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P O L I C Y

PROGRAMME PLANNING

COUNTRY AND INTERCOUNTRY PROGRAMMES AND PROJECTS

Implementation of selected country programmes in the Africa region, 1983

Addendum

Use of United Nations Volunteers to assist the most severely affected African countries in the implementation of emergency assistance programmes

Note by the Administrator

Summary

This note is submitted taking into account the extraordinary demands on scarce local technical manpower resources that are already confronting African countries receiving emergency assistance and that are likely to be exacerbated in the future.

The Administrator is recommending an allocation from the Special Programme Resources to permit countries that so request to augment their local technical manpower capabilities on an immediate and short-term basis to cope with the material assistance provided from other sources within the framework of emergency programmes.

1. The Administrator has outlined in his statement UNDP's support for the Secretary-General's appeal to the international community to give its full and generous support in confronting the unprecedented crisis that now faces the African region. The various modalities available to the donor communities to provide immediate assistance to projects in such high priority areas as food aid, water supply and health services were described in broad terms. While most of the necessary elements for implementing a multidisciplinary approach to the problem, once the funding is assured, are in place, it is recognized that the scale on which the assistance is required will make extraordinary demands on scarce local technical manpower resources. In many fields, the gap in trained and experienced personnel is already becoming critical and this situation is likely to become even more serious as efforts are made to reach more remote, isolated communities.
2. The Administrator is concerned, therefore, to augment on an immediate and exceptional basis the technical manpower resources of the most severely affected African countries to ensure that emergency assistance has the maximum impact on the intended beneficiaries. The United Nations Volunteers (UNV) programme, with its capacity to secure at very short notice, through its global network, large numbers of experienced logistic and technical personnel would be, UNDP believes, extremely well placed to channel in a flexible, efficient and low-cost manner the necessary human resources to those countries requesting such assistance.
3. The UNV programme has 14 years of experience in channelling skilled operational personnel, on volunteer terms, into all those fields which, in Africa, have been identified as requiring urgent action. In particular, in those African countries stricken by prolonged drought and other natural disasters, UNVs have become an invaluable source of support providing cost-effective inputs into projects within the framework of medium and long-term development programmes. Some 410 UNVs are currently serving in 195 projects and programmes spread among 38 African countries with over 300 working in countries identified by the General Assembly as deserving of special measures to enhance their development efforts. Seventy per cent of UNVs in Africa are working within the framework of United Nations specialized agency-executed activities complementing and extending the substantive and geographic reach of other agency inputs. The remaining 30 per cent are attached directly to Government departments to assist in in-service training of nationals over an extended period of time or to temporarily replace nationals wherever a need for their training away from their eventual working locations is required, so that the normal delivery of Government services is not interrupted.
4. United Nations Volunteers are working in community development programmes linked to food logistics; UNV sanitary engineers and well drilling technicians are ensuring safe water supplies for people and livestock; UNV mechanics are keeping fleets of vehicles and machinery functioning, while many civil engineers, representing one of UNV's largest professional categories, are working under Special Public Works Programmes, enabling road and bridge building works to reach the poorest communities. UNV veterinarians are assigned to remote locations to deal with cattle diseases and UNV forestry specialists are in increasing demand. Programmes for displaced persons in Africa are receiving growing UNV inputs to assist in complex logistic and technical operations. The proven effectiveness of the UNV programme is due to several factors, not the least of which is that the previous field experience of UNVs now averages from five to 10 years. Moreover, an increasing proportion of UNVs are being recruited from

the developing countries themselves, so that today more than 140 African UNVs are serving in the Africa region, which greatly facilitates their rapid adaptation to the local environment.

5. The imaginative and innovative working arrangements of the UNV programme that is serving many African countries so well in their longer term programmes should, in the Administrator's opinion, now be directed to addressing the critical stage in which the region finds itself. It is estimated that some 200 UNVs would be required if such a scheme were to have some impact at the regional level. Given a situation that calls for an expeditious and flexible approach and the limited resources currently available to UNDP, the Administrator is recommending to the Council that it approves an allocation from the Special Programme Resources of \$1.5 million for the remainder of the current programming cycle for the specific purpose of providing, at the request of the Governments concerned, initially, the services of approximately 1,000 months (approximately 100 UNV posts) of skilled and experienced United Nations Volunteers to the most severely affected African countries with a minimum lead time. This would make it possible to provide the services of operational manpower in the form of mobile teams for short periods of time in the fields mentioned above. Without the special earmarking, UNDP and the international community will not have the capability to respond in a rapid manner and on the scale required to ensure the reinforcement of local capabilities to cope better with the material assistance provided from other sources to combat the worst effects of the crisis.

6. This allocation would be drawn from the earmarking for contingencies under the third programming cycle Special Programme Resources. This earmarking currently stands at \$20.4 million, of which \$9.2 million has been allocated by the Council for specific activities, and a further allocation of \$0.8 million is under consideration by the Council at its present session for TCDC-related activities.

7. It is envisaged that a regional project would be designed to provide the administrative, financial and substantive framework for the smooth functioning of this scheme. Furthermore, such an arrangement would enable interested individual donor countries to participate in the operations by providing complementary contributions under the cost-sharing modality. In this context, I appeal to donor countries to consider favourably such contributions, thereby enabling the scheme to reach its full complement of 200 UNVs.

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