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WORKING GROUP ON TECHNICAL CO-OPERATION AMONG
DEVELOPING COUNTRIES

1. INTRODUCTION

The Regional Director invites the attention of the Regional Committee to the deliberations of the Working Group on Technical Co-operation among Developing Countries which was set up by the Governing Council of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) at its January 1973 session. This was in line with the United Nations General Assembly resolution 2974 (XXVII) of 14 December 1972 on Co-operation among developing countries in the United Nations technical co-operation programmes and increased efficiency of the capacity of the United Nations development system.

The principal aims of this Working Group - whose establishment was mainly due to the initiative of those members of the Governing Council representing the developing countries were:

- to examine and make recommendations on the best way for developing countries to share their capacities and experience with one another with a view to increasing and improving development assistance; and
- to examine the relative possibilities and advantages of regional and interregional technical co-operation among developing countries.

The Working Group, which comprises representatives of developed as well as developing countries, has held three sessions, the last of these being held in New York in May 1974, at which a series of recommendations was elaborated and presented to the Governing Council in June.

2. BACKGROUND

The considerations that have animated the Working Group's discussions have been closely related to the contribution which technical co-operation among developing countries can make towards the New International Economic Order foreseen in the Declaration and Programme of Action adopted by the Sixth Special Session of the General Assembly. The thesis that the resources available, both human and material, within the developing countries themselves should be more widely used on a reciprocal basis, continues to gain ground. In this way it is hoped that some machinery can be instituted at national level, as well as regional and interregional levels, to permit developing countries to share their capabilities and experience with one another in such a way as to increase and improve the quality of development assistance and bring about more effective regional co-operation. This would in effect constitute a new tool in the development process.

This concept has also been receiving increasing attention over recent years within WHO to meet the developing countries' desire to participate more actively in and contribute more decisively to the formulation and implementation of operational activities. In WHO's view the outmoded "donor/recipient" relationship must be changed to give way to a truly international co-operative effort in which the self-reliance of the developing countries will find its natural place.

3. RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE WORKING GROUP

Among the major recommendations the Working Group has put forward in its final report are the following:

- Developing countries should devise specific programmes on technical co-operation among themselves which should be part, as appropriate, of overall co-operative schemes which the developing countries and international organizations could complement.
- Each developing country should establish, with UNDP assistance, a special office to co-ordinate such activities.
- Developing countries are urged to contribute to national and regional institutions located in other developing countries and to use these for training.
- Agencies and UNDP should recognize and make every use of the capacities and potentialities of developing countries, including manpower, training and research facilities and exchange of technical information. To this end UNDP and agencies (particularly through regional offices) should revise rosters of experts, training centres, consultant firms and equipment suppliers. Developing countries themselves should maintain up-to-date lists of experts and facilities available.

- Financial priority should be accorded by UNDP to regional and interregional projects emerging under this scheme. For their part, agencies should consider using their regular budget resources to promote this type of technical co-operation.

- Least Developed Countries (LDCs) and developing countries with geographical disadvantages should receive special attention.

- UNDP should expand assistance to National Liberation Movements and efforts should also be made to permit developing countries, that are in a position to do so, to extend assistance to National Liberation Movements.

- To foster these ideas, a symposium on technical co-operation among developing countries should be held under UNDP aegis, possibly in 1976. This might be preceded by regional or sectoral symposia.

- A Special Unit should be set up in UNDP headquarters to serve as a clearing house for information and to facilitate co-ordination. At the country level, the UNDP Resident Representative should act as the focal point and maintain contact with parallel points in the agencies, which in WHO's case would be the office of the WHO Representative. These various points should collaborate to maintain and circulate data rosters of the capacities and needs of developing countries and co-ordinate work with the special office in each of the developing countries.

4. FUTURE ACTION

At its eighteenth session in June 1974, the Governing Council approved the final report of the Working Group and decided to transmit it to the General Assembly at its next session for decision. The Governing Council will then review the situation at its January 1975 session in the light of the General Assembly decision. Subsequently the Council at its twenty-first session in January 1976 will review the experience gained during the initial stages of the scheme. Meanwhile, the Governing Council has authorized the Administrator of UNDP to establish the Special Unit recommended by the Working Group.

Although the recommendations of the Working Group are aimed at the social and economic development in its totality, there would seem to be important implications specifically for the field of health. It is with this in mind that the Regional Director wishes to bring these innovative ideas to the notice of the Regional Committee for whatever action may be deemed appropriate.

PART II - MINUTES OF THE MAIN COMMITTEE