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NOTE
ON
CDCC FOCUS
NEWSLETTER

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Introductory

With the heavy turnover of staff and the passage of time, has come a less than full appreciation of the value and purpose of the CDCC Focus newsletter. What is more, there is not the clear appreciation that its production is an obligation on the Office. Inevitably, the efforts towards improving its quality and periodicity have not been maintained. This note endeavours to put the CDCC newsletter Focus back into perspective; to indicate the aims it was meant to achieve; and to stimulate increased attention to this important external aspect of the Office's functioning.

Background

At the second session of CDCC "..... it was agreed that Governments should be kept more closely informed of developments in the Work Programme on an on-going basis for this purpose it was further agreed that the CEPAL Office for the Caribbean should issue a bi-monthly bulletin on progress in the implementation of the Work Programme, without prejudice to direct consultations with individual governments as required."^{1/} The preparation and issue of CDCC Focus, therefore, is not an innovation of the Office; rather it is action taken under a specific directive of the Ministerial Committee.

^{1/} E/CEPAL/1039 : E/CEPAL/CDCC/21/Rev.1 "Report of the Second Session of the Caribbean Development and Co-operation Committee" (Santo Domingo, 16-22 March 1977) paragraph 30.

The first issue of Focus did not appear until February 1978. The Office was provided no resources to undertake the task, so consequently it was prepared as an entirely internal effort, not just in terms of reallocating resources but even more importantly in terms of arriving at decisions on design, layout and presentation - aspects in which the Office had and still has no special expertise. For example, the name was chosen because it remains the same in all three languages. The logo was developed in two stages. In that year there were four issues of the newsletter. Despite the best efforts the bi-monthly schedule could not be established. The timing of issues in 1978 (February, July, September, November) is indicative of the effort to arrive at that target. It was not until January 1979, that some support was obtained from Santiago to revise the layout, presentation and printing, resulting in the format that currently appears.

The audience and purpose of Focus

Having regard to the directive by the Committee quoted above, the newsletter has been directed to Government representatives in the first instance, and to co-operating agencies, rather than to the general public. The intention has been to keep members of CDCC apprised of actions being taken, and of progress being made in implementation of the CDCC Work Programme authorized at the First Session, and the subsequent decisions adopted by the Committee. Each issue therefore focused on those sectors of the Work Programme in which new developments had taken place since the previous 'reporting' period.

More precisely, the purpose of the CDCC Focus newsletter was to highlight progress made, but also to pinpoint difficulties encountered, stating the problems involved and indicating support actions required of member states and co-operating agencies.

The overall aim therefore was that the newsletter should be a medium for maintaining the CDCC dialogue between the Committee's annual sessions, expediting and facilitating the support actions required between sessions, and assisting Governments, both collectively or individually, in the

effective performance of their policy-making and programme review functions at the Committee's annual sessions.

It was generally accepted that a continuing dialogue and constant flow of information would be of particular importance in respect of a programme such as that of CDCC, which is first and foremost a programme of economic and technical co-operation among the countries concerned, rather than a traditional technical assistance programme. The newsletter was therefore to be seen, not only as a means for Governments to keep under review the implementation of their decisions, but also as an additional instrument for stimulating and maintaining the momentum and vitality of the co-operation programme within the Caribbean subregion.

Evolution of CDCC Focus

It is now exactly five years since the first issue of CDCC Focus appeared. Generally there have been four issues in each year, except in 1981 when there was only a single issue. This however hardly reflects the actual periodicity of preparation and publication. The writing depended on the time the then Director personally could allocate to writing it. In addition there were printing delays, often as much as three months. This latter factor accounts for the periodicity in 1979 reflected in the Annex. The momentum of 1979 and 1980 could not be maintained with the result there was only one issue in 1981. This is a reflection of the then paucity of resources, one consequence that CDCC Focus is still to develop its full purpose as the medium for stimulating a dialogue on CDCC matters involving the Governments, the Agencies and the Secretariat.

An aspect that has not evolved, is the use of the newsletter as an open forum, to be used by member states and co-operating agencies to convey to the other parties concerned, information and actions and developments which are directly relevant to the CDCC programme, although not an integral part of it. Instead the tendency has been for the Office to record governmental and agencies actions under the substantive work programme sectors to which they refer.

As far as the agencies are concerned, such information might have covered meetings scheduled in the Caribbean subregion, missions on CDCC related subjects to the CDCC Secretariat and CDCC member countries, and availability of regional advisory services. But such information would have to be invited, and reflected as part of the overall co-ordination/collaboration effort.

Contents

Generally, in addition to highlighting recent developments, the endeavour has been to provide a summary of general purposes, objectives and orientation of CDCC activities. Similarly, topics related to upcoming events or to overall issues relevant to the programme have been selected for more in-depth treatment in subsequent issues. The pattern has been to keep the description of developments in various sectors concise and focused on specific actions, with the supporting activities or initiatives required precisely indicated. The selection of the programme sectors covered in each issue has depended on actual developments; as a result lags in the pace of substantive work in several sectors have offset the intent to keep the newsletter non-repetitive to a large extent.

During 1978 there was the attempt to report on the areas of CDCC activities as widely as possible, to maintain the interest of individual Specialized Agencies and Ministries of governments, and to keep a check on progress within the Secretariat. This pattern changed in 1979 when it was decided that the structure should be more in terms of a leading article, two or three minor articles, reports on selected developments and miscellaneous items. The miscellaneous group has included lists of CDCC documents and reports, recent appointments, viewpoints etc. as appropriate. This pattern was meant to evolve into regular issues and special issues, the latter giving exhaustive coverage to some particular development. Such issues would be given wider circulation. So far there has been only one special issue - on Science and Technology.

Concerning the lesser articles, these have tended to be reports on seminars and workshops, and very little on research findings and problems. Consequently, over the long span a cumulative picture of the impact of the CDCC programme as it is implemented, does not emerge. So far there has not been an assessment of the Caribbean situation in any of its aspects; which qualitative background would be useful for the orientation of subsequent activities. In short the approach so far does not provide any appreciation of the dynamics of social and economic change in the Caribbean.

Finally, the Miscellaneous items need review - the lists of documents need some time frames, the staff appointments are not offset by separations etc.

Summing up

There should be a new and critical look at CDCC Focus, so that its orientation and content move more in the direction of the aims and purposes it was meant to serve. Aside from improving the regularity of issues, there is the need for a somewhat more analytical approach - both of these elements being very necessary to the stimulation of the Caribbean dialogue. To achieve this, however, will mean establishing a more definitive basis for the preparation of the materials, and assigning it a clearer priority among the myriad activities of the Office. So far it has been somewhat like a Cinderella.

With the strengthening of the Office, the possibility now exists for such action to be taken.

ISSUES OF CDCC FOCUS

			<u>Interval</u>
Volume 1	-	No. 1 - February 1978	
		No. 2 - July 1978	5 months
		No. 3 - September 1978	2 months
		No. 4 - November 1978	2 months
Volume 2	-	No. 1 - January 1979	2 months
		No. 2 - March 1979	2 months
		No. 3 - September 1979	6 months
		No. 4 - October 1979	1 month
		No. 5 - November 1979	1 month
Volume 3	-	No. 1 - January 1980	2 months
		No. 2 - March 1980	2 months
		No. 3 - June 1980	3 months
		No. 4 - August 1980 ^{1/}	2 months
		No. 5 - October 1980	2 months
Volume 4	-	No. 1 - September 1981	11 months
Volume 5	-	No. 1 - January 1982	4 months
		No. 2 - March 1982	2 months
		No. 3 - June 1982	3 months
		No. 4 - October 1982	4 months

1/ Special Issue on Science and Technology.