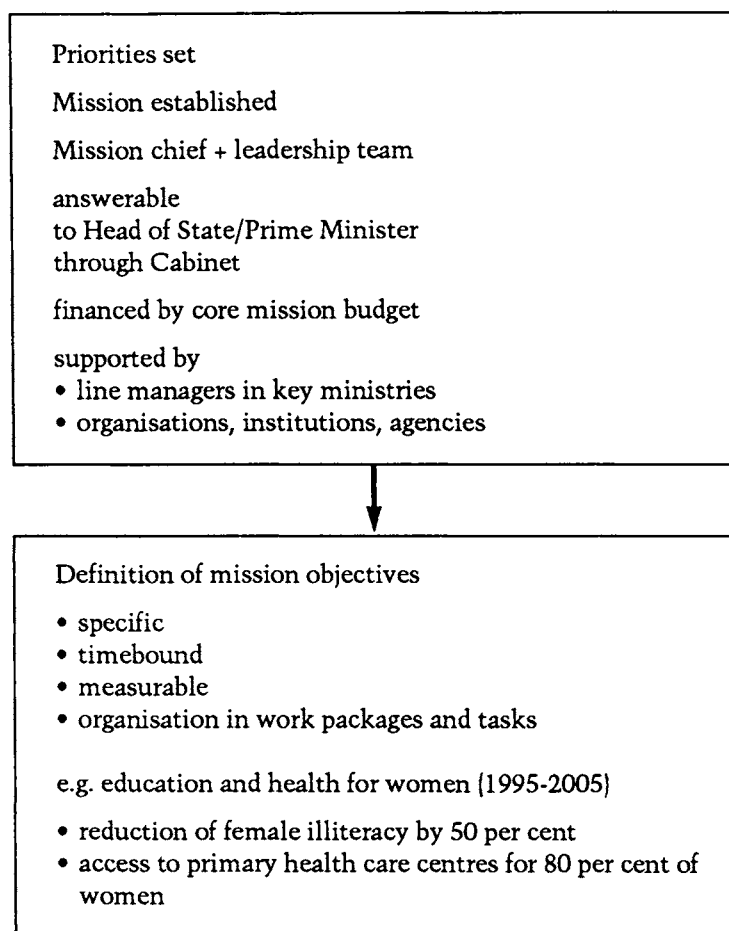


Figure 2: The organisation of a national human resource development mission



179 Figures 1 and 2 illustrate how a national mission might be conceived and organised. It highlights a number of central characteristics of the mission approach:

- (a) The mission is established by the highest level of government.
- (b) It is directly answerable to the head of state, prime minister or cabinet, who gives strong public commitment to the mission; and to a co-ordinating body made up of all the principal stakeholders relevant to the mission's focus of activity.
- (c) It is headed by a person of achievement and public acceptability, with access to the highest levels of political authority.
- (d) The head of the mission will motivate, manage, monitor and mobilise resources; interact with ministries, institutions, parastatals, the media, voluntary organisations and external agencies and have the authority to draw on their services.
- (e) The head of mission will be responsible for the formulation of mission objectives and programmes following consultation at all levels, including those who will be the ultimate beneficiaries.
- (f) A mission document will have widespread publicity with the active support of the media.

- (g) The mission will have its own core budget.
- (h) The mission will have its own small management team.
- (i) The mission comprises a set of mini- or sub-missions each with their own specific focus.
- (j) The mission will be enacted through partnerships; with ministries, NGOs, the private sector, the media, individuals, etc. as appropriate.
- (k) Missions have specific lifetimes. They are there to meet an end; they are not ends in themselves.

180 Public Service 2000 in Canada, Ghana's The Children Cannot Wait, India's Technology Missions for drinking water, immunisation and literacy, Malaysia's Vision 2020 and many other examples suggest that countries are moving in the direction of giving focused attention to specific priorities.

181 These 'missions' are characterised by clearly established targets to be met within a given time frame. They are publicised and widely debated. They are accountable to the highest levels of authority. They are visible in the localities or departments or institutions where their impact is ultimately to be made. They are led by government but necessitate partnerships. Their style, their management, their activities are not bound by existing regulations and structures; they are by their very nature cross-sectoral and responsive to particular needs in particular places.

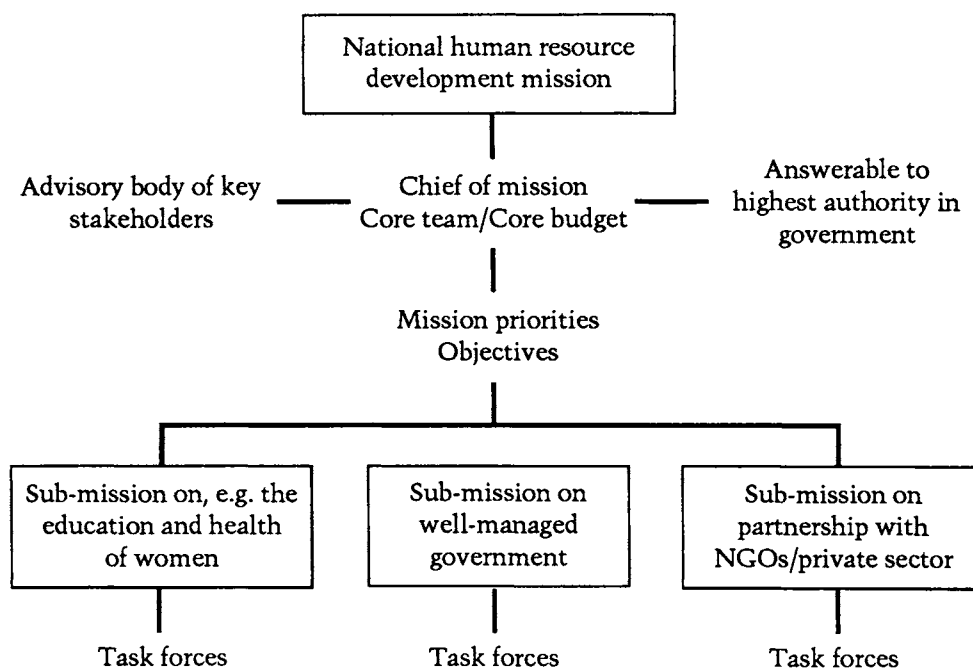
182 If they work well they incorporate a number of the key strategies to which the Working Group gives priority. They can be a demonstration of well-managed government. They cannot work unless they are open, transparent and accountable, giving ministries and others clearly defined targets which they have to meet. They necessitate co-ordination, decentralisation and partnership. They have a mandate to mobilise resources in an imaginative way from a variety of sources and, as the Indian examples show, they must make the best use of technology, whether old or new, whether adapted, adopted or newly developed, in support of their objectives.

183 It is clearly unrealistic to believe that a human resource development mission can address the totality of the human development agenda. The mission approach assumes that a set of key priorities will be identified and become the focus for specific mission objectives and activities.

184 Priorities, approaches and objectives will be country specific, matching local realities and local needs. No one 'cook-book' formula can be applied to countries with different stages of development, different forms of government and different resource availability.

185 Despite these differences, our principal recommendation is a single one: each government should establish a national mission for human resource development. It will be for each mission, in the light of the circumstances prevailing in that country, to work out both an overall human resource development operational plan and to identify, as part of such a plan, those sectors which merit priority and the time frames within which

Figure 3: Organogram of a national human resource development mission



particular sectoral targets are sought to be achieved. The components of this overall plan and the priorities on which they rest will naturally vary from country to country. Nevertheless the Group is convinced that the three components of well-managed government, priority for women, and partnership with non-government organisations and the private sector, will be common to all countries and should be accorded primacy by each national mission (see Figure 3). Each of these components would constitute a sub-mission with its own dedicated task force but these would report to the national mission and be conscious at all times that they are part of something bigger.

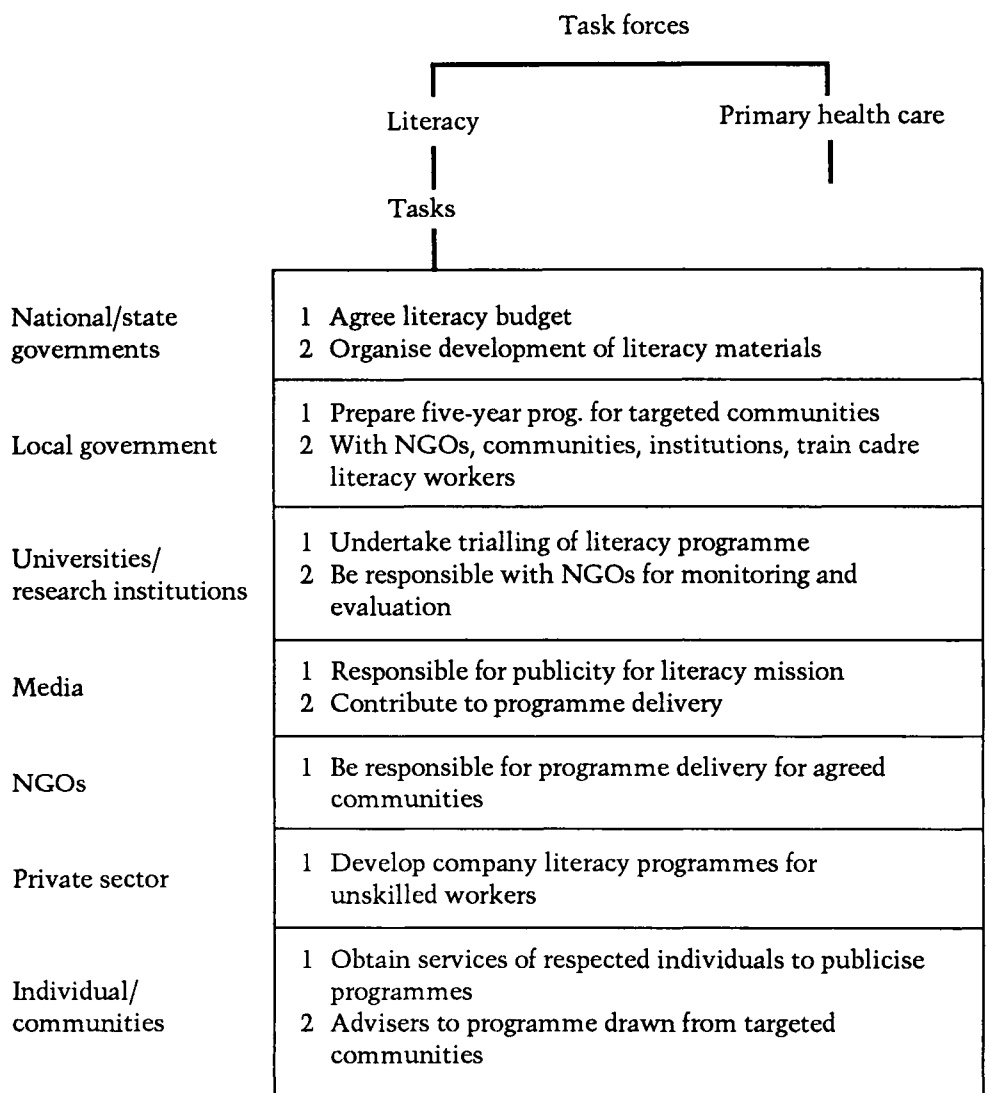
186 Governments are themselves aware that there is much to be put right in their own houses. Enmeshed in regulations and procedures from a different age; hierarchical and compartmentalised; concerned with maintenance rather than with change; sometimes overstaffed; faced with an agenda well in excess of the resources available; governments need reform if they are to provide the political and technical leadership for human resource development. Governments have to learn how to co-ordinate across sectors, genuinely devolve power and authority and work in new and productive partnerships. They need to use technology in support of their own effectiveness and as a tool for human development nationwide. The reform of government to be a genuine public service deserves its own focused attention through a human resource development mission.

187 Women have to be given pre-eminence in the human resource development agenda, both for reasons of equity and also because they are at the centre of all aspects of social and economic development. This demands

special and focused efforts to provide access to basic education (see, for example, Figure 4); the provision of health services at the community level; access to family planning information and services and access to credit, training and equal opportunities in the labour market. These are needs and targets which could be addressed productively through the mission approach.

188 The Working Group has noted both the strength and the weaknesses of the work of non-government organisations in support of human resource development. At its best it is innovative, democratic and life-changing for the communities with which the organisations work. At worst, it is ephemeral and unsustainable; high on rhetoric, low on productivity. Whatever the judgement, the heterogeneous non-government sector is one with which governments need to work. Together there is the potential for value added activity. Yet developing the partnership is problematic – ‘antagonistic co-operation’. This is an issue which needs to be addressed

Figure 4 Example of a sub-mission: education and health of women



head on. It is not a human resource development objective or end in its own right but it is a problem which needs to be cracked and one which could benefit from the mission approach.

189 The private sector is also active in support of human resource development in many countries. In some it is a major contributor especially in the area of training and skills development. It is often better equipped than government to provide and sustain human resource development investments which are specific to local circumstance and need. Governments should provide an environment which encourages and strengthens this capacity; which builds partnerships through consultation in the design of human resource development strategies and in support of the delivery of services by the private sector where these match national human resource development priorities. While there is acceptance of this in theory, in practice co-operation between government and the private sector is often bedevilled by attitudinal problems and the hangover of adversarial relationships. The creation of a more positive partnership therefore becomes a prime task.

190 The mission approach is not a prescription for all ills. It is an option: an option which encourages the qualities which are inherent in human resource development. The scale of the problems confronting many members of the Commonwealth – basic problems of food and health and education – have to be solved essentially at home, by the society in which they are found. Their solution requires leadership and commitment, access to the full range of human and financial resources, and the application of these resources to meet specific ends, by a specific time in an open and participatory way. The Working Group commends the idea of mission as a tool for development – a real contribution to human resource development.