

Chief Dental Officer wishes the newsletter a success

Those of us who have been entrusted with the oral health of the nation have reason to be proud of the progress in the last few years. For the first time in the history of dental health services, our service has received some recognition and appreciation.

Major events have been the acceptance by the government — after a hard struggle in persuasion — of the establishment of a dental school in the University of Dar es Salaam. As many of us know, a dental school involves tremendous outlay. While it requires the basic facilities of a medical school, facilities for training in the actual specialised field of dentistry are even more expensive. Besides the physical facilities, those of teaching staff have been even more difficult a problem being faced by many dental schools in the world. We must all congratulate those who have made it possible for the school to start in 1979 and in reaching its fourth year now.

At about the same time as the dental school was born it was found necessary to have a national plan for the development of dental health services. The preparation of the plan and its acceptance by the government was no mean feat. After acceptance by the government there was still the problem of finance and technical support. Fortunately DANIDA agreed to support some programmes in the plan which took off in 1981. To date a national oral health survey has been completed in the field, a preventive programme has been launched through the school health model project and MCH delivery system, a model school dental health project is progressing in Tanga, a new dental assistant school has been started in Tanga and another one is in progress in Mbeya. Furthermore some of our district dental clinics will receive modern equipment in the near future.

Of course we have also faced enormous problems of broken down equipment, shortage of materials, delayed promotions etc. These problems have not been unique to our field and despite them I am proud to say most of us have done their best to render the best services to the people that circumstances could allow. We can all look ahead with optimism as there are hopes of us working closer together as was demonstrated by the recent workshop in Dar es Salaam.

Another great achievement was the launching of the Tanzania Dental Association in 1980. For the first time dental staff from different corners of Tanzania got together and our activities appeared in the national papers. Despite our small number the activities of the Tanzania Dental Association have been impressive. The life of any association depends on continuous communication among its members. So despite financial constraints I applaud the association for starting the TDA newsletter. This will give members the opportunity to exchange ideas and information on various aspects of our work and profession. It is my hope more information will come from upcountry than Dar es Salaam which is the usual trend.

I wish the newsletter every success and a very long life.

Dr. R. J. Muya,
Chief Dental Officer