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S U P P O R T

PROGRAMME IMPLEMENTATION

IMPLEMENTATION OF DECISIONS ADOPTED BY THE GOVERNING COUNCIL AT PREVIOUS SESSIONS

Improvement of the methods and procedures for the recruitment of project professional staff and consultants

Report of the Administrator

Addendum

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INTRODUCTION

1. In accordance with paragraphs 5, 8 and 9 of Governing Council decision 82/7, the Administrator has brought to the attention of the executing agencies his report (DP/1982/10 and Add.1) as well as the views expressed thereon by representatives to the Council at its twenty-ninth session. Moreover, agencies have been invited to report on measures taken to improve their recruitment policies and practices for the purpose of reporting to the Council on the progress achieved on this matter.

2. The information requested from agencies has been summarized in this support paper which should be read in conjunction with paragraphs 4-12 of the policy paper (DP/1983/8).

A. Improvement in forecasting project personnel requirements

1. Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)

3. There are a number of reasons why it is extremely difficult to arrange for anything like an effective forecasting of expert requirements. The original country programmes, and even early project requests generally have not been firm enough to form a basis for forecasting what kinds of experts are needed over the next few years. It was hoped in the very early 1970s that the new country programming system would come to constitute a major help in this respect. Experience has shown that this is not so.

4. It is also appropriate to mention that over the last couple of years, and most likely in the foreseeable future, the difficulties and uncertainties concerning UNDP financial resources have constituted an additional impediment to forecasting expert requirements in the various country programmes as well as in the various disciplines. As a matter of fact, with the serious reduction that is currently taking place in the real value of the UNDP-supported programme, FAO has difficulties, not so much in making forward plans on how to locate and recruit more experts for new projects as in placing existing experts who finish their assignments.

5. It is thus foreseen that for some time to come the major instrument of FAO in this field will continue to be what is usually referred to as "matching". This is in itself a rather effective instrument and consists of forecasts for periods of over one half and up to one year of expert vacancies to be "matched" with lists of experts known to be finishing their assignments. At short-term intervals, usually monthly, such "matching sessions" take place in FAO operations units. Naturally, whenever vacancies are identified for which no expert serving currently in a project exists, outside recruitment will be resorted to.

2. International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA)

6. The forecasting of project personnel requirements is practically impossible within the agency's programme since, due to its rather small size, no statistical averaging can take place and the requirements of expert services are only known at the final stage of project planning. This is

compounded by the fact that the IAEA programme is formulated on an annual basis with relatively few multi-year projects.

3. International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO)

7. Every effort is made by the ICAO Field Operations Branch and the Field Recruitment Unit to forecast the need for project personnel as far in advance as may be prudent and realistic.

8. To accomplish this, ICAO tracks each project proposal from its conception to its ultimate approval or rejection. When, in the considered opinion of ICAO, the proposal has reached the stage where approval by the concerned Government and UNDP seems likely, ICAO begins the recruitment process for the requisite field personnel.

9. Following this course produces speedier implementation in many instances, but it also carries the risk that on some occasions considerable work will have been performed to no object, should the project not be approved. This, however, is a risk which ICAO is prepared to assume in the interests of better service to the developing world as well as to achieve a more efficient utilization of UNDP resources.

4. International Labour Organisation (ILO)

10. It has become a standing practice in the ILO to hold periodic project staffing review and forecasting meetings with the participation of officials responsible for project planning and design on the one hand and those responsible for recruitment and staffing on the other. Moreover, the ILO Technical Co-operation Personnel Branch has included for several years a special section responsible for the forecasting of medium-term staffing requirements and the advanced planning of recruitment. These tasks are performed by professional category officials who also manage the candidate roster in the light of requirements in order to maintain its effectiveness as the most important recruitment tool. Moreover, the ILO has issued for the third time a comprehensive prospection brochure in three languages which has been widely distributed in all member States for the purpose of identifying and informing potential new candidates and recruitment sources.

5. International Telecommunication Union (ITU)

11. The ITU is still in the process of studying ways and means for establishing a realistic forecasting method of project personnel requirements. The fast-moving technology in the telecommunications field, resulting in constantly changing post requirements, make it extremely difficult to forecast very far ahead what specialities will be most in demand. In addition, the current uncertainty as to availability of funds renders forecasting somewhat difficult over even a one-year period.

12. While rosters can prove helpful, the securing of candidatures for inclusion on rosters must be based on realistic assessments of requirements if candidates are not to become discouraged when no openings occur within a reasonable time span.

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6. United Nations/Department of Technical Co-operation for Development (UN/TCD)

13. UN/TCD publishes twice a year a forecast of requirements in line with information received from the offices of UNDP resident representatives. The most recent issue of the Forecast of Manpower Requirements was circulated on 1 May 1982.

7. United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)

14. Improvement in the forecasting of project personnel requirements would be possible only if Governments concerned were to formulate the project's needs, identify its priorities and determine a precise calendar for operations well in advance. More precise information about the types of expertise required, the availability of funds, the dates on which counterpart staff would be in function, etc., would be necessary for refined forecasting. Alternatively, a list indicating areas of expertise in demand would be established.

8. World Health Organization (WHO)

15. Within WHO, recruitment plans are prepared on a biennial basis and all posts - subject, of course, to adjustments by actual programme developments - are foreseen at the time the plans are prepared. Since the recruitment for project personnel and consultants is regionalized, each WHO regional office is responsible for preparing such plans. The regional personnel officers currently ensure that the necessary job descriptions for expert posts are prepared as far ahead as possible to enable them to plan timely recruitments. It should be pointed out that, while WHO can plan its personnel needs due to its biennial programme budgeting period, the same approach is not possible for UNDP-financed posts due to UNDP's ad hoc project approval procedure.

9. World Meteorological Organization (WMO)

16. WMO would find it very difficult to make any worthwhile forecasts of the requirements for field personnel. What the agency is attempting to do, however, is to improve the advance planning of projects and scheduling of activities in order to allow sufficient time for project approval and expert recruitment. WMO considers that greater attention to this aspect would yield better results in terms of timely recruitment than attempts at forecasting the requirements for project personnel.

17. In short, WMO considers that what is required is not to reduce the time taken to recruit project personnel but to know in advance how long recruitment is likely to take and to plan accordingly.

B. Timely circulation of vacancy announcements to NRS

1. Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)

18. Among the various means for locating candidates for expert posts, vacancy announcements are no longer being resorted to on a regular basis.

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This is because of the delay factor inevitably involved in the vacancy announcement procedure and the fact that adequate rosters of expert candidates have been built up in the organization's operations units. However, vacancy announcements may be issued for specific disciplines in which there are shortages and for unusual language combinations. General vacancy announcements covering a certain broad range of specialization rather than referring to specific jobs or posts are also being used for the specific purpose of expanding the roster. Such vacancy announcements are often published in the relevant technical journals so that anyone working in that specific field may be alerted to FAO needs.

19. More needs to be done in order to bring vacancies to the attention of candidates in developing countries. The organization thus intends to have increased recourse to the services of FAO representatives, regional representatives and senior field staff in an effort to locate suitable candidates. It is also being considered how the permanent representative of Governments to FAO can be increasingly drawn on to assist in circulation of vacancy announcements, job descriptions and other material concerning placement opportunities.

2. International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA)

20. In particular cases the agency has had recourse to a wide distribution of job descriptions in its own scientific bulletin, but experience has shown that this is far from being an efficient and rapidly working tool for recruitment. Direct contact with scientific institutions and known specialists by telephone and telex remains the most efficient and time-saving means for recruitment.

3. International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO)

21. ICAO maintains a computerized roster of potential candidates for field posts which at present lists some 3,500 individuals and covers a range of about 100 civil aviation disciplines. This roster is maintained by periodic appeal to all 150 ICAO member States, by regular advertisements in aviation industry publications; and through frequent contact by telex and telephone with various national civil aviation administrations.

22. ICAO experience has revealed that the roster system, reinforced by the contacts described above, can produce a satisfactory number of candidates for most field posts. ICAO does not, therefore, advertise all vacancies whenever they arise to all member States, a considerable number of which is known to be unable to provide candidates with the required experience in many sophisticated and complex technical areas of civil aviation.

23. However, as pointed out above, ICAO does maintain continuous liaison with member States in order to add qualified candidates to its recruitment roster, and invariably vacancies are made known to national administrations which it feels may be capable of providing candidates for those specific posts which, for whatever reason, cannot be adequately filled from the roster.

4. International Labour Organisation (ILO)

24. The ILO finds it very difficult to implement consistently the Governing Council's request to ensure that all vacancy announcements in the form of job

descriptions be circulated on a timely and equal basis to all member States. The ILO even considers that this request is in contradiction to the request to reduce recruitment time because, quite obviously, world-wide prospection in the proposed form is extremely time-consuming. Considering that approximately one half of all new project vacancies call for short-term consultants to be recruited urgently, it would be totally unrealistic to impose on agencies a formalistic and bureaucratic approach. The ILO does resort to a world-wide distribution of vacancies in a large number of cases, but only in those where there is sufficient time until the scheduled post's starting date. In all other cases, and they are the majority, the ILO works from the roster in order to meet deadlines. The ILO does, however, take into account the need to diversify the nationalities and cultural origins of experts; more candidates from developing countries are included in the reserve roster.

5. International Telecommunication Union (ITU)

25. While a proportion of ITU field vacancies continue to be advertised on a world-wide basis to some 400 addresses (telecommunications administrations, UNDP field offices, national committees on technical assistance, operating agencies participating in the work of ITU, diplomatic missions in Geneva, some professional institutions, etc.), it has become practice to send those vacancies which require highly specialized expertise in the new technologies only to selected countries. This consultation of sources which are likely to be in a position to provide the requisite expertise covers industrialized and middle-level developing countries in various parts of the world. For urgent consultant missions of one to six weeks duration, advertisement is further restricted to some two to six likely sources.

6. United Nations/Department of Technical Co-operation for Development (UN/TCD)

26. Printed in 1200 copies, job descriptions and vacancy lists are developed with a view to providing up-to-date and complete information to as wide a range of recruitment sources and at as early a stage as possible. Both are issued to the offices of UNDP resident representatives, all other United Nations agencies and all NRS. The monthly list of vacancies, including information of appointments confirmed, normally reaches its destination by the tenth of each month. In this and other ways, the Technical Assistance Recruitment Services (TARS) makes an effort to promote open international recruitment of professional personnel and consultants. The computerized roster of candidates for vacancies in the United Nations Technical Assistance Programme is also consciously used with the same objective in mind. The TARS regional representatives as well as the TARS New York and Geneva offices have sought to enrich this roster with names of suitably qualified candidates, notably from underrepresented or developing countries.

7. United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)

27. In order to make better use of NRS in the maintenance and up-dating of their rosters, the Bureau of Personnel continues its efforts to maintain systematic contacts with the permanent delegations and the national recruitment sources. These contacts are based not only on existing specific

vacancies and approved job descriptions, but also on the prospective needs of the organizations. Periodic biennial meetings with the representatives of recruitment sources are held for the purpose of reviewing their individual recruitment needs and studying the whole complex of recruitment problems. Increased efforts are being made to interview candidates through prospection missions, use of the services of Chief Technical Advisers, regional offices, etc.

8. World Health Organization (WHO)

28. WHO vacancy announcements for posts in headquarters and in the regional offices are circulated to all other international organizations, to permanent missions, ministries of health and selected institutions. In view of the manner in which WHO field projects evolve, vacancies in projects are not ordinarily announced through vacancy notices. It is considered that the time-consuming procedure for vacancy announcement for field project posts would certainly be a delaying factor. In addition, selection for field posts can be made from among existing staff as well as outside candidates, which implies that the manpower resources planning must take into account the movements of internal staff within each region, between the six WHO regions and between headquarters and the six regions. WHO has established the practice of reassigning staff from one large, non UNDP-financed programme to another such programme, even if this entails a different source of funds.

9. World Meteorological Organization (WMO)

29. As a general principle, WMO circulates all vacancy announcements for expert posts to the national meteorological services, which act as NRS, of all member States. Because of the relative urgency and importance of timing which is normally the case for short-term (less than three months) expert and consultant missions, and especially because of the high ratio of administrative costs compared to short-mission costs WMO considers it more appropriate to depend on its roster than to circulate vacancy notices for such posts.

C. Reduction of recruitment time

1. Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)

30. Over the years the organization has devoted considerable attention to the question of reducing the time needed for recruitment. Numerous internal studies of the subject have been undertaken and a number of measures have been introduced which have resulted in an appreciable reduction in the time it takes, on average, to recruit an expert for an FAO field post. Among these measures are the organization of the FAO operations units, whereby the personnel and recruitment staff are at all times closely in touch with the preparatory work on new projects and the building up of candidate rosters in the three main operations units - agriculture, fisheries and forestry.

31. The area with the most potential for improvement is, without doubt, the expert candidature advance clearance procedure; i.e. advance clearance with recipient Governments as well as the clearance by a number of releasing

Governments is still a frequent and serious cause of recruitment delays. The main cause of delay is the time the clearance takes; additional delays occur because candidates are often lost to FAO before the clearance is eventually obtained. It should be realized that this matter is a major bottleneck in the recruitment process. (Anything that UNDP can do to help, either through its resident representatives or perhaps through Governing Council action, would be welcome and beneficial to efforts made by FAO itself).

32. FAO, over the years, has had in mind that a system-wide initiative might be undertaken in respect of short-term consultants: perhaps Governments could be convinced to agree to a tacit clearance for all short-term consultant assignments. The need is particularly great in as much as this is the kind of staff who are often in great demand, have tight work schedules, and cannot accommodate their time to the vagaries of government clearance procedures. FAO has recently launched a pilot scheme whereby short-term consultants under the organization's technical co-operation programme are sent to the countries of assignment without advance clearance. FAO hopes that this initiative will be successful. FAO also hopes that it may be expanded to cover other programmes of the organization; it would certainly be helpful if the system at large could move in this same direction.

2. International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA)

33. IAEA experience shows that very often delays in recruitment have to be attributed to the time required for clearance of the candidates in host countries. It should be emphasized, however, that on specific occasions - for instance, where previous agreement on particular names or institutions has been reached between the Government and the agency - it has been possible to recruit and contract the expert and to issue tickets and visa in less than a week.

International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO)

34. ICAO takes the calculated risk of attempting to recruit candidates for field vacancies in projects which in many instances have not yet been approved. Doing so can reduce considerably the recruitment time, but also carries with it the penalty of unnecessary work when a project is not approved.

35. An additional time-saving device is the ICAO "Directory of Occupational Classifications and Job Descriptions for Technical Assistance Field Personnel". This publication includes detailed job descriptions in all the principal civil aviation disciplines which, in ICAO experience, are required for field posts. Such descriptions, amended in part where appropriate, offer field operations personnel a simple and speedy opportunity to communicate vacancy requirements to the Field Recruitment Unit.

36. ICAO, through its Technical Assistance Bureau, is also in the course of computerizing all communications in this field. Sometime in 1983, field operations staff will be able to access the computerized roster of candidates, by discipline, through their own receivers. This will enable them to establish a short list and communicate it through the computer to the Field

Recruitment Unit, which will then ascertain the availability of the desired candidates.

4. International Labour Organisation (ILO)

37. In order to reduce recruitment delays, the ILO has introduced a computerized recruitment operations control system with automatic warning devices for missing or delayed actions. This office-wide information system has helped considerably to improve control of the time element in the recruitment process. Another information system specifically designed for pipeline projects provides early information on forthcoming projects and their degree of probability. Other measures to reduce delays include the use of a word processor in correspondence with candidates and recruitment agents, more interviewing missions to member countries and new accelerated and simplified medical clearance procedures.

5. International Telecommunication Union (ITU)

38. While it is impossible to reduce the time required for the recruitment process, bound as it is by a number of factors outside the agency's control, the realistic scheduling of the expert component by better forecasting, earlier involvement of recruitment officers and timely advertisement is an attainable goal. Time-consuming elements which are integral parts of the process appear not to have received sufficient attention: (a) clearance of candidates by the recipient Government; (b) pre-recruitment formalities; and (c) the expert's own pre-departure arrangements.

39. Clearance by the recipient Government can take from six weeks to eight months. While "notice of technical clearance" can help advance pre-recruitment formalities, pending official clearance, and ensure earlier availability of the candidate, such a notice is not given by all recipient countries. It would seem pertinent that subsequent discussions on recruitment methods review ways and means of reducing the time for recipient Government clearance. The adoption of a procedure of providing "technical clearance" within two weeks of receipt of candidatures by the substantive host country ministry would be a positive step, with formal acceptance following four weeks later at most. Governments should give authority for the issuance of entry visas to their diplomatic representatives in the country of the selected expert. If such a step were taken as a general procedure delays could often be avoided.

6. United Nations/Department of Technical Co-operation for Development (UN/TCD)

40. UN/TCD has established departmental policy and guidelines on the use of national experts which have already proved very helpful in recruitment in several countries. With regard to the situation of internationally recruited professional staff, given the means at its disposal, TARS seldom needs to have recourse to advertising in order to secure a panel of suitably qualified candidates within the time required. The average recruitment lead time is currently just below four months. This is considered close to the minimum required in order to ensure both the quality of recruitment and equal opportunities of recruitment for nationals of all member States.

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7. United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)

41. Among the measures which could be taken to reduce the time required for recruitment, the following may be envisaged: (a) greater intra-secretariat decentralization and delegation of authority; (b) advance financial coverage commitment in order to initiate and complete recruitment action on a definitive basis; (c) preparation of job descriptions, with increasing co-operation between sectoral project officers and the Bureau of Personnel, at an earlier stage; (d) systematic revision of the roster to update information stored in the computer and to ensure that the roster contains candidates who would meet appropriate needs, particularly in new and specialized fields; (e) computerization of the whole recruitment procedure; and (f) the undertaking of candidates prospection missions.

8. World Health Organization (WHO)

42. While every effort is made to streamline the recruitment procedure and to reduce the time required to recruit qualified staff, WHO has not found that it is the procedure itself which is the delaying factor. In the experience of WHO, delays in recruitment are generally due to the non-availability of the selected candidate as well as the delay in receipt of government clearance which usually takes several weeks. Also, when the candidate is a government employee, WHO has found that his or her release often requires a long period of time, in some cases up to 18 months. The average duration for recruiting a staff member for a field project is approximately 6 months with not more than 15 days of that time required for purely administrative purposes by WHO. There is, therefore, very little room for reducing the duration of the recruitment process itself. Several selections sometimes have to be made before a selected candidate accepts the offer made to him. This is particularly the case in respect to difficult duty stations.

9. World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO)

43. In the second half of 1982, a complete reshuffle and updating of the roster for industrial property experts and consultants was completed with the collaboration of all potential sources of recruitment. With the substantial expansion of the roster, notably as regards experts able to work in major languages other than English and French (particularly Arabic, Russian and Spanish) and the use of computer assistance recruitment searches in the roster have become more efficient and recruitment time has been reduced.

10. World Meteorological Organization (WMO)

44. WMO finds that it can do little to reduce the time required to recruit field personnel except to eschew the circulation of vacancy announcements and the submission to Governments of only one candidate who happens to be immediately available. Rather than resort to such measures, WMO feels that better results can be obtained by estimating, on the basis of experience, how long the recruitment procedure will take and planning accordingly. It should also be noted that the longest and most uncertain phase of expert recruitment is the process of Government selection and approval of candidates, which is beyond the control of the agency.

D. Early contacts between operational and recruitment staff

1. Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)

45. FAO has set up an organizational structure for project support which includes the outposting of personnel and recruitment staff from the Administration and Finance Department directly to the individual operations units. This has had a very beneficial effect in ensuring close and early collaboration between the staff responsible for project formulation and design and the staff responsible for candidate identification and recruitment of experts. This particular feature of the FAO organizational structure was previously reported (DP/1982/10, para.14) to the Governing Council as an example of how such early contact could be achieved in practice.

46. FAO at this stage does not have much further to add or any additional procedures or practices to recommend. It might be explained that, as a normal practice, when a new draft project document is about six months away from signature, a short list of candidates is drawn up and the selected candidates are contacted. The project preparation staff and the recruitment staff have to work in the closest collaboration to achieve this, and the above-mentioned short periodic "matching sessions" (see para.18) constitute a good point of departure for such collaboration.

2. International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA)

47. Within IAEA, the Experts Section, which is in charge of the recruitment of experts, and other operational staff responsible for project design, planning and implementation are in permanent contact. It should also be pointed out that the Experts Section is involved in the project cycle as early as at the planning stage so that potential recruitment bottlenecks will be identified and reflected in the project design.

3. International Telecommunication Union (ITU)

48. The ITU Technical Co-operation Department is so organized that there is constant, day-to-day contact between officers responsible for project design and implementation and the Recruitment Service.

4. United Nations/Department of Technical Co-operation for Development (UN/TCD)

49. Early contacts, which are integral parts of the established TCD procedures at the project planning stage, including the following: (a) at least once a year, operational staff provide recruitment staff a forecast of manpower requirements for the next twelve-month period; (b) when drafting project documents, the operational staff provides recruitment staff with a summary of the main functions and requirements of each post as early guidance for recruitment; (c) at the same stage, the recruitment staff is consulted on the estimated recruitment lead time for establishment of realistic timetable for project implementation.

5. United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)

50. With more frequent contacts between operational staff responsible for project design, on the one hand, and recruitment staff, on the other, the following proposals could be considered: (a) a screening system to respond to urgent recruitment needs; (b) more frequent collaboration among United Nations organizations (roster-sharing); and (c) regular meetings between the recruitment division and administrators of programme sectors for operational projects (once or twice a month).

6. World Meteorological Organization (WMO)

51. The question of achieving earlier contacts between operational staff and recruitment staff does not arise in WMO as they are one and the same; recruitment, up to the stage of contract preparation, is done by the operational staff. The point is taken, however, that recruitment action should begin as early as possible and need not await project approval. WMO frequently circulates vacancy notices prior to project approval but, while this may occasionally save time, it can often lead to unnecessary and wasteful work if approval is withheld or considerably delayed or if the project design is amended.

7. World Health Organization (WHO)

52. In WHO, the recruitment operation is totally decentralized and regional offices have full authority to make selections and recruit for field project posts. WHO regional recruiting staff are in close and even daily contact with the operational staff responsible for project design.

E. Other measures

1. International Telecommunication Union (ITU)

53. On the subject of strengthening NRS, ITU stresses that, in such a highly specialized field as telecommunications, the only possible sources of expertise for at least for 90 to 95 per cent of the field vacancies are the respective telecommunication administrations of member States. Furthermore, ITU is bound by its convention and the directives of its governing bodies to notify field vacancies to the telecommunication administrations. ITU, therefore, has had little recourse to NRS and does not anticipate any modification in the future.

2. United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)

54. UNESCO stresses the importance of the role of UNDP in the approval of project design. Unfortunately, very often the recruitment procedure is hampered by the revision of a project or the rescheduling of operations, especially when this takes place in the final phase of recruitment (sometimes even after the executing agency has completed contractual obligations with an expert or consultant).

3. World Meteorological Organization (WMO)

55. Governments themselves have a rather considerable influence on the process both in terms of the suitability of the expert and the time taken to complete the procedures. It cannot be ignored that some countries will not accept experts of certain nationalities and others believe, rightly or wrongly, that only experts from the most scientifically and technically advanced countries can be considered as "expert". As regards the time taken for recruitment, the experience of WMO is that the longest and most uncertain phase is that of the Government's selection and approval of the expert to be recruited.

