

UNITED NATIONS  
GENERAL  
ASSEMBLY



Distr.  
GENERAL

A/C.5/667  
23 October 1956

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

Eleventh session  
FIFTH COMMITTEE

BUDGET ESTIMATES FOR THE FINANCIAL YEAR 1957

The Outposting of Certain Programme Officers  
of the Technical Assistance Administration

Report by the Secretary-General

A. Introduction

1. At its tenth session, the General Assembly considered a proposal by the Secretary-General, made on the basis of recommendations of his Survey Group, to effect a partial re-organization of the work of the Programme Division of the Technical Assistance Administration. The proposed arrangement was designed to supplement and strengthen the close integration previously existing between TAA and the substantive Departments both at Headquarters and in the field.

2. The essential elements of the proposal of the Survey Group were that certain functions and responsibilities of the Area Offices of the Programme Division should be taken over by the Office of the Director of that Division, and that its residuary Area Offices should be outposted to the cities in which the headquarters of the Regional Economic Commission secretariats are located. Thus, while the Technical Assistance Administration at Headquarters, in addition to the over-all direction of the programme, would continue to be responsible for financial and budgetary control, for recruitment and administrative servicing of experts and fellows, and for publication and distribution of reports, substantive support for the programme would be drawn directly from the Regional Commission secretariats, as well as from the Department of Economic and Social Affairs in New York.

3. The Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions, in its Twenty-fifth Report to the Tenth Session of the General Assembly, had voiced concern lest the proposed arrangements might lead to delays in the formulation and approval of requests and in the recruitment and servicing of experts,

56-27833

6P.

especially if recipient governments should prefer to deal directly at the highest level with TAA at Headquarters. The Advisory Committee also felt that (as in the case of the proposals of the Survey Group concerning the Regional Commission secretariat) the recommendations relating to TAA involved substantial policy considerations which should be accorded careful study by the appropriate organs, such as the Technical Assistance Committee and the Economic and Social Council. The Advisory Committee was, therefore, reluctant to recommend the immediate adoption of the Survey Group's proposals and suggested instead that their consideration should be postponed until the Eleventh Session of the Assembly.

4. In the Fifth Committee of the General Assembly, attention was called by a number of delegations to the further observation of the Advisory Committee that it might be appropriate to authorize the Secretary-General to undertake exploratory measures of a practical nature, within the over-all budgetary appropriations, with a view to testing the advantages and effectiveness of some of his proposals. After considerable discussion, it was proposed and agreed "that the Secretary-General should be authorized to apply, in a limited and experimental manner, the recommendations made by the Survey Group for bringing about a closer relationship between the TAA and the Secretariats of the Regional Economic Commissions" and that for this purpose certain TAA personnel might be posted to Santiago and Mexico City in 1956, "on the understanding that no net additional appropriations would be involved and that the Secretary-General would report on the results of such an experiment to the General Assembly at its Eleventh Session". In the course of the discussion, the assurance was requested and given by the representative of the Secretary-General that, should the experiment prove unsatisfactory, existing practices could and would be promptly re-established.

5. During the Twenty-second Session of the Economic and Social Council in July 1956, the experimental outposting of part of the TAA Programme Division received further consideration. Certain differences of opinion were reflected in the debate. In the course of the discussion assurances were asked of, and given by the Director-General of TAA that the proposed arrangement "would in no way complicate the country programming procedure, that it would not affect the roles of governments or of Resident Representatives in that procedure, that it would not change the existing responsibilities of TAC, TAB or TAA in United Nations

technical assistance matters, and that it would not tend to regionalize what was at present a world-wide approach to the recruitment of experts and the placing of fellows".

6. In its eighth annual report (May 1956) the Economic Commission for Latin America took note with satisfaction of the measures adopted by the General Assembly concerning the outposting of part of the Technical Assistance Administration's Programme Division and expressed the hope that the secretariat of the Commission would inform Member Governments, at whatever intervals it might consider appropriate, of the progress of these activities.

B. Purposes of the Experiment

7. The purposes of the experimental posting of Technical Assistance Programme Officers to Santiago and to Mexico City were to determine whether the proposals of the Survey Group would provide for more effective administration of the programme by:

- (a) enabling the Administration and the Resident Representatives of the Technical Assistance Board, through the outposted officers, to draw as fully as possible on the experience, judgement and knowledge of the ECLA secretariat, and
- (b) bringing the Technical Assistance Administration into closer contact with Governments receiving assistance.

C. Steps taken towards implementation of the Experiment

8. The Chief of the Technical Assistance Administration's Office for Latin America and three programme officers were posted to Santiago, Chile, from 1 June 1956 and two programme officers were posted to Mexico City from 1 August 1956. The officers in Santiago are directly engaged on technical assistance programmes in the ten countries of South America, while those in Mexico City are responsible for the United Nations programmes in Mexico, Central America, including Panama, and certain countries in the Caribbean area.

9. The Governments of the countries concerned were informed of the new and experimental procedures in letters describing the purposes of the change and outlining the procedures that would be followed during the experimental period. Governments were advised to forward their requests for technical assistance, as before, through the Resident Representatives of the Technical Assistance Board.

10. As 10 July had been established by the Technical Assistance Board as the deadline for the programme submissions by the Governments for technical assistance in 1957, a series of meetings of the TAA programme officers with the substantive personnel of the ECLA secretariat was organized early in June to plan arrangements by which the resources of the Secretariat might most effectively be made available to the programme officers, the Resident Representatives and the appropriate national officials in connexion with their common concern for the economic development of the countries of South America. In this way, and through subsequent meetings, the knowledge and experience of the ECLA Secretariat was made directly available in the planning of the technical assistance programmes for 1957.

11. From the beginning also the substantive resources of ECLA were employed in the processing of both interim and final reports of technical assistance experts serving in South American countries.

12. Following the initial meetings, the Chief of the Office for Latin America and members of the staff visited the various countries during the programming period in order to assist the Resident Representatives and the Governments in the formulation of their submissions, and to communicate to them the suggestions made by the ECLA secretariat concerning the most promising fields for technical assistance in each country. Argentina, Colombia, Ecuador and Venezuela were visited once; Bolivia, Brazil, Peru and Uruguay on two occasions, and Paraguay was visited three times. The Chief of the Office also maintained close relations with the Chilean Government from his headquarters in Santiago.

13. As a result of these contacts and discussions, and of the general growth of the programme, a certain shift of emphasis of requests towards a greater concentration on the development of power and transport became noticeable; to a lesser extent, investigation of mineral resources and programming of economic development also showed increases.

14. In Mexico, where the TAA Office was opened after the programming period, one programme officer, with the substantive backing of the local ECLA secretariat, kept in contact with the Mexican Government and accompanied the Resident Representative on a short visit to each of the countries of the Central American Isthmus. These activities came so late in the season that their influence was not widely reflected in the 1957 programme.

D. Conclusions

15. The results of the experiment in the countries of South America during the summer of 1956 indicate that a fruitful collaboration is being established with the ECLA secretariat through the outposted TAA programme officers. A closer contact has also been developed between TAA and the agencies of the Governments concerned with economic development, and the latter as well as the TAA experts in the field have benefited from the knowledge concerning their economic problems that has been accumulated in the ECLA secretariat.

It can be said that the initial results of the outposting experiment have been definitely encouraging. It is, however, obvious that the experiment has been under way for too limited a period to permit a clear and final conclusion to be advanced as to the over-all desirability or otherwise of the new arrangements.

16. Although it is anticipated that the ultimate result of outposting certain programme personnel will, as forecast by the Survey Group, be a reduction in cost, there is an initial increase in cost because of the necessity of providing premises not previously available, of assuring maintenance of communications, and of financing the regional travel foreseen in the outposting proposals. Transporting and installing the outposted staff and providing the most urgent requirements has been financed, although with some difficulty, within the limit of funds available for the technical assistance operation in 1956. The costs expected to arise or continue in 1957 are estimated as follows:

(a) Continued storage of household effects .....	\$ 1,500
(b) Regional travel.....	6,000
(c) Rental and maintenance of premises (and utilities) .....	6,400
(d) Office equipment .....	4,000
(e) Miscellaneous office supplies .....	3,100
(f) Communications .....	4,000
	<hr/>
Total .....	\$25,000

17. It is the opinion of the Secretary-General that these running costs cannot be absorbed within the budget estimates shown in Section 26. No provision for these additional costs was made in the initial estimates because of the absence, at the time of budget preparation, of authority to continue the experimental

outposting beyond 31 December 1956. Hence, if it is the decision of the General Assembly to continue the experiment in 1957, it will be necessary to increase the total expenses foreseen under section 26 of the Budget Estimates by the amount of \$25,000. This additional sum will be obtained out of savings that are expected to accrue during the course of the coming year in the operation of the programme. Accordingly, supplementary application to the Technical Assistance Board for approval to apply savings from country programmes to the extent necessary, will be made.

18. In view of the inconclusive nature of the evidence that has accumulated during the very brief period in which the outposting procedure has been in operation, it is recommended that the experiment be continued at the discretion of the Secretary-General during 1957, and that a final decision be postponed until the Secretary-General is in a position to make more positive reports to the summer session of ECOSOC and to the Twelfth Session of the General Assembly. It is further recommended that for the same period no steps be taken in relation to the outposting of TAA personnel in other areas.

-----