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BUDGET ESTIMATES FOR THE FINANCIAL YEAR 1957

Establishment of Regional Social Affairs Units

Report by the Secretary-General

1. During its consideration of the Secretary-General's report on Organization of the Secretariat^{1/} in 1955, the Fifth Committee decided to defer to its eleventh session consideration of the proposals of the Secretary-General with regard to the organization of the work of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, the regional economic commissions and the Technical Assistance Administration. It was agreed that the Secretary-General should be free to carry out on an experimental basis his proposals for the outposting of certain Technical Assistance Programme officers in Latin America and that he should report to the eleventh session of the General Assembly on the experience thus gained. The Economic and Social Council during its twenty-second session in Geneva requested that the interim report should also cover the detailment of social affairs staff. Since the experimental plan for detachment of TAA officers to Santiago and the plans for detachment of social affairs officers to four overseas duty stations have proceeded on a different time schedule and with somewhat different objectives, the Secretary-General believes that separate information reports to the General Assembly would lead to greater clarity.
2. The proposals of the Secretary-General concerning the social affairs units should be viewed in the context of the development of the social programme in the

^{1/} See Official Records of the General Assembly, Tenth Session, Agenda Item No. 47 (A/3041).

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United Nations. As early as 1948 the rapid development of the Advisory Social Welfare Services programme made it necessary to appoint regional social welfare advisers who would assist Governments in defining their requests for assistance, help to brief individual experts sent to various countries in response to those requests, assist Governments and Headquarters in conducting regional seminars and in the utilization of the fellowship programme. Further, these officers were asked to give assistance to UNICEF on the social aspects of its programme, and to furnish specific information to Headquarters for certain technical reports. By 1950, one such officer was stationed in the field at each of the following centres: Bangkok, Santiago, Guatemala City and Beirut. From the beginning, these four posts were financed from funds appropriated for the advisory social welfare services (currently Section 28 of the budget).

3. The inauguration of the Expanded Programme of Technical Assistance and the increasing attention given by the Economic and Social Council to broad policies and programmes directed toward the economic and social development of the under-developed countries placed heavy burdens on the Headquarters staff and the regional welfare advisers for greater attention to the social aspects of economic development. The regional economic commissions themselves in the course of their studies could not fail to touch upon such socio-economic questions as population, housing and regional planning, community development and urbanization. Since the staffs of the regional commissions were not competent to deal with the social aspects of these questions, they have called upon Headquarters and the regional advisers for assistance.

4. To meet these demands, the Secretary-General set out a plan in 1955 for the outposting of a limited number of social affairs officers to supplement the four existing regional social welfare advisers. After consultations with the Social Commission in May 1955, which gave full support to the plan, the Secretary-General began to implement those parts which required no increase in budgetary appropriations. The Secretariat is therefore able to give an appraisal of the development of these arrangements, which have so far been in partial operation for about fifteen months.

5. In September 1955, a unit was established in Santiago comprising a senior officer, detailed from the Bureau of Social Affairs, the regional social welfare adviser, and a sociologist and social statistician who were existing staff members

of the ECLA Secretariat. The Under-Secretary for the Department of Economic and Social Affairs has exercised overall responsibility on behalf of the Secretary-General, approving the annual work programme for the unit, and from time to time, the more detailed work schedule. The Executive Secretary of ECLA has assumed administrative responsibility for the unit. The technical responsibility has been assumed by the Bureau of Social Affairs at Headquarters.

The programme of work for the unit was derived from three sources: the programmes of the Social and Population Commission, the assistance required to carry out certain studies of ECLA and the Advisory Social Welfare Services programme. In the first branch of its work the unit was requested by Headquarters to concentrate on problems of urbanization in Latin America in order to provide material for the forthcoming World Social Report and to prepare for a conference on urbanization requested by the Social Commission. The unit has made a substantial contribution to the data available at Headquarters through direct contact with Governments and research institutions and will be able to organize the conference more efficiently and economically than could be done from New York. The unit was also asked to organize a study tour of senior officials from selected Latin American countries to examine and analyse a variety of experiments in community development. The preparations have been made by the chief of the unit in direct contact with the Governments concerned and with the specialized agencies in health, education, agriculture, and labour. If the unit had not existed, the more costly procedure of sending an official from New York or recruiting a special director for the study tour would have been necessary.

In an area of equal interest to the Population Commission and to the ECLA, the unit has continued manpower studies in a number of Latin American countries with the co-operation of ILO officials in the region. Again, the fact that the officer making the study can be in direct contact with Government officials concerned is likely to improve the comparability of the data and the methodology used.

Finally, the contribution of the unit to the technical assistance programme in the region is already evident. The 1957 requests of Governments show a substantial number of broader requests for social policy advisers to work with the economic planning boards, requests for advice in the financing of housing

programmes, and other projects which show a growing awareness of the importance of integrating social and economic programmes.

6. The unit in Bangkok was also established in September 1955, when it was possible to detach a first officer specializing in community development to supplement the social welfare adviser who had been assigned to the Bangkok region for four years. The first six months were spent chiefly in organizing and participating in direct assistance to Governments in connexion with community development and social services projects. The new officer has subsequently assisted the officers of ECAFE in planning and doing initial research on a project in the ECAFE work-programme on the role of expanded self-help measures in economic development and in the preparation of materials for the Working Party on Economic Development and Planning.

A specialist in social defence questions was sent from the Bureau of Social Affairs to Bangkok in May 1956. He and other officers there have played a substantial role in the urbanization conference held in Bangkok in August 1956, which was a joint project of the Social Commission, ECAFE and UNESCO. He is collecting and analysing materials in the region for two Social Commission studies on the prevention of juvenile delinquency and of prostitution. Finally, he has assisted the TAB resident representatives in negotiating with Governments arrangements for the establishment of a regional social defence institute under the technical assistance programme and for preparing the second regional conference on this subject required by General Assembly resolution 415 (V).

The unit has felt strongly the need for a senior social policy officer to achieve the desired fuller integration of social and economic development work in the region and for specialists in demography and in town planning, both important problems for countries in that region and the subject of continuing requests for help from the United Nations both through research and technical assistance.

7. Finally, the Regional Social Affairs Office in the Middle East was strengthened in July 1955 by the addition of a specialist in community development to supplement the work of the general social welfare adviser. The increase in the amount and quality of technical assistance projects in the social field has been the most obvious result. In several cases, the United Nations has been able to accept younger experts for work in the various countries, because of the availability

of advice and guidance from the regional officers. The organization of regional projects in community development in accordance with a 1955 resolution of ECOSOC has also been facilitated. Follow-up of short-term missions in Turkey and Iran has also been possible. The unit has also furnished data collected directly from Governments and research institutions for the World Social Report.

Furthermore, the amount of time available to assist in welfare and training aspects of UNICEF and UNRWA programmes has been increased and meets a long-felt need from those agencies. Closer relationships with the WHO regional office on UNICEF projects and with UNESCO and other specialized agency field personnel in connexion with such joint projects as the fundamental education centre in Egypt has led to improvements sought by the Governments and all the agencies concerned.

A special benefit of the establishment of the Regional Social Affairs Office came at the time of the earthquake in Lebanon, when the Office was able to mobilize three United Nations officers to help the Government in both emergency relief and long-term reconstruction plans.

Finally, the Office is preparing certain projects for 1957 to be carried out in co-operation with economic affairs officers from Headquarters who are making studies in the region.

8. In appraising this experience, the Secretary-General stated in the foreword to his budget estimates for 1957 that:

"The experience thus far has proved the basic soundness of the Survey Group's recommendations on this point and in my budget estimates for 1957 provision is therefore made for the full implementation of the plan."

9. These estimates provided for five professional officers and three general service posts in the Middle East (Section 8 of the Budget Estimates); for six professional officers and four general services posts in Asia and the Far East (Section 21); and for four professional officers and two general service posts in Latin America (Section 22). It was proposed that these establishments should be financed in part from funds appropriated for advisory social welfare services (Section 28) in view of the functions to be performed by the social affairs officers in connexion with this programme. The provision of \$75,000 from Section 28 was to be offset against a total salary cost of \$163,800 for the three units in 1957.

10. The Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions, in commenting on these estimates, made three major points, namely:

- (a) that the final approval of the plan should await the consideration of the ECOSOC at its twenty-second session;
- (b) that in the absence of a decision to regionalize inter-governmental functions in the social field, the units should be subject to supervision and receive instructions from the Bureau of Social Affairs and that consequently the funds should be budgeted in Section 8 of the estimates;
- (c) that the requirements of sound administration and budgetary control make it undesirable to apply Section 28 funds to the costs of the regional units. The Committee proposed as an alternative that two professional posts and one general service post for each unit be budgeted in the regular administrative budget and that up to a total of six regional social welfare experts with appropriate secretarial assistance might be approved by appropriate programme organs concerned with the utilization of funds from Section 28.^{2/}

11. On 8 August, following a discussion of the regional social affairs unit which took place in the Co-ordination Committee of the Economic and Social Council the Council adopted a resolution which, inter alia,

"Expresses the hope that the interim report the Secretary-General intends to submit to the eleventh session of the General Assembly on the posting of the Headquarters personnel to the regional commission offices will also cover the detailment of Social Affairs staff."

12. The Secretary-General agrees with the Advisory Committee's observation that the units should receive supervision and instructions from the Bureau of Social Affairs; such an observation is, indeed, in line with his own conception of these units as "advance echelons" of the Bureau of Social Affairs. Present instructions provide that the Under-Secretary for the Department of Economic and Social Affairs will approve the annual work programme for the units on the advice of the Bureau, and that instructions on questions concerning the implementation of this programme may be dealt with in direct communications from the Bureau to

^{2/} See Official Records of the General Assembly, Eleventh Session, Supplement No. 7, (A/3160, paras. 94 to 97).

the regional units. The recommendation of the Advisory Committee that funds for such units should be included in the Headquarters departmental budget (Section 8) rather than in the budgets of the regional secretariats of ECAFE and ECLA (Sections 21 and 22) presents no difficulty, although for the reasons explained below, the Secretary-General has serious reservations on the total amount which the Committee recommends should be provided for these posts on a continuing basis.

13. The proposal to divide the units into two parts, one to study and analyse and service meetings, and the other to give direct advisory services to Governments on request, does not, in the view of the Secretary-General, accord with the realities of the work in the field and could well give rise to considerable administrative complication. The social field covers a wide range of activities such as community development, housing, population, social services and social defence and it is not practicable to have two officers who prepare reports on all these subjects and two experts in each of these three regions who give advisory services to Governments in all the same subjects. The General Assembly and the Advisory Committee itself have frequently requested the fullest possible integration of the work of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs and the Technical Assistance Administration. The integration is complete in each officer since responsibilities are divided among the officers according to their technical fields of specialization rather than types of work. This was the reason for the proposal of the Secretary-General to take a lump sum grant from Section 28 of the Budget for the contribution to technical assistance in this field rather than to separate the office into two parts, one of "regular secretariat" and one of "regional experts", which would complicate both the lines of authority and the terms and conditions of employment.

14. The Secretary-General also wishes to point out that the amount recommended by the Advisory Committee for inclusion in the 1957 budget would make it possible to implement the basic plan in the following respects: (a) no demographers can be assigned to the three regions since population studies are not basically technical assistance activities and no Headquarters officers are available for detail to the regions in view of the 40 per cent reduction in the budget of the Population Branch in 1955. This would be very unfortunate in the light of the importance attached to population problems, especially in Asia and Latin America;

(b) no junior professional assistant would be available to the Middle East Unit. This is important since no regional economic staff exists in this region to assist in the collection of data needed by the senior professional officers;

(c) the secretarial assistance needed by the regional experts could be covered by project funds from Section 28 only if they were taken on a short-term irregular basis and charged to specific projects. It appears to the Secretary-General sounder to employ such staff on a regular secretariat basis.

15. In brief, the Secretary-General believes that the experience of the last year or so has indicated the value of regional social affairs units. It continues to be his view that these units should be established along the lines recommended by the survey group. On both administrative and substantive grounds, he believes that it would be desirable to have each unit function as a complete entity and not divided into two parts, one of "regular secretariat" dealing with studies and reports, and one of "regional experts" giving advisory services on a continuing basis to Governments in the same subjects. As regards the financial arrangements, the Secretary-General sees no objection to the Advisory Committee's recommendation that the cost to the units be budgeted together with the estimates for the Department of Economic and Social Affairs. It is believed, however, after careful review, that the effective implementation of the survey group's plan calls for the number of regular staff members originally proposed, except for a reduction of one second officer and two secretarial posts.

16. The comparative recommendations of the Advisory Committee and of the Secretary-General regarding the staffing pattern for the three units are as follows:

Recommendation of the Advisory
Committee

Proposal of the
Secretary-General

Not more than six experts, with appropriate secretarial assistance, to be attached to the three regional units as a whole. And in addition, the following staff:

Far East

1 Senior Officer (Chief)
1 First Officer

1 Secretary

1 Senior Officer (Chief)
4 First Officers (Community
Development*, Social Defence,*
Family and Child Welfare** and
Demographer)
2 Secretaries

Recommendation of the Advisory Committee Proposal of the Secretary-General

Latin America

1 Senior Officer (Chief)
1 First Officer

1 Secretary

1 Senior Officer (Chief)
3 First Officers (Social Aspects of
Economic Development,* Family and
Child Welfare** and Demographer
2 Secretaries

Middle East

1 Senior Officer
1 First Officer

1 Secretary

1 Senior Officer (Chief)**
1 First Officer (Community
Development)*
2 Second Officers (Family and Child
Welfare, Demographer)
1 Assistant Officer (Statistics and
General)
3 Secretaries

Maximum Total

12 Professional Staff (including
experts)
3 Secretaries, plus additional
secretarial assistance for
experts

14 Professional Staff
7 Secretaries

It would appear from the above summary that in terms of total staffing requirements there is no substantial difference between the recommendation of the Advisory Committee and the Secretary-General's proposals, given the fact that existing regional adviser posts have been provided on a continuing basis for a number of years. The difference lies mainly in the administrative arrangements proposed.

17. The Secretary-General's proposals as set out in the present report would require a budgetary provision of \$159,000 for the regional social affairs units in Section 8 of the budget. This represents an increase of \$75,000 over the amount proposed by the Advisory Committee. In order to achieve the objectives of the plan within the overall budget totals proposed for social activities, the

* Existing post - staff member.

** Existing post - regional social welfare adviser.

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Secretary-General now recommends that this increase be offset by a corresponding reduction in the total grant-in-aid for social welfare advisory services under Section 28 from \$1 million to a new level of \$925,000. This appears justified in light of the functions to be performed and consistent with the Advisory Committee's recommendations referred to specifically in paragraph 10 (c) above; at the same time, this procedure would eliminate the administrative complications entailed in having social affairs regular staff and regional expert advisers in each office.
