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PROGRESS MADE UNDER THE UNITED NATIONS WORLD-WIDE PROGRAMME  
OF RESEARCH AND TRAINING IN REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT

by

Social Development Division



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By ECOSOC Resolution 1086 C (XXXIX), the Secretary-General of the United Nations was requested to develop a research and training programme in regional development. This programme was to be based on regional development projects under way in member countries which were seeking by this approach to modernize their economies and achieve a better distribution of population through the development of improved patterns of human settlement and programmes of planned social and economic adjustment and development.

As a preliminary step in the development of the programme, a selection of regional development projects was made by an Advisory Committee of Experts appointed by the Secretary-General in January 1966. These were:

(i) The Aswan region in the United Arab Republic; (ii) The Awash River Valley Development project in Ethiopia; (iii) Wadi Jizzan and the Eastern and Western Provinces in Saudi Arabia; (iv) The Ghab and Euphrates Projects in Syria; (v) The Lakhish Region and Upper Galilee in Israel; (vi) East Pakistan in Pakistan; (vii) The Chubu Regional Project in Japan; (viii) The Gal Oya River Valley Project in Ceylon; (ix) Plan Lerma and Plan Oaxaca in Mexico; (x) Bio-bio and Concerte regions in Chile; and (xi) The North-East region (SUDENE) in Brazil. Six European countries, namely Czechoslovakia, France, Italy, Poland, the Netherlands and Yugoslavia were also studied from a different perspective.

Seven teams of experts visited the regions mentioned above from October 1966 through December 1967. They carried out preliminary studies and observations of the social, economic, physical and administrative aspects of the regional development efforts and the facilities available for developing research and training activities connected with the region. They also discussed with the Governments concerned their interest in cooperating with the United Nations in establishing a world-wide programme of research and training in regional development. The reports of the teams are included in a United Nations publication titled: "Selected Experiences in Regional Development" which will be published shortly. What follows is a summary of the general observations and recommendations of the teams in respect of the regional development projects visited by them and the progress made so far in developing a programme of research and training in regional development.

1. The Aswan Region in the United Arab Republic provides an opportunity for studying the interactions of technological advance, physical development and economic progress, and their implications for social and human welfare. The development programme encompasses intensive agricultural development and re-settlement, the development of new transport, power and utility systems as the necessary infra-structural basis for establishing large industrial complexes; and also the development of a modern economic, cultural and administrative capital for the region.

The Aswan Planning Agency consists of five research and development centres, namely, the Agricultural Development Centre, the Industrial Development Centre, the Mineral Centre, the Water Resources Centre, and the Human Resources Development Centre. Two additional research and service centres - the Transportation Development Centre and the Environmental Development Centre are also available for research and training purposes.

The existence of these "development centres", the proposed establishment of an evaluation and co-ordinating unit to service the "centres", as well as the existence in the UAR of a large number of institutions of higher learning and research will be directly useful to the disciplines involved in economic, social and physical development and public administration and provide an excellent basis for specialized as well as interdisciplinary training and study in regional development as conceived by the United Nations resolution.

2. The Awash Region in Ethiopia, with an area of 123,400 sq. km., has the potential for resolving problems connected with the settlement of pastoral nomads with the establishment of new capital-intensive plantations and industrial development at rates sufficient to absorb the rapidly growing movement of rural populations. The research and operations undertaken up to the time of the visit were predominantly technical in nature.

The geography and the natural resources of Ethiopia offer remarkable opportunities for regional development. The Second Five-Year Development Plan (1968-1973), stresses regional development as a means of promoting balanced national development as well as a means of extending the benefits of progress implied in national development to Ethiopia's less developed areas. Nevertheless there does not yet exist at present an active relationship between the development promoted in the Awash Valleys and that stimulated by the national plan.

Nevertheless, the Awash Valley is a unique case for research in the regional development process. A research and training programme will come into

existence as a matter of course when an outline regional development plan encompassing all essential economic and social sectoral development in the Awash Valley can be formulated and when the Awash Valley Authority can be assisted suitably and strengthened in this task and for the task of carrying out the requisite detailed local planning and feasibility studies.

3. The Wadi Jizzan Project and the Eastern and Western Provinces of Saudi Arabia.

The former project was studied for its suitability as a base for organizing a training and research programme in regional planning and development. Wadi Jizzan, part of the South Tibana area including seven wadis in all, an area of 1,600 sq. Kilometers with a population of 50,000, at the time of the visit, was purely an agricultural project, and the possibility of its assuming a significant role in regional development was found to be remote. The problem of population migration to the area did not exist, and emphasis was being placed on retaining the existing population. It was not sufficiently advanced at the time of the visit to yield the kind of experience of a transferable nature for the purpose of research and training in comprehensive regional development envisaged by the ECCSOC resolution.

The Eastern and Western Provinces constitute two separate regions with a population of 400,000 in the Eastern Region alone, and an annual influx of some 200,000 pilgrims to the Holy Places of Islam in the Western Region - particularly to Mecca and Medina. These two regions which already contain diversified development projects have further potentials in the nature of mineral resources in the West, and petro-chemical industries in the East with prospects for future growth that would permit the establishment of a training and research programme in the future.

There is, however, nothing at present in Saudi Arabia which can be identified as a regional plan. Regional administrative organization consists of seven regions each under the authority of a Governor (Emir) and the participation of the regional authorities in planning at the national and regional levels is not evident.

4. The Ghab and Euphrates Projects in Syria include many diversified programmes ranging from irrigation, land reclamation and land reform, development of communication systems and of social and economic institutions in Ghab; and the irrigation, flood control and power generation projects in Euphrates.

The Ghab project is at an advanced stage of implementation and offers interesting possibilities for research and training in regional development. The experience gained in the project in land settlement, land reform and in village improvement is transferable to other similar projects in the country or elsewhere in the world. The organization of a research and training programme connected with the Ghab Project will enable the Syrian Government to create a pool of trained civil servants and others in matters of regional planning and to enable it to implement other regional projects, notably the Euphrates project.

5. The Lakhish Project in Israel comprises comprehensive planning for the agricultural sector, a hierarchical pattern of rural settlements, the location of new towns as growth points, the establishment of industries including agricultural processing and the construction of a new port as an outlet for the region approximating 115,000 acres and situated in the Northern Negev.

Israel has a richness of experience, a nucleus of facilities, a body of highly qualified personnel and a diversity of settings and institutions, especially the Settlement Study Centre at Rehovot and the Institute of Technology at Haifa, which collectively can contribute substantially to the United Nations programme of research and training in regional development. The Extended Lakhish Region would serve as a suitable area for the studies envisaged in the programme. The United Nations Team strongly recommended that Israel should be associated with the programme and that the research and training activities could be effectively initiated at the Settlement Study Centre which has had experience in conducting courses in comprehensive rural planning for students from developing countries. The United Nations could cooperate by providing fellowships for the students from developing countries, a limited number of lecturers and training abroad for the lecturers of the Centre. In the matter of research cooperation should be established between the Settlement Study Centre and the United Nations Research Institute for Social Development in Geneva and the Housing, Building and Planning Section of the Economic Commission for Europe.

6. Regional Planning in East Pakistan was first introduced in 1950 with the initiation of the Five-Year Colombo Plan. That plan and the subsequent two five-year plans aimed primarily at "the creation of the economic infrastructure and the initiation of institutional reforms which would facilitate uninterrupted economic expansion.

There was no institute in Pakistan at the time of the visit of the United Nations Team, which specialized exclusively in regional development problems. However, there exist a number of institutions that could meet the research requirements of the proposed United Nations programme, if a few highly qualified personnel could be provided and their research activities coordinated.

The Province of East Pakistan, visited by the Team, had been defined by the Government as a region for planning purposes. The development plan covered agriculture, water and power, industry, transport and communications, physical planning and housing, education, manpower planning, health, family planning and social welfare. Its implementation was designed to bring about a more viable urban-rural balance by judicious location of projects and industry, transport and those based on local initiative through rural development programmes.

7. The Chubu Project in Japan had adopted a systematic approach to the development of the central region of Japan. The region covers about 16 per cent of the total area of Japan, contains nearly 17 per cent of the population, and accounts for more than 21 per cent of the nation's total industrial production.

Of particular interest to the United Nations Programme were the legislative basis for development planning of the region, the organizational and administrative arrangements for the execution of plans, and the wealth of research facilities and resources.

The Team was impressed by the extensive research facilities available to the programme. A considerable amount of research on various aspects of regional development was being done in the universities and other institutions of learning. The Team visited two such institutions, one in Nagoya (the Chubu Region Development Centre) and the other in Tokyo (the Japan Centre for Area Development Research). Other institutions such as the Japan Economic Research Centre, the Institute of Population Problems and the National Institute of Agriculture specialize in subjects directly related to regional development problems.

The Team was of the strong opinion that the Chubu region should be included in the research and training programme in regional development promoted by the United Nations as providing an opportunity for the study of

the interaction of economic, social and environmental development in an area where productivity generally rises at a very fast rate, but where the quality of the living environment might well deteriorate.

8. The Gal Oya River Valley Project in Ceylon is an area in East Ceylon including a substantial part of the total land area of Ceylon. The scheme was designed for the development of irrigation, flood control as well as hydropower. It now covers the following schemes: irrigation, water supply, drainage, power generation and supply, flood control, soil erosion control, reforestation and general agricultural and industrial development as well as economic and cultural programmes.

From the point of view of the United Nations Programme for Regional Development, the Gal Oya Project has the necessary elements for inclusion in the overall research programme. Although it represents only one type of regional development, viz that of a River Valley Region, it should offer much in the way of comprehensive research and analysis for national as well as international application. The initiation by the Government of regional planning, as part of the national planning process should strengthen the present position.

9. The Oaxaca and Lerma Plans of Mexico emphasize sectoral planning and implementation within highly centralized economic policy and guidance and through centrally controlled financing. The state of Oaxaca is situated in the southern part of Mexico with a population of nearly 2 million in a depressed region having the lowest per capita income in the republic. The purpose of the plan is to evaluate the actual and potential resources of the State, and to recommend development objectives and goals for Oaxaca.

Plan Lerma covers the whole or parts of territories of nine different Mexican states which together form the basin of the River Lerma-Santiago, a 130,000 square kilometer territory with a population of about 8 million. Plan Lerma reflects the recognition that once the technology of efficient use of water resources is mastered, the development programme of the region concerned must devote itself to the problems of improving productivity and the levels of living in the region so that its rural people in particular can begin to participate in and benefit from its progress.

Many Institutions of research, of higher learning and of technology are available for purposes of the research and training programme in regional development. They include the National Institute for Agricultural Investigation, the Institute for Agrarian Research and the National Productivity Centre. In

addition, there are the Colegio de Mexico, the Universidad Autonoma de Mexico and the Instituto Politecnico Nacional which could provide the academic base for the research and training programme in regional development. For these and other reasons, the Team concluded that Mexico should be invited to participate in the United Nations Research and Training Programme in Regional Development, and that Plan Lerma would be a good starting point for carrying out the field study and evaluation programme in Mexico.

10. Chile has followed a deliberate policy of regionalization of the national plan. Ten development regions have been defined and surveyed. Within the framework of national development guidelines, local planning agencies formulate development strategies and plans for comprehensive development of these regions. Regional committees, composed of central and local entities of Government and of other bodies established to promote local development, participate in the formulation of the regional plans. Another interesting process which merits study is the gradual reciprocal accommodation of local sectoral and civic action to the nation's long-term development goals.

11. Brazil's economic policy considers regional development as one of the means of eliminating the existing disparities in productivity, income and levels of living in the country's different geographic areas. A clear example of the application of such policy is in the under-developed Northeast where fiscal and tax incentives are used to stimulate large investment as part of a long-term effort at industrialization and intensive agricultural development. This approval is combined with specific investment guidance and the support of particular projects through infrastructural development within the framework of short-term programme budgeting of public resources. Similar incentives and support are also applied to obtain a gradual, more adequate and more general rise in the production of traditional agriculture and in the development of human resources in line with the growing demand for manpower and skills.

Brazil's policy and approach in regional development is a case of industrial development in a traditionally rural area as part of a national strategy of industrialization which is based on the presence of rich but dormant natural resources and of under-employed human resources.

12. The European Experience. Two United Nations missions visited Poland, Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia from 6 to 26 November 1967, and Italy, France and the Netherlands from 27 November to 6 December 1967. These are countries which have had a long history of regionalization of development planning since World War II; they have many universities and institutes, and have developed research and training in regional planning.

The attention of the Mission was directed towards the following:

a) basic problems of research and training in regional development; b) the applicability of practical and theoretical experience in regional development of these countries to conditions in developing countries; c) the possibility of participation by the countries concerned in activities related to the United Nations programme in regional development; d) the possibility of setting up a system of national rapporteurs to work closely with the United Nations regional development centre in Geneva (UNRISD); e) the possibility of interdisciplinary teams being provided by co-operating governments to visit developing countries, on request, in order to assess and advise on regional planning and development

The Team's conclusions were that these countries have valuable experience in regional planning and that, moreover, their experiences could in many respects be transformed into a valuable contribution to the implementation of the United Nations Training and Research Programme in Regional Development. The experiences in regional development differ widely reflecting not only the specific country context for regional planning, but also the nature of the problems being tackled through regional planning in the respective countries. The countries concerned are all interested in assisting the United Nations Programme through research and training activities.

Progress made in the Development of the Research and Training Programme  
in  
Regional Development

Considerable progress has been made in developing the research and training programme in regional development which was requested by the Economic and Social Council Resolution 1086 C(XXXIX) and which was reported to the Commission at its nineteenth session <sup>1/</sup>. The resolution envisaged, "the selection of a reasonable number, possibly six to twelve, of regional development projects already under way which are best suited for the planned research and training activities". So far four such projects have been selected in co-operation with the Governments concerned namely, Japan, Israel, Mexico and Brazil, and research and training activities are being initiated.

In the following paragraphs is given the progress made in each of the projects.

Japan - The Chubu Centre has already been officially inaugurated on 2 September 1968. It has been set up in co-operation with the Japanese Overseas Technical Co-operation Agency and the Chubu Region Agency, and has the support of the Chubu Region Development Research Centre and the University of Kyoto, Nagoya and Tokyo. The Government of Japan has provided the necessary physical facilities and the personnel. The United Nations is providing a senior adviser on a short-term basis and a resident adviser for training and research. The first course of training lasting 3 months commenced on 17 January 1969. Ten participants from developing countries attended the course on scholarships provided by the Government of Japan. It was organized on an experimental basis with a view to conducting another course in January 1970 to which participants will be sponsored both by the Joint Group and the United Nations. The present plans are for that course to last 4 months.

Israel - Co-operation has been established between the Israel Government and the United Nations in organizing a training course in comprehensive regional planning. The course will be conducted at the Settlement Study Centre, Rehovot near Tel Aviv. The one-year course is being developed with the support of the Hebrew University and the Israel Institute of Technology, Haifa. The United Nations will provide up to ten fellowships for each course and also make available a specialist to teach as well as participate in the research activities relevant to the United Nations programme. The research will be undertaken in the Greater Lakhish region which has many elements and issues of interest to many developing countries engaged in rural development and regional planning. The first course of training commences on 28 April 1969. It is hoped to continue holding such courses in the future years.

Mexico - The Lerma region has been selected as one that will have special significance to developing countries in their attempts to modernize rural life through planned investment in rural industrialization, infrastructure development and diversification of agricultural production. The United Nations is co-operating in the project by providing initially a high-level inter-disciplinary advisory team which will assist in the regional integration of various sectoral activities already under way or in the course of planning and in determining what further action should be taken to carry out regional development objectives in the planned Lerma area. It is hoped that subsequently these activities and experience will provide the basis for starting a training and related research programme based on the Lerma Region

Brazil - The activities of SUDENE in the northeast of the country were recognized as relevant to the purposes of the United Nations programme in research and training for regional development. In the first instance the United Nations, along with the United Nations Research Institute for Social Development, is co-operating with the Government of Brazil in a pilot study of SUDENE's past experiences and future possibilities which would be of benefit both for SUDENE's activities and also the United Nations programme. The study is expected to be a precedent for future studies of a similar nature and at the same time bring out certain issues and problems which will be of interest to other countries undertaking similar regional development projects.

The United Nations regional institutes for economic and social planning have also been active in promoting training in regional development. The Institute at Dakar, Senegal, held such a course in 1968 for twenty-five students

from African countries. The course lasted eight weeks and attempted to introduce the participants to the inter-relatedness of economic, social and environmental phenomena in regional planning within the context of national development planning. The various substantive divisions of the United Nations and the Specialized Agencies co-operated in organizing and conducting the course. The Institute in Bangkok, Thailand and ECAFE co-operated in the training course that was held at the Chubu Centre in Japan during January - April 1969. The Institute in Santiago, Chile, is in the process of planning a training course in regional planning and local development which, in the first year, will be held in Santiago and in subsequent years may be conducted in selected countries in the region which have adopted policies for regionalization of national development planning. The regional commissions are also co-operating in these training programmes by providing regional resources for fellowships, regional advisers for lecturing and teaching materials as needed. ECLA, in Santiago is organizing a seminar on the social aspects of regional development to be held during the last quarter of 1969.

The research component of the United Nations programme which is being developed primarily by the United Nations Research Institute for Social Development has also advanced considerably. The emphasis of the Institute's programme is upon regional development as a part of aspects of national development and upon regional planning as a dimension of planning in general. The research programme is primarily concerned with comprehensive or inter-sectoral problems and strategies of regional development - the inter-relations of industry, agriculture and social services, the inter-relations of productive and infra-structure investment, the inter-relations of rural and urban sectors, of population distribution and the distribution of economic, social and cultural facilities. Special attention is to be given to sociological approaches to regional development, since these have been relatively neglected in the past. While a comprehensive approach is considered desirable, from the point of view of information and assessment, this does not mean attempting to do everything at once.

One of the projects that UNRISD has undertaken is the preparation of a comprehensive review of regional development experiences and prospects in the geographical areas of Southeast Asia, Southwest Asia, Africa, Latin America, North America, Soviet Union, Eastern Europe and Western Europe. The final reports are expected to be ready towards the latter part of 1969. The study

of the role of "Growth Poles and Growth Centres" as instruments of regional development policy and planning, has already been completed. As a follow-up to this study, UNRISD is to organize a meeting of an expert group to study this approach to regional development based on practical experiences.

Another study of UNRISD is concerned with information systems for regional development with a view to developing a broad framework and general guidelines for a system of collecting, transmitting, processing, storing and distributing information needed for development planning at the regional level. The study will include some case studies of systems already operating in selected countries. In view of the special importance of the sociological aspects of regional development, UNRISD convened an expert group in November 1968 to study this subject particularly in respect of the social aspects of regional development, methodological problems and human and institutional aspects in the context of regional development. In addition to the above research activities undertaken by UNRISD, various substantive divisions in the United Nations are engaged in studies in their respective fields which have relevance to regional development.

With a view to disseminating information about and creating a wider understanding of the purposes of regional development as envisaged in ECOSOC Resolution 1086 c (XXXIX), the United Nations has been participating and contributing to various seminars and conferences organized by other bodies. These meetings have included the European Conference on Health Aspects of Regional Development organized by the World Health Organization (November 1967), the Seminar on Comprehensive Planning organized by the Netherlands University Foundation for International Co-operation (November 1967), the Inter-regional Seminar on Location of Industry and Regional Development organized by the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (August 1968), the Conference of Senior Officials of National Bodies Concerned with Urban and Regional Research organized by the Economic Commission for Europe (May 1968). Meetings relevant to regional development which have been organized by the United Nations include a meeting of an expert group in December 1967 to review and advise UNRISD on the research programme for regional development; an Inter-regional Seminar on Physical Planning Techniques for the Construction of New Towns organized by the Centre for Housing, Building and Planning in co-operation with the Government of the USSR (MOSCOW, September 1968); and the Workshop on the Administrative Aspects of Urbanization organized by the Public Administration Division (November 1968).