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OTHER FUNDS AND PROGRAMMES

Technical co-operation among developing countries

Report of the meeting of the Group of Governmental Experts on
the rules, regulations and procedures of the organizations of
the United Nations development system concerning technical
co-operation among developing countries

Note by the Administrator

In compliance with paragraph 15 of decision 6/3 of the High-level Committee on the Review of Technical Co-operation among Developing Countries, the Administrator convened a meeting of technical co-operation experts in New York from 9 to 20 April 1990. The mandated objective of the meeting was to identify clearly the impediments to technical co-operation among developing countries (TCDC) and changes to be introduced, so as to enable the incorporation of TCDC into all programmes and projects financed by the United Nations system, and to recommend, as far as possible, revisions of the existing rules, regulations and procedures necessary for that purpose by the relevant governing bodies of the technical co-operation agencies of the United Nations system.

Pursuant to paragraph 16 of the same decision of the High-level Committee, the Administrator hereby transmits the report of the meeting of the Group of Governmental Experts on the rules, regulations and procedures of the organizations of the United Nations development system concerning technical co-operation among developing countries to the Governing Council at its current session. Following the introduction (paras. 1-9), the report identifies (paras. 10-33) impediments to TCDC being currently faced by Governments and within organizations of the United Nations development system. The Council's attention is drawn to paragraphs 35-50, which contain the Group's recommendations for action by Governments, and to paragraphs 53-70, which contain the recommendations for action by UNDP and other organizations of the United Nations development system.

Annex

REPORT OF THE MEETING OF THE GROUP OF GOVERNMENTAL EXPERTS ON
THE RULES, REGULATIONS AND PROCEDURES OF THE ORGANIZATIONS OF
THE UNITED NATIONS DEVELOPMENT SYSTEM CONCERNING TECHNICAL
CO-OPERATION AMONG DEVELOPING COUNTRIES

I. INTRODUCTION

1. Pursuant to the provisions contained in paragraph 15 of decision 6/3 adopted by the High-level Committee on the Review of Technical Co-operation among Developing Countries on 29 September 1989, the Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) organized, after consultations with the chairmen of all regional groups of the United Nations, a meeting of technical co-operation experts of interested countries.
2. The mandate of the meeting was to identify clearly the impediments to technical co-operation among developing countries (TCDC) and changes to be introduced, so as to enable the incorporation of TCDC into all programmes and projects financed by the United Nations system, and to recommend, as far as possible, revisions of the existing rules, regulations and procedures necessary for that purpose by the relevant governing bodies of the technical co-operation agencies of the United Nations system.
3. The meeting was held in New York from 9 to 20 April 1990 with the participation of 13 experts and two advisers. The list of participants is contained in the appendix to this report.
4. The meeting elected Mr. Eduardo Praselj (Venezuela) as its Chairman.
5. The Director and the Deputy Director of the Special Unit for TCDC of UNDP also attended the meeting and provided the Group with information and clarifications on the topics discussed. Representatives of certain regional bureaux of UNDP, the Department of Technical Co-operation for Development (DTCD) of the United Nations Secretariat and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) informed the Group on matters relevant to them. In addition, a presentation was made on the TCDC Information Referral System - INRES-South - databank.
6. As background for discharging their responsibility, the experts reviewed various elements contained in the Buenos Aires Plan of Action for Promoting and Implementing Technical Co-operation among Developing Countries. 1/ The decisions of the High-level Committee on the Review of Technical Co-operation among Developing Countries as well as policies and procedures of UNDP and several organizations of the United Nations system related to TCDC were made available to the Group.
7. The Group addressed the interpretation and scope of TCDC. It felt that the definition contained in paragraph 15 of the Plan of Action should be viewed in the context of the amplifications stemming from the work of the High-level Committee on

the Review of Technical Co-operation among Developing Countries at its various sessions, together with Governing Council decision 81/31 of 26 June 1981.

8. The Group agreed that the interpretation of TCDC should be elucidated as follows:

"TCDC is the execution and management of developmental activities and projects by institutions of developing countries in which they share one another's experience and technical capacities and utilize, whenever necessary, advice and financial support from external sources including organizations of the United Nations development system. In this regard, TCDC should be seen as an integral part of country, regional and interregional programming of international technical co-operation, as a modality of technical co-operation, a cost-effective instrument for enhancing technical co-operation to developing countries."

9. In approaching its work the Group of Experts decided to undertake a thorough examination of impediments to TCDC and recommend solutions in the light of that analysis.

II. IMPEDIMENTS TO TECHNICAL CO-OPERATION AMONG DEVELOPING COUNTRIES

10. The main impediments identified by the Group of Experts, at both the government level and in the United Nations system, would fall into six main categories: awareness of the potential of TCDC; information on TCDC usefulness and applicability; attitudes; focal points; financing; and policies and procedures within the United Nations system. The Group tried to classify the impediments in a logical manner without putting any priority ranking on them.

Awareness and information

11. The nature and severity of insufficiency of awareness about TCDC potential for economic development depends on each individual country, since there exist different levels of awareness and different understandings of TCDC operations within and among developing countries. In addition, awareness in the private sector and in non-governmental organizations in many developing countries is insufficient.

12. There are also varying levels of awareness in field offices of UNDP on the usefulness and applicability of TCDC modality as a viable instrument for technical co-operation. Moreover, some agencies within the United Nations system profess widely different understandings and interpretations of the concept of TCDC, which further complicate understanding of TCDC at the government level.

13. In addition, TCDC has generally been approached from a limited perspective as a short-term exceptional instrument of technical co-operation, as one of several specific concerns in the process of elaboration of national programmes, and not as a less costly and more effective alternative modality of project implementation.

14. Available information on general development programmes as well as country programmes is inadequate, thus making it difficult for other developing countries to identify possible TCDC projects or components thereof which could be implemented on a TCDC basis. Information on projects within regional programmes is also considered to be insufficient.

15. There are difficulties in disseminating information compiled by individual Governments on their capacities and needs for TCDC, mainly as a result of communications problems.

Attitudes

16. There has not been a consistent approach to TCDC by some developing countries, mainly due to insufficient awareness and information as well as lack of continuity in the various national organizations dealing with TCDC. Governments have usually utilized traditional means of project execution rather than the TCDC modality which is readily available.

17. The inability of institutions from developing countries participating in TCDC projects fully to recover costs incurred on those projects is a form of disincentive.

18. Agencies in the United Nations system are faced with conflicting interests when considering the incorporation of TCDC components in projects as a result of current procedures for compensating them for their operational and administrative costs in such activities.

19. The agencies in the United Nations system have been placing emphasis on advocacy for projects, in the domain of their respective mandates, which in many cases constitute a constraining factor for TCDC option, while not enough attention has been focused on the objective of institution building in developing countries to increase their capability of planning, executing and managing development projects and programmes.

20. Some decision makers at the national and the UNDP level remain in doubt about the quality and effectiveness of TCDC inputs which result in preference being given to traditional modes of technical co-operation provided by the United Nations development system.

21. There is the wrong belief of some agencies of the United Nations development system that recruitment of experts from developing countries in agency-executed projects by itself fully satisfies the need for promoting TCDC as a more effective way of enhancing self-reliance of developing countries.

22. There is a widely spread assertion that the concept of tripartite partnership in UNDP gives the agencies of the United Nations development system an automatic right of execution of UNDP-funded projects, generating thereby a conflict of interests between TCDC and traditional technical co-operation modalities for distribution of overhead resources of UNDP and other international funds.

Focal points

23. Effective focal points both in Governments and United Nations system organizations represent one of the crucial elements for the full use of TCDC as a cost-effective and adequate mechanism for promoting development. Therefore the lack of focal points in certain cases and the weak functioning of many of those already existing constitute a significant impediment to TCDC.
24. In many cases national focal points have not been established at a level in the government structure that would enable them effectively to co-ordinate TCDC activities at the national level. In certain cases national focal points have not been delegated sufficient authority to oversee TCDC actions by other government agencies.
25. The performance of national focal points is hindered by difficulties in access to the relevant information systems, including those of the United Nations organizations, and by ready access to INRES-South which is an important component of the TCDC network.
26. The absence or weakness of regional or subregional focal points do not facilitate the full utilization of TCDC by developing countries within a given region or subregion, or between regions.

Financing

27. The increasing scarcity of financial resources for TCDC constitutes a major impediment.
28. In the light of the reports from United Nations organizations made available to the experts, the Group noted the recurrent low share of resources of the United Nations system being devoted to TCDC activities, as well as repeated attempts to interpret the regular technical co-operation programmes as TCDC.
29. There is a lack of information on possible sources of financing for TCDC activities.
30. Complicated administrative procedures in the various financial institutions for obtaining such resources are also a significant impediment.

Policies and procedures in the United Nations system

31. There has not been adequate enforcement by Governments of their guidelines to the organizations of the United Nations system regarding TCDC. There is a general absence of clear instructions to programmers and field office representatives on a systematic application of TCDC modalities in the processes of identification, formulation, appraisal and approval of projects supported by these organizations. As a result, TCDC has been kept out or at best on the fringe of the mainstream activities of the United Nations system.
32. The provisions for the use of TCDC in existing policies and procedures for

project formulation and appraisal in the United Nations system do not encourage the use of TCDC as a modality for implementation of projects or components of projects. On the contrary, such policies and procedures work against proclaimed objectives of promoting self-reliance of developing countries.

33. Current organizational structures in the various organizations in the United Nations system do not enable a clear identification of responsibilities as regards TCDC.

III. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTION

34. The Group of Experts agreed on a number of recommendations aimed at overcoming the foregoing identified impediments and thus strengthening TCDC. These recommendations encompass actions to be taken by Governments and by United Nations organizations.

A. Action at the government level

Promotion of awareness and improved dissemination of information on TCDC

35. Governments should utilize TCDC modalities in their national planning activities, particularly when programming their indicative planning figures (IPFs) and other forms of support from the organizations of the United Nations system.

36. The experts emphasized the need to bring the TCDC concept to the attention of planners and programmers in Governments as well as to national institutions and organizations interested in TCDC. In this regard the Group recommended that suitable orientation and training programmes be organized by UNDP for government officials and other personnel involved in TCDC.

37. Governments of developing countries should consider undertaking bilateral or multilateral TCDC planning exercises with one another with a view to identifying potential for TCDC projects.

38. There should be exchanges of an increased number of technical missions for joint programming among potential partner countries as a fundamental instrument for expanding the scope of TCDC.

Promotion of a positive attitude towards TCDC

39. A positive attitude towards TCDC should be encouraged through sharing of successful experiences that would highlight TCDC as a cost-effective and appropriate tool for fostering co-operation. To this end orientation seminars and workshops for government officials and other personnel involved in TCDC should be suitably organized with the assistance of the Special Unit for TCDC of UNDP and other organizations of the United Nations system.

40. In the preparation of their country programmes, Governments of developing countries should give due regard to the use of TCDC modalities in programme

implementation. This would enable a significant proportion of projects financed by UNDP to be implemented with inputs from other developing countries.

41. A suitable mechanism should be devised for the coverage of costs incurred by institutions from developing countries in implementing TCDC projects. Institutions providing expertise for the implementation of TCDC projects should have budgetary allocations for that purpose.

Focal points

42. Developing countries that have not yet done so should establish national focal points for TCDC. Existing focal points should be strengthened.

43. National focal points for TCDC should have a co-ordinating role of all sectors involved in TCDC and, where appropriate, established in the same government institution responsible for the management of external technical assistance.

44. Focal point staff should receive adequate training in programme formulation, project preparation and evaluation, and in the policies and procedures of UNDP and other organizations of the United Nations system, as well as other matters relevant to TCDC.

45. Provision should be made for ensuring continuity of the core staff of the focal point.

Financing

46. Even though financing of TCDC is the primary responsibility of developing countries, the international community has a definitive role in providing substantial support to TCDC.

47. In the fifth programming cycle, there should be a substantial increase of the share of TCDC in UNDP expenditures devoted to regional, interregional and global projects.

48. With a view to enhancing the cost-effectiveness of technical co-operation, special effort should be made to ensure the execution of projects by the relevant developing country institutions themselves, utilizing the capacities of other developing countries in the process on a TCDC basis.

49. Governments should take the initiative to enter into triangular arrangements involving two developing countries and a third financing partner with a view to increasing the flow and effectiveness of international co-operation available to developing countries.

50. National focal points staff should receive adequate training on financial matters related to TCDC, including information on sources of financing.

Policies and procedures in the United Nations system

51. For the next few years, TCDC should constitute an important item on the agenda of the regular meetings of the governing bodies of organizations of the United Nations system.

52. The definition and scope of TCDC should be reviewed and elucidated in a wider sense in the light of experience gained and the decisions taken by the Governing Council of UNDP and the High-level Committee on the Review of Technical Co-operation among Developing Countries since the adoption in 1978 of the Buenos Aires Plan of Action for Promoting and Implementing Technical Co-operation among Developing Countries, taking into account the need to make a clear distinction between TCDC and the traditional mode of technical co-operation.

B. Action by the United Nations system

Promotion of awareness and improvement of information on TCDC

53. The staff of UNDP and other relevant organizations of the United Nations development system should be given adequate training in TCDC concepts and methods.

54. Field offices of UNDP should upgrade their competence and capacity in effectively deploying TCDC in country programming, by making it a priority responsibility of resident representatives to improve information flows to Governments of developing countries on the potential for TCDC, and to train national focal points on TCDC matters.

55. Organizations of the United Nations system should facilitate the fielding by developing countries of technical missions to other developing countries as an important instrument for expanding the scope of TCDC. Whenever project formulation activity commences with a preparatory mission, should the Government so require, arrangements should be made to include developing country experts in such missions so as to facilitate the consideration of TCDC approaches for the implementation of the project.

56. UNDP should undertake the publication of information on capacities and needs of developing countries for TCDC by country and by sector in order to assist developing countries in identifying opportunities for TCDC through regular UNDP public information publications.

57. In addition to the Planner's Handbook on TCDC currently under preparation, the Special Unit for TCDC of UNDP should also produce a brochure in the appropriate languages for widespread dissemination of the concept, potential and usefulness of TCDC, stressing the opportunities for cost savings and for optimizing the use of IPF resources.

Focal points

58. UNDP should assist Governments of developing countries upon request in the establishment or strengthening of national focal points for TCDC. UNDP should give special recognition to the particular needs of those countries, whose economic circumstances and institutional weaknesses would make it difficult to give necessary priority to TCDC. UNDP should provide, where necessary, human and financial resources to these countries to ensure their effective participation in TCDC activities.

59. Organizations of the United Nations development system should set up or strengthen, as appropriate, their focal points for TCDC.

Financing

60. Organizations of the United Nations system should co-operate with Governments' efforts to increase substantially UNDP expenditures for TCDC modalities in regional, interregional and global projects of the fifth programming cycle.

61. The Special Unit for TCDC of UNDP should continue to compile and disseminate information on all available sources of financing for TCDC.

62. UNDP and other organizations of the United Nations development system should continue to simplify, where appropriate, its financial procedures governing TCDC projects.

Policies and procedures in the organizations of the United Nations system

63. Pursuant to recommendation 33 of the Buenos Aires Plan of Action for Promoting and Implementing Technical Co-operation among Developing Countries and decision 6/3 of the High-level Committee on the Review of Technical Co-operation among Developing Countries, UNDP should bring TCDC into the mainstream of its programme by placing the main responsibilities for application of TCDC modality in country programming on resident co-ordinators and revising its Programme and Projects Manual accordingly prior to the initiation of the fifth programming cycle.

64. The programme and projects manuals or equivalent documents of every organization should be systematically reviewed and suitably amended, where necessary, to include consideration of TCDC alternatives in the process of identification, formulation, appraisal and approval of every development project supported by the organizations.

65. Pursuant to the provisions of paragraph 10 of General Assembly resolution 42/180 of 11 December 1987, the Resident Co-ordinator should carry the responsibility of assisting Governments with all necessary elements for their decision on the method of executing each UNDP-supported project concerning the total or partial use of TCDC modalities.

66. Similar responsibility should be assigned to the field representatives of the specialized agencies in respect of projects being supported from non-UNDP sources of financing.

67. The Special Unit for TCDC at UNDP headquarters and the TCDC focal points at headquarters of other organizations of the United Nations system should be fully associated with the processes of formulation of policies and appraisal and approval of projects.

68. The TCDC Information Referral System - INRES-South - should be extensively used by the resident representatives of UNDP and, whenever necessary, by the organizations of the United Nations development system in identifying suitable

developing country institutions for obtaining project inputs at the project formulation stage. Detailed information on the institutions so identified should be promptly provided to the respective local authorities for the exercise of choice for selection. Where necessary, short exploratory missions to selected institutions should be fielded to enable the national authorities at both ends to review the project proposals and to discuss mutually agreeable terms for co-operation in the formulation and execution of the project. The competent United Nations organizations should facilitate these efforts whenever so required by national authorities.

69. Organizations of the United Nations system, particularly specialized agencies, in compliance with the relevant decisions of their governing bodies in supporting and promoting TCDC, should exercise the following roles in formulating and implementing projects:

(a) Assistance to national authorities and to the resident representatives of UNDP in identifying suitable developing country institutions for obtaining project inputs in their respective fields of competence;

(b) Assistance in preparing TCDC project proposals and in drafting project documents;

(c) Assistance in implementing projects or those components of the projects for which suitable capacities in developing country institutions may have not been identified, upon request by national authorities;

(d) Assistance in evaluating project implementation mid-stream during the life of the project, and project results upon completion of the projects;

(e) Dissemination of information on project experiences gained in developing countries through workshops, orientation seminars and publications;

(f) Assistance to national authorities in identifying sources of financing for projects or for activities stemming from the implementation of projects.

70. The Special Unit for TCDC should continue to convene meetings of the TCDC focal points of the organizations on an annual basis, and preferably before the regular sessions of the Governing Council of UNDP.

Notes

1/ Report of the United Nations Conference on Technical Co-operation among Developing Countries, Buenos Aires, 30 August-12 September 1978 (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.78.II.A.11 and corrigendum), chap. I.

Appendix

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS IN THE MEETING OF THE GROUP OF GOVERNMENTAL
EXPERTS ON THE RULES, REGULATIONS AND PROCEDURES OF THE
ORGANIZATIONS OF THE UNITED NATIONS DEVELOPMENT SYSTEM CONCERNING
TECHNICAL CO-OPERATION AMONG DEVELOPING COUNTRIES, HELD IN
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