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FUTURE ACTIVITIES OF THE LATIN AMERICAN INSTITUTE
FOR ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL PLANNING

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INTRODUCTION

The new phase for ILPES has begun at a time in which the changing international situation has intensified and given characteristics to the traditional problems of Latin American countries. At a moment when the demands and needs of the vast majority of the population are being expressed with increasing anxiety, new problems from abroad have been added to the internal difficulties, chronic in some cases, which affect development in Latin America.

This set of problems must not be seen merely as an obstacle to the task being carried out by Latin American countries to achieve a better standard of living, but rather as a challenge which may stimulate the mobilization of resources and efforts within the framework of coherent and integrated programmes. It has been frequently reiterated that the structures of Latin American countries possess certain characteristics which do not contribute greatly to their dynamism. What has not been equally stressed, however, is the fact that these countries do possess appropriate conditions such as considerable natural resources, masses of unemployed or underemployed population, and access to the technology of other countries. The mobilization of this potential requires, also, other kinds of actions among which those tending to bring about a high degree of rationality of public and private economic activity stand out. Since its initiation, ILPES has developed important contributions to planning in Latin American countries. With these past achievements as a basis, and taking into account changing conditions and the challenge of the present international situation, it should continue to make progress in refining the methods, instruments, and modalities of planning, with a view to obtain substantial improvement in the

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living conditions of the population and a higher rate of growth. ECLA Resolutions 220 (AC. 52) and 340 (AC. 66) empower the Institute to tackle in the best possible manner, the task for which it was created, which is based on the orientations originated from the Latin American governments. Dynamic and functional collaboration with ECLA and UNDP, and coordination with other UN organizations and international agencies, will be decisive factors for success in the work to be faced.

If due note is taken of the remarkable progress made in planning in the countries of the region and the increasing demands for the services of ILPES, it is convenient to concentrate efforts on those fields from which the countries may obtain the greatest benefits and on those which the governments might, for a variety of reasons, be unable to deal with at present.

It is worth mentioning that the Institute has, by virtue of the assistance from UNDP, a permanent staff of 26 professionals and an additional capacity for contracting services of 70 man-months per year. With these limited resources ILPES has to attend to an increasing demand, both in the quantity and in the quality of its services, on the part of governments. Furthermore, in recent years many countries have considerably increased the numbers and the level of officials engaged in planning. It therefore appears that the efforts of ILPES to count on professionals of the highest quality would have to be intensified in order to maintain a technical level that would allow it to attend, in the most effective way, to the requests from countries in the field of advisory services, training, and research. To satisfy this demand, it is also necessary to increase available resources with voluntary contributions from governments, as established in Resolution 340 (AC. 66).

On the other hand, the Institute should continue to enrich itself with experiences in economic and social planning, not only from developed countries, but also--and mainly--from developing

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countries. A great deal of progress has been made in the theory and in the practice of planning in Latin American countries. An intensification of research carried out by ILPES on its own, or in combination with ECLA, coordination with the activities of research centres in the countries, and a close and systematic contact with Planning Offices, will allow the Institute to render more fruitful advisory services and improve the training activities.

For this reason, in addition to its eminently operational role, ILPES must also be an organization of intellectual reflection, which draws on the experiences of the countries and in turn offers the results of surveys and research which it carries out.

In training activities, ILPES will continue to hold courses, seminars, and other teaching activities on topics relevant to development planning, and will reinforce its efforts to carry them out at the highest technical level. At the same time, as far as the methodological-theoretical approach is concerned, the problems of general, regional and sectoral planning will continue to be dealt with from an interdisciplinary point of view continuing the effort orientated to closely link not only economic disciplines among themselves, but these with social and political-administrative disciplines.

With regard to advisory services, ILPES will concentrate its action on strengthening the planning systems of Latin American countries. Among the multiple tasks implied in achieving this aim, it is worth stressing those concerning collaboration in the preparation of long-term development strategies and medium-term plans, the formulation of economic and social policies, the elaboration of programmes and projects, and the technical-administrative organization of the institutional apparatus of planning systems.

What has been said of the above activities will naturally have to follow the guidelines stipulated for the Institute by the different countries and which appear in Resolution 340 (AC. 66), already mentioned.

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In fact during the preparatory stages of Phase IV, the Institute has begun programming and carrying out activities in accordance with the terms of the Resolution, and has also planned tasks for 1975 along these lines.

/I. THE ILPES

I. THE ILPES WORK PROGRAMME

The ILPES work programme is based on the contents of the document New Organization and Future Activities of the Latin American Institute for Economic and Social Planning which was presented at the Eighth Extraordinary Session of the Committee of the Whole of ECLA held in New York in January 1974. The document was approved by the countries, and Resolution 340 (AC. 66) also stems directly from it.

The work programme covers the development of the traditional fields of the Institute's activities, such as analysis of the changing characteristics of development in Latin America; overall, regional and sectoral planning; the design of strategies, etc. It also covers a new range of topics which attempt to deal with problems which are only recently affecting the improvement of development planning in Latin America. Among these, the most interesting for the future activities of the Institute appear to be the following:

a) Institutional and political aspects of the planning process.

This is a field which represents a considerable gap in planning experiences, since the institutional and political context in which the planning process is carried out is not usually considered. In fact, more attention will be given to an analysis of the administrative capacity of the State to mould development plans and strategies. The aim of these studies will be to incorporate their results into training and advisory services.

b) Planning and the social objectives of development. Here it is necessary to make a deeper interdisciplinary analysis which will give real meaning to the consideration of social and institutional variables and processes.

/c) Economic policy

c) Economic policy and planning. Crucial problems arise here in the concept of the modality of planning with regard to the adequate treatment which must be given to the relationships between plans, programmes and different instrumental policies, as well as between the physical variables and monetary variables.

d) Planning models and techniques. In this respect, experts and heads of the planning offices have repeatedly expressed the convenience of research on and the elaboration of, improved models and techniques for solving the problems of development processes. Such methodologies, as is well-known, have had to undergo substantial changes in order to include numerous social and political variables. Undoubtedly, it appears to be essential to improve the knowledge of progress made in this field through systematic research.

e) Relations between planning and economic integration. This concerns the need to study the possibilities of complementation and convergence among existing integrated groups, and to interpret the progress of the Latin American integration process.

f) Planning and modalities of enterprise management. New modalities of enterprise management have emerged in Latin American countries which need to be studied. Examples are semi-public enterprises, public enterprises, and labour managed and worker participation enterprises and institutions, all of which represent a new set of problems within the planning process.

g) National, regional and urban planning. This refers mainly to problems concerning the problem of interrelationships between national, regional, and urban programmes and the manner of co-ordinated planning of aims and means for achieving real progress in the solution of problems such as rural and urban marginality and poverty at a national level.

/h) Relations between

h) Relations between planning and technological policies. It has become necessary to study the consequences of large-scale absorption of technology on the possibilities and modalities of development in the countries of the region. It would also be interesting to analyze the possible options open to countries in relation to imported technology, from the point of view of the establishment of a selective policy in this respect, as well as of the real possibility of adaptation and diffusion of imported technology, and the difficulties encountered in creating technology.

II. ADVISORY PROGRAMME

As previously mentioned, ILPES will be orienting its advisory services towards strengthening national planning systems by means of collaborating with countries in the formulation of development plans and strategies, elaboration and implementation of economic and social policies, in the preparation, execution, and evaluation of programmes and projects, and in improving institutions of the planning systems from the technical-administrative point of view. This orientation has been prominent in the past and will continue to be so in the future, since countries continue to require this type of assistance, and ILPES is particularly qualified to provide it. Furthermore, it is worth pointing out that the progress which has been made by the countries in planning has interested them in incorporating new fields with the aim of giving the plans a wider scope, not only in a strictly economic sense, but a scope which also includes social and political matters. This reaffirms the efforts which ILPES has been making to extend its advisory services to these areas, although the possibility of fully satisfying such demands will depend on any progress made in research which is already underway, or which may be programmed in support of these activities.

Advisory services will continue to be carried out in accordance with the Institute's usual system, that is, on the basis of teams specially formed according to the characteristics of the country concerned and the problems involved. These teams are supervised and formed by ILPES experts and specially-contracted consultants, and emphasis will be given to the policy of including regional ECLA experts in the missions assigned to field-work. On the other hand, it is of special importance to link work of this kind with the resident experts of specialized UN agencies, and in this way collaborate with the UNDP in its efforts to adequate technical assistance to the priorities of national development plans.

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An important restriction for increasing advisory services has been the limitation on the availability of financial resources. However, recent experiences are encouraging in this respect. For example, the countries themselves are contributing to the financing of the advisory services they request, multilateral organizations such as IDB are collaborating, and UNDP projects in particular are supporting this type of activity.

III. TRAINING PROGRAMME

The Institute's training activities will be concerned with the discussion, systematization, and diffusion of the experience and knowledge derived from the subject of development planning.

These activities will be mainly directed towards the specialization of personnel in certain areas of development planning, and will consist of courses and seminars.

The training programme for 1975 will be based on available teaching experience, accumulated knowledge, and the need to explore new areas which interest governments for the training of specialists.

In accordance with the requirements of governments and within the Institute's possibilities, courses on the following subjects will be offered in 1975: development and planning, regional development planning, agricultural planning, industrial planning, preparation and evaluation of investment projects and pre-investment operational planning, and environmental development planning.

The central core of professors for these courses is formed by ILPES' specialists, and complemented by experts from ECLA and other UN organizations and professionals from universities and planning offices in Latin American countries.

In cases where courses are programmed and held in conjunction with government organizations, the corresponding national entities will provide specialists as national counterparts for describing and interpreting the situation of the country.

In the majority of training courses, the preparation of practical exercises has been introduced in order to promote an analysis of national problems based on the training given. Courses are held in different countries in an effort to decentralize the Institute's activities and provide direct support to local planning offices.

Also during 1975, evaluation of training activities and consultations with national planning organizations will be carried out, in order to introduce any modifications which may be necessary.

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In this respect it is thought that it may be useful to reduce the range of specialties dealt with at present, in favour of concentration on synthesized topics which stimulate reflection on the changes which have taken place in the region, the present characteristics of the development process and the search for the most suitable methods for their analysis and planning.

The training programme will be carried out in close relation to the research and advisory programmes, to make use of and to discuss the knowledge and experience obtained in each activity.

IV. RESEARCH PROGRAMME

Research has a three-fold role to play. First, as mentioned in previous paragraphs, it should intensify knowledge in development planning and support activities which provide direct services to governments. Secondly, research work should permit diffusion of national experiences and advancements in planning techniques which may be of regional interest. Thirdly, research should constantly reinforce ILPES's capacity for intellectual creativity. This does not imply neglect or reduction of its operational functions, but rather to give a new dimension to its scope which will allow it to anticipate to the varied and changing problems facing planning in Latin America.

This ambitious role for research, which it has already taken on in the more complex areas of planning processes (technology, the political system and planning, urban development and short-term planning), will allow ILPES in the future, even within its limitations, to occupy a relatively significant position in the general effort being made in Latin America in the field of development planning.

These roles for research are beyond the internal possibilities of ILPES. Their fulfillment requires large-scale mobilization of the talent and the experiences outside the sphere of ILPES, which are developing rapidly in Latin American countries. For this reason negotiations have been started to carry out joint research projects with national research centres. A programme of co-operation with academic centres has, in fact, been prepared with the aim of making use of the experiences in Latin American countries and of linking research topics directly to the specific reality of the countries of the region.