



World Bank Group Archives Exhibit Series

Nairobi Office Opens

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These exhibits, authored by World Bank archivists, highlight key events, personalities, and publications in the history of the World Bank. They also bring attention to some of the more fascinating archival records contained in the Archives' holdings.

To view current exhibits, visit the [Exhibits](#) page on the Archives' website.



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In this article, which first appeared in the May 1967 issue of "International Bank Notes," David L. Gordon, the first Chief of Mission in Nairobi, gives a picture of the Mission in its early days.

The Bank first moved to put down roots in Eastern Africa in March 1965, when T. V. Andersen arrived in Nairobi. Over the next several months came a trickle of other recruits. Harold Young took over as Acting Chief of Mission. Mary Sfeir quickly organized the clerical side of the Office and personified the spirit of *Harambee* (Swahili for "working together"). Douwe Groenvelde arrived from Rome. Sandy Storrar and Dick Henderson, old hands in East Africa, came back to Nairobi to set up the Agricultural Development Service (ADS), a new departure in the Bank's services to member countries. Pepe Morra took on the growing administrative headaches just before the end of 1965.



Nairobi Office staff, 1967. Sitting left to right: Timothy Mukangura, Shirley Jolley, Bhanu Shah, Rose D'Souza, Phoebe Odero and Celine George. Standing left to right: Cyrus Samii, Dug Kirkwood, Douwe Groenvelde, Kay MacDonald, Sandy Storrar, Wynne Taylor, T. V. Andersen, Elizabeth Cook, David Gordon, Pepe Morra, Mary Sfeir, Tony Van Dijck, Ken Prashar, Gideon Wairioko, Samuel Maina, Peter Kimani, and Joseph Macharia. Photo: Elite Studio's Ltd.

[The Agricultural Development Service—attached to the Nairobi Office--employed on long-term contract a limited number of men of proven agricultural and managerial competence under African conditions, making them available to governments or development agencies in Eastern Africa to assist in the execution of agricultural projects and in the training of African managers to run these projects later on.]



By the time I arrived in January 1966, the walls of our temporary seven room office suite were bulging; half the Mission had to be kept traveling so that the other half could sit down. Our expansion continued throughout the year, but now we are more or less stabilized at a total of 38, including two ADS men appointed but not yet on board. Fortunately, we managed, with some difficulty, to find enough office space to house everyone and are now sufficiently settled to begin to feel that it may really be a permanent mission.

In the variety of origins, backgrounds and temperaments, the Mission fairly well reflects the Bank as a whole. Ten nationalities are represented: Britain, Canada, Denmark, India, Iran, Israel, Italy, Kenya, the Netherlands, and the U.S. There are nine members from the regular Bank staff, one detailed from the FAO/IBRD Cooperative Programme, twelve ADS members on long-term contracts, and 16 local employees.

The ADS group are long-time residents of East or Central Africa, agriculturists and practical farmers, with a wide knowledge of conditions and potentialities in this region. They spend most of their time in the bush, tramping or Land Roving over embryonic ranching schemes, laying out tracks or water and soil conservation works, inspecting crops and cattle, and chivvying local administrators for equipment, supplies or boundary adjudication. The rest of us feel somewhat desk-bound by comparison, but still cover a good deal of ground—mostly on relatively short trips, by the Bank's usual standards, from one to twenty days—within our region, which stretches from the Egyptian border to that of South Africa.



Douwe Groenveld



Thermod V. Andersen

It is a diverse and picturesque region—ranging from the desert and the arid rangelands of Sudan and Somalia; through the lush rolling country along the upper Nile and around the great African lakes; the high plateaux and deep valleys of Ethiopia, Kenya and Tanzania; the steep slopes of Madagascar; and down to the progressively drier country of South Central Africa. There are lovely long beaches on the Indian Ocean, a dozen or so game parks in East



Africa and Zambia, charming country hotels and all kinds of sport facilities for the occasions when we take a few days off from work. The Nairobi climate is delightful most of the time—the same can't be said for some other parts of the region—and we find that in the months from November to March, especially, there are quite a few people in the Bank who thoughtfully come out to assist us in our tasks.

The main work of the Mission, apart from the ADS, is to help the countries of Eastern Africa in the preparation of plans and projects, especially in the agriculture and transport sectors, to the point where they could be financed by the Bank or IDA. As we conceive our role in project preparation, it is not to work out investment schemes on our own hook, and serve them up fully formed, ready for financing and execution. Rather it might be said that we try to foster the *evolution* of projects, responding to local initiative and relying on local authorities to do most of the necessary collection of data, sifting of policies, devising of administrative arrangements and assessment of advantages. But outside help is often needed to get this project preparation work started, and keep it moving along properly.



Mary Sfeir



Alexander Stevenson



Giuseppe Morra

The Mission's location in the center of the region, no more than two or three hours by plane from any of its capitals, makes it easy to maintain this continuing contract, going back to the project sponsors at successive stages of its evolution, as often as is necessary. In the process we have a chance to gain a better appreciation of development needs and problems, in other fields related to the project, or become aware of other projects that deserve attention.



In this process also we may be too closely involved, too psychologically committed to "our" projects, to be able to assess them with full objectivity. The final appraisal and negotiation of loans is therefore rightly reserved to Headquarters personnel. On the other hand, precisely because the regional Mission is so closely and continuously involved in its countries, it may sometimes be able to bring a different and valid perspective to the Bank's assessment of development need problems, and an additional link of understanding with these member countries.

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