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POLICY

OTHER FUNDS AND PROGRAMMES

TECHNICAL CO-OPERATION AMONG DEVELOPING COUNTRIES (TCDC)

Activities and staffing of the Special Unit for TCDC

Report of the Administrator

Summary

This report is submitted in accordance with operative paragraphs 2 and 3 of section II of decision 83/21 dealing with the functions and staffing of the Special Unit for TCDC. The report provides an analysis of the functions of the Special Unit and the staffing pattern of the Unit as it has evolved since the Unit was established. The report deals briefly with the modalities by which TCDC activities are undertaken by the Special Unit. The report highlights the Administrator's conclusions from the analysis; namely, that the functions proposed for the Unit by the High-level Committee on TCDC would require additional staffing. The budgetary constraints of UNDP are emphasized and, in the light of these constraints, the conclusion is reached that, when weighed against other needs of UNDP, an increase in the staff of the Special Unit for TCDC cannot be recommended at this time.

I. BACKGROUND AND MANDATE

1. In response to paragraphs 4 and 6 of decision 3/8 adopted by the High-level Committee on the Review of TCDC at its third session, the Governing Council, in operative paragraph 2, section II, of its decision 83/21, urged the Administrator "to take, to the extent possible, immediate concrete measures to enable the Special Unit for TCDC to carry out its functions effectively...paying particular attention to field and action-oriented TCDC activities and having regard to the need to contain administrative costs." In operative paragraphs 3 and 4, section II, of decision 83/21, the Council also decided to review the staffing pattern of the Special Unit at its thirty-first session in connection with its review of resources available to UNDP, and requested the Administrator to submit a summary assessment of the related operational implications for the work of the Special Unit.

2. For the purpose of this analysis the Administrator has reviewed the functions of the Special Unit as they have evolved since its establishment by the Governing Council at its eighteenth session. The current functions of the Unit, as summarized below, originated in the recommendations of the Working Group on TCDC (DP/69) which were approved by the Governing Council at its eighteenth session and endorsed by the General Assembly at its twenty-ninth session in resolution 3251(XXIX). These functions were incorporated and refined in the Buenos Aires Plan of Action adopted in September 1978. The Buenos Aires Plan of Action was endorsed by the General Assembly at its thirty-second session in resolution 32/182. The functions of the Special Unit thus evolved are, briefly, as follows:

(a) Assisting Governments in undertaking TCDC programmes and activities through the Special Programme Resources and other funds allocated for the promotion of TCDC;

(b) Developing new ideas, concepts and approaches for promoting TCDC;

(c) Preparing progress reports and other documentation for the High-level Committee and servicing the Committee with the assistance of the UNDP Division of External Relations;

(d) Working in close contact with resident representatives, regional bureaux and other sections of UNDP and focal points in other organizations of the United Nations system in assisting in the co-ordination of TCDC activities;

(e) Initiating adjustments to UNDP policies and procedures to help promote and implement TCDC;

(f) Maintaining liaison with TCDC focal points of Governments, and assisting Governments of developing countries in strengthening their co-ordination mechanisms for TCDC;

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(g) Collecting and disseminating information on potential sources for financing TCDC;

(h) Organizing TCDC training courses and seminars for government officials and personnel of the United Nations system;

(i) Expanding and maintaining the efficient use of the UNDP Information Referral System (INRES) and establishing appropriate linkages with national and regional information systems, and/or focal points;

(j) Lending support to public information programmes on TCDC.

3. In reviewing the functions of the Special Unit, the Administrator has attempted to determine the objectives intended to be achieved through each of these functions, the specific activities required to be undertaken to attain these objectives, and the most effective manner of undertaking these activities. In this exercise, it has been borne in mind that the promotion and support of TCDC is a mandate which has been given to UNDP as a whole in collaboration with other bodies of the United Nations development system. It is not, nor can it be, the sole responsibility of the Special Unit for TCDC. However, the Special Unit, as the focal point and co-ordinator of TCDC within UNDP, and the foremost unit for the exercise of UNDP's lead agency role for TCDC in the United Nations development system, has been assigned unique and specific responsibilities of its own as described below.

II. OBJECTIVES, ACTIVITIES AND FUNCTIONS

A. Reporting to and servicing the High-level Committee on the Review of TCDC (HLC) (paragraph 2(c) above)

4. For the purpose of reporting to and servicing the HLC, the Unit obtains information from resident representatives, from other organizations of the United Nations development system, and from Governments on their TCDC activities. The voluminous material is reviewed, analysed and consolidated in two separate reports for the HLC: one evaluating the progress of the work of the United Nations development system in promoting and implementing TCDC; and the other that of Governments beyond the United Nations system involvement. Detailed reports are also prepared by the Special Unit for TCDC for the HLC and the Governing Council on the use of country and regional IPFs for TCDC and on expenditures from the Special Programme Resources on promoting and implementing TCDC. In addition, the Special Unit prepares, or arranges for the preparation of, any special ad hoc reports required by the HLC and/or the Governing Council. This has been a time-consuming activity, confined largely to the months prior to the sessions of the HLC and the Governing Council. The concentrated workload has been such that additional temporary personnel have sometimes had to be recruited to assist in the preparation of some of the reports.

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B. Programme support (paragraph 2(d) above)

5. As the central repository within UNDP for information and experience relating to TCDC worldwide, the Unit exercises the responsibility for promoting TCDC within the Programme at all levels. The responsibility for programming TCDC activities lies with the field offices, regional bureaux and other operational units; the Special Unit for TCDC, being a source of practical and timely information on TCDC approaches and potentialities, provides a programme support function. For example, in 1982 a staff member of the Unit participated in the country programming exercise of a least developed country, and subsequently in a donor's meeting, which resulted in the articulation of TCDC components in the country programme. In November 1983 another staff member of the Unit participated in the regional consultations organized by another Government which financed the cost of the exercise partly from the IPF and partly from its own resources. Thirty-two TCDC action-oriented projects emerged from the consultations involving the transfer of national technology and know-how among seven other developing countries of the region.

C. TCDC innovations (paragraph 2(b) above)

6. Related to the Special Unit's programme support function is its mandate to develop new ideas, concepts and approaches for promoting TCDC. This is required by the provisions of paragraphs 34 and 59 of the Buenos Aires Plan of Action, as well as by the High-level Committee's decision 3/8, paragraph 7, in which the Committee drew attention to the recommendations of the Caracas Plan of Action and requested the Administrator to take the necessary steps to assist Governments, intergovernmental bodies, non-governmental organizations and organizations of the United Nations development system in pursuing those recommendations.

D. Governments' co-ordination mechanisms for TCDC
(paragraph 2(f) above)

7. An important function assigned to the Special Unit is to assist Governments of developing countries in strengthening their co-ordination mechanisms for TCDC. The lack of well-organized governmental mechanisms (focal points) for the promotion of TCDC has been evident. Numerous intergovernmental meetings - most recently the Meeting of Heads of National Technical Co-operation Agencies of Developing Countries held in Tunis in October 1982, and the 1983 session the HLC - have called for more vigorous efforts to build up effective national TCDC focal points. Closely related is the need for a better developed, legal and procedural framework governing the terms of employment of TCDC experts, trainee exchanges and other TCDC activities. Among the means at the disposal of the Special Unit to contribute to this effort, the following are important:

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(a) Providing information to Governments on focal point arrangements or other types of TCDC mechanisms which have been found particularly effective in other countries;

(b) Helping to arrange exchange visits through which officials of one country can obtain first-hand information on the methods adopted by countries which have succeeded in developing strong focal points; and

(c) Developing model contracts governing the terms of recruitment and employment of experts.

E. TCDC action-oriented promotional activities
(paragraph 2(a) above)

8. An additional responsibility of the Special Unit is the programming of the Special Programme Resources placed at the disposal of the Unit in support of TCDC. For the two-year period, 1984-1985, the amount of these funds is \$600,000. The appraisal, selection and approval of a multitude of small-scale activities involves considerably more work than the support of a small number of large-scale projects.

F. TCDC Information Referral System (INRES)
(paragraph 2(i) above)

9. One of the most important activities in which the Special Unit has been engaged for the past several years is the development of INRES, the global information referral system which provides information on institutions offering skills and capacities of developing countries in the fields of (a) educating and training, (b) research and technological development, (c) consultancy and expert services, (d) scientific and technical information services and (e) bilateral and multilateral project experiences of these institutions in all sectors and disciplines. A detailed account on the status of INRES is given in document TCDC/3/9, and an updated version is contained in document DP/1984/48.

G. Training programmes on TCDC (paragraph 2(h) above)

10. Assistance to Governments, organizations of the United Nations development system, and intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations in training their staffs in the concepts and modalities of TCDC has been another important function of the Special Unit. This has involved the preparation and distribution of a training manual and holding the first of a series of seminars for senior government officials (of Asia and the Pacific region) in April 1982. The training manual has been translated into French with the co-operation of the Government of Canada, and translated into Spanish and printed in that language with the co-operation of ECLA and WHO. Seminars for the Latin American, African and the Arab States regions are now being planned.

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H. Other functions

11. The three remaining functions of the Special Unit - developing modifications in the policies and procedures of UNDP concerning TCDC; the collection and dissemination of information on the potential sources for financing TCDC; and lending support to public information programmes on TCDC (paragraph 2(e), (g) and (j) above) - now involve comparatively less time and effort.

III. STAFFING REQUIREMENTS

12. The activities discussed in the preceding paragraphs are the essential ones required to fulfill the functions assigned to the Special Unit for TCDC. Each set of activities is not, however, a fixed quantum from which it may be possible to deduce in mathematical fashion the number of staff required to carry them out. For all the functions reviewed in the exercise, however, the level of activity may have to be adapted to the resources available which could indeed vary greatly. For example, the number of country and intercountry programmes selected for review is clearly elastic, and remains dependent upon the staff resources available. The same applies to country visits to advise on TCDC mechanisms, or to participate in programming missions or reviews. It is obvious, however, that to achieve a minimum critical mass of activity of adequate quality in each area, staffing levels cannot be reduced too far.

13. When the TCDC unit was originally set up in 1975, the approved staffing was three posts in the Professional category and five posts in the General Service category whose functions, in practice, concentrated on making preparations for the Buenos Aires Conference. As work for the Conference advanced, seven extrabudgetary staff (five Professional and two General Service) were added to the Unit. After the Buenos Aires Conference in 1978, the Governing Council established, in its decision 79/29, seven regular Professional posts and seven General Service posts for the Special Unit for TCDC. Following the "desk-to-desk" review, the Administrator proposed, as part of the overall rationalization of UNDP, that the TCDC Unit staffing be reduced to four Professional and five General Service posts. At the same time, funds were provided for staff and computer costs, enabling the utilization of an additional post at the L-5 level and another at the G-4 level (temporary assistance). The net effect of the Council's decision 82/31 was thus a reduction from seven to five Professional-level posts, and from seven to six General Service posts.

14. The High-level Committee, in its decision 3/8 adopted in 1983 at its third session, suggested that the staffing level be brought back at least to the pre-1982 levels. At a minimum this would mean the reinstatement of two posts at the Professional level and one at the General Service level. It is obvious that such a reinforcement of the TCDC Unit would allow some

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intensification of the Unit's activities. On the other hand, such a reinforcement of the TCDC Unit must be weighed against other needs of the organization, especially at the field level, and against the impact this would have on the overall biennial budget of UNDP.

15. As has been stated previously on numerous occasions, the present headquarters organization allows for little, if any, flexibility. Nevertheless, to meet the concerns of the HLC, the Administrator first considered whether staff could be redeployed from other units at headquarters. He is unable to recommend such a redeployment of staff to the TCDC Unit since this would endanger other aspects of the programme. Nor does the Administrator consider it possible to redeploy posts from the field to headquarters for the TCDC Unit.

16. The possibility of requesting additional appropriations has also been considered. The present situation at headquarters is such that requests for additional resources might be warranted in many areas in order to permit increased activities: for example, in TCDC, evaluation, technical backstopping or information, to name a few. However, the Administrator is not prepared at this stage to make any such recommendations. On the contrary, all efforts are being made to continue the cautious budgetary policy pursued by UNDP, especially since 1981, in relation to administrative expenditure.

17. The question remains, then, how the important TCDC activities can be reinforced, both at headquarters and at the field level. The TCDC Unit is already working through the regional bureaux and the field offices. Focal points for TCDC are operating in a number of developing countries, and as one of its important work objectives, the Special Unit is actively involved in enhancing the establishment of such focal points which will facilitate three-way communication: namely, between the United Nations system, the Government involved, and the TCDC focal points of other Governments.

18. Taking into account all the issues involved, the Administrator finds that if all the functions proposed for the TCDC Unit by the High-level Committee and listed in previous paragraphs were to be meaningfully developed and implemented at the levels expected by the High-level Committee, additional staffing would be required. However, as stated in paragraph 14 above, these needs must be weighed against other needs in the organization; if he is to contain the size of the administrative budget, he is not in a position to propose to the Council, at this time, an increase in the staff of the Special Unit for TCDC. In doing so, he is fully cognizant of the importance attached to the activity by many countries and of the potential benefit to be derived from increased activities. Continued efforts and actions will be made, however, to further enhance TCDC within the budgetary resources available to UNDP.

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