DISTR.
RESTRICTED

LC/R.405
22 January 1985

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

E C L A C

Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean

Santiago, Chile, August 1984

COMISION ECONOMICA PARA AMERICA LATINA
NACIONES UNIDAS
BIBLIOTECA

ECLAC: TOWARDS A NEW INFORMATION SYSTEM */

*/ This document was prepared by Mr. Charles Krause, Free-Lance journalist and former Latin America correspondent for The Washington Post. The views expressed in this work are the sole responsibility of the author and do not necessarily coincide with those of the Organization.

85-1-51

CONTENTS

/TERMS OF

TERMS OF REFERENCE

The purpose of this Final Report on Communications and Public Information is:

- To evaluate the operations of ECLAC's office of Information Services in Santiago;
- To evaluate the effectiveness of ECLAC's information programmes and other channels of external communication with reference to the news media in Latin America, the United States and, to a lesser extent, the Caribbean;
- To evaluate attitudes within ECLAC concerning the news media and ECLAC's own office of Information Services;
- To evaluate the flow of information to and from headquarters concerning ECLAC activities in Latin America and the United States;
- To evaluate ECLAC's relations with the United Nations Information Centres in Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, Mexico and the United States;
- To evaluate current perceptions within the news media regarding ECLAC, its work, its views and its activities;
- To recommend practical steps which the Executive Secretary might take to strengthen both internal and external communications in order to heighten public awareness and raise ECLAC's institutional profile in Latin America, the Caribbean, the United States and Europe.

/INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION

ECLAC is once again at the centre of the great economic and social issues of the day, a key player in efforts to resolve the foreign debt crisis that threatens the peace, stability and continued economic progress, not only of Latin America but of the whole Western world.

Beginning last year in Quito, ECLAC has assumed an increasingly important role --both in terms of conceptual thinking and technical advice-- in helping its member countries find a solution to the current crisis.

ECLAC's key role in these efforts offers an almost unprecedented opportunity for the institution to raise its public profile and reaffirm its position as THE centre for economic and social thinking and research in Latin America.

The benefits to ECLAC of increased public awareness of its activities could be enormous. At a time of growing disillusionment with the United Nations system, ECLAC has the opportunity to demonstrate its continuing relevance to the peoples of Latin America and the Caribbean.

This could be especially significant for ECLAC as an institution at a time of spreading democratization in Latin America because in countries where governments are elected democratically, public opinion often has a significant impact on government policy; ECLAC can insure its own future, both in terms of funding and continued member country support, by giving the highest priority to information programmes designed to heighten public awareness of its many activities and reinforce positive public opinion of ECLAC as an institution.

In fact, ECLAC has become more visible over the past year, in part because of its direct involvement in trying to resolve the debt crisis and in part because of a marked improvement in the operations of its office of Information Services, Santiago.

For the first time, Information Services is aggressively pursuing contact with the press, urging both local and foreign journalists to report ECLAC meetings and other activities on a regular basis.

Information Services is also producing better written and more timely press releases; the look and content of other publications has been vastly

/improved; radio

improved; radio and, in some cases, film and television material is being produced in Santiago for distribution through UN/DPI New York.

Of almost equal importance, the office of Information Services has made a concerted effort to better inform itself about ECLAC activities BEFORE they occur, in order to have the time necessary to stimulate press coverage of conferences, meetings, etc., and/or to prepare written releases or other material for the news media.

But, these important improvements notwithstanding, ECLAC must still overcome many serious problems if it is to develop a truly effective public information system capable of reaching beyond Chile to other member countries in Latin America, the Caribbean, North America and Europe.

The first and most fundamental problem to be overcome is the institutional bias one encounters among ECLAC professionals against Information Services and its public information programmes.

As an institution, ECLAC must understand and accept the importance of public information programmes and the desirability of having news media coverage of ECLAC activities.

Information Services must be given a higher institutional priority and more resources; division directors must communicate more willingly and directly with their colleagues in the office of Information Services; research reports and other ECLAC documents should be written more clearly, should be better organized and should always include an executive summary, preferably written in non-technical language, to increase their usefulness to the news media (see short summaries that precede articles in the CEPAL Review).

Outside Santiago, ECLAC cannot expect United Nations Information Centres to promote its activities or even distribute its written documents. The Information Centres do not have the resources or personnel to do an effective job on ECLAC's behalf.

ECLAC offices in Buenos Aires, Brasilia, Bogotá, Montevideo and Washington should appoint one staff member to serve as press liaison officer with sufficient resources and incentives to develop press contacts and promote ECLAC documents for publication in the mass media; in Mexico City and Port of Spain, a local journalist should be hired as a full-time press liaison; the Chief of Information Services (Santiago) should hire and oversee the two full-time

/press officers

press officers outside Chile; at least once a year, all press liaison officers should travel to headquarters to re-acquaint themselves with ECLAC operations.

Both the Executive Secretary and the Chief of Information Services should spend more time outside Chile meeting with newspaper, magazine, radio and television editors and executives, as well as cultivating key journalists in member countries. Accurate, up-to-date mailing lists should also be compiled in each member country.

From time to time, the Executive Secretary and other ECLAC staff should hold background seminars for the press in member countries, selecting topics that are newsworthy or of interest to specialized publications.

Finally, ECLAC should encourage United States, European, Latin American and Caribbean journalists to visit headquarters in Santiago or, at the very least, to communicate with ECLAC technical experts by telex or telephone; to facilitate the latter, ECLAC should publish a short News Media Guide, listing areas of expertise, available statistics, key reports, other documents, telephone and telex numbers.

The goal of ECLAC's public information system should be two-fold:

- to develop the capability of distributing in a timely fashion easily understood and relevant documents, statements, statistics and other material, not only in Santiago but throughout Latin America, the Caribbean and the United States;
- to cultivate key journalists and publications in each member country to increase their knowledge of ECLAC and their receptivity to its ideas; ideally, ECLAC will become their principal source for analysis, information and statistics related to the economic and social condition of Latin America and the Caribbean.

ECLAC need not be controversial to achieve greater public awareness of its work and activities. But it must be efficient and reliable, in transmitting the information it wants published, on the one hand, as well as open and forthcoming in answering requests for information from journalists on the other.

If this happens, ECLAC's visibility in the news media will surely increase, generating greater awareness of ECLAC as an institution and increased public recognition of its key role in fostering the economic and social development of Latin America and the Caribbean.

/Part I

Part I

ATTITUDES AND INTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS

> "We are technocrats. We thing about preparing a Conference for Ministers. But we rarely think about the press or public opinion."
>
> - Rolando Sánchez
> 28 April 1983

> "Public information is the essence of everything. ECLAC has very good people but they work alone. (Internal Communications) are very bad."
>
> - Guillermo Maldonado
> 28 April 1983

Although the original terms of reference for this study referred solely to external communications, it became apparent after only a few days at ECLAC headquarters in Santiago that institutional attitudes and the current ad hoc system of internal communications (within headquarters and between headquarters and other ECLAC offices outside Chile) must change if ECLAC is to develop a truly effective public information system.

Interviews with many ECLAC division directors and other professional staff revealed ambivalent feelings towards news media coverage of ECLAC activities and public information efforts in general; although there has been some improvement over the past year, ECLAC's press and public information office (Information Services) must still overcome the widely-held view that it is a relatively unimportant appendage --rather than an integral part-- of the institution.

To some extent, these ambivalent feelings toward Information Services and its work seem to reflect a certain institutional insecurity and caution ("no hagan olas").

This malaise has affected Information Services in two important ways: it has reduced interest and incentives for senior staff to seek publicity for their work and the work of their divisions; it has also restrained efforts by Information Services to publicize studies or other ECLAC activities which might prove to be controversial.

/Although ECLAC

Although ECLAC now appears to be trying to shake off this "no hagan olas" mentality, ECLAC's public image as an active and innovative institution has suffered over the years. Interviews with leading journalists in Chile, Brazil, Argentina, Colombia, Mexico and the United States revealed a consistent lack of knowledge of ECLAC's current work: ECLAC's still overwhelmingly positive reputation is based more on the past than the present.

This study was commissioned by the Executive Secretary because he believes ECLAC should now begin to make a greater effort to promote its views, its research, its activities and itself as an institution.

He (and some other ECLAC administrators, past and present) view external communications as part of ECLAC's mandate to assist and promote economic and social development in Latin America and the Caribbean.

The Executive Secretary (and others) recognize that informed public opinion is a necessary ingredient for economic and social change. They also recognize that, at a time of growing dischantment with the United Nations system (especially in the United States and Europe), ECLAC's future as an institution may, at least to some extent, depend on its ability to demonstrate its continued relevance to the people of its member countries.

For better or worse, the mass media provide the only efficient mean for ECLAC to reach large numbers of people scattered over three continents. And, for better or worse, the news media in most Western countries consider news to be what is new, different or controversial. (Nonetheless, there are "quality" newspapers, magazines, radio and even some television news programmes in most countries that treat "serious" subjects in a non-controversial fashion; these media are ECLAC's appropriate audience and should be cultivated (see Part II).)

In general terms, ECLAC faces a tricky but not impossible task in trying to strengthen its image and heighten its public visibility without being unnecessarily controversial.

ECLAC should pursue a two-fold strategy (see Part II): it must find ways to translate its often technical work and statistical data in ways that are understandable and useful to working journalists, on the one hand, and then develop an effective system for communicating with and "cultivating" key media outside Chile (as a regional organization, ECLAC must always remember that headquarters is located in only one of its 40 member countries).

/Much of

Much of ECLAC's work is so technical that it will never be of great interest to the news media, even the "quality" press. But much of ECLAC's statistical research, conceptual thinking and policy recommendations are --or could be-- of interest to the media; ECLAC's work will receive greater diffusion and public attention if it is willing to devote more time and resources to public information programmes.

An effective information system, however, will require a change of institutional attitudes; the Executive Secretary must take the lead in articulating a rationale for expanded information programmes as well as closer co-operation between operating divisions and subregional offices with Information Services in Santiago.

In effect, division directors, the heads of ECLAC's seven subregional offices and other professional staff must be convinced that Information Services does, in fact, deserve a higher priority within the overall institution and that an expansion of Information programmes has the complete support of the Executive Secretary.

One example should help demonstrate the potential value to ECLAC of greater media coverage: Leonard Silk of "The New York Times" recently wrote an article about adjustment policy using an ECLAC document as the basis of his report. ECLAC's Washington office was flooded with requests for the original document; as a result, ECLAC's work reached a far larger --and far more influential-- audience than would probably have otherwise been the case.

ECLAC has no power to compel its member countries to adopt its recommendations. It must rely on the logic and power of its arguments and research to persuade governments that it is in their interest --and in the interest of the peoples they govern-- to consider ECLAC's views.

The news media often plays an important role in the decision-making process, especially in countries with elected governments; at this time of regional economic and financial crisis, the news media are more likely than not to welcome, rather than reject, ECLAC's recommendations and analysis, creating an excellent opportunity for ECLAC to increase its visibility in the region.

/Sometimes, as

Sometimes, as in the case of the recent "New York Times" article, mention of an ECLAC document can help it reach a large and influential audience. In other cases, editorials or other kinds of coverage can help influence public opinion, which may have a direct impact on the policy decisions of ECLAC's member governments.

Although many ECLAC professionals interviewed for this report seemed unconvinced that programmes designed to reach and influence public opinion through the media should become a priority for ECLAC, who among them would deny the influence of "El Mercurio" in Chile, "La Nación", "La Prensa" or "Clarín" in Argentina, "Jornal do Brasil" or "O Estado" in Brazil, "El Tiempo" in Colombia, "Uno Más Uno" and "Excelsior" in Mexico, "The New York Times", "The Washington Post" and "The Wall Street Journal" in the United States?

Yet, in an age when the media is diluged with information, reaching the media is itself a complicated and difficult undertaking. ECLAC is in direct competition with numerous other international bodies, private "think tanks" and financial institutions, universities and governments themselves; ECLAC must make a greater effort to reach and cultivate the media if it hopes to extend its influence --and raise its public visibility-- through the media.

A fully effective and professional external information system requires much more than simply writing and distributing press releases on often technical subjects which, in and of themselves, do not at first glance appear to be of interest to the news media.

Information Services must have the co-operation of ECLAC's professional staff to explain the importance of conferences, research or policy recommendations ECLAC cannot assume the media will write about, or otherwise publicize, institutional activities as a matter of course.

Information Services needs internal co-operation in order to "stimulate" news media coverage of all potentially newsworthy ECLAC activities; it must have the time and background information necessary to engage the media's attention in a highly competitive environment.

Among other things, Information Services should be advised of the travel plans of key ECLAC personnel to arrange interviews or other public appearances

/for them

for them outside Chile. Information Services must also become more adept at "planting" stories or story ideas with those newspapers and magazines that have the personnel and resources to do "original" reporting.

A review of research projects and studies underway in several divisions, particularly Social Development and Critical Poverty, revealed a number of subject areas that could well be of interest to the Latin America correspondents of major international news organizations, among them "The New York Times" and "The Washington Post".

But in order to "plant" these reports, it is necessary to understand how correspondents for major newspapers and magazines select topics for "soft" news stories; as often or not, correspondents receive an academic or quasi-academic study of a subject that may interest them; using the data and often portions of the text, they complement the study with additional interviews and then write an article for publication, citing the source (e.g., ECLAC) of their statistics or other information.

It is my impression that ECLAC's various divisions have completed --or have underway-- a number of studies that correspondents for major newspapers and magazines would find interesting enough to serve as the basis for articles; but these studies must be made available --and explained-- to selected correspondents. In order to do so, Information Services must be aware of research and other projects currently underway so that it can "cultivate" appropriate journalists, "planting" a study or story idea for their use.

This mode of operation requires a more open, continuing flow of information from ECLAC's various divisions and subregional offices to Information Services; the need to replace ECLAC's current ad hoc "system" of internal communications with a more regularized system cannot be stressed enough.

At present, Information Services is often unaware of research or other "in house" activities. Too often, Information Services meets resistance when it requests help from operating divisions in preparing background materials and even press releases; division directors and other professional staff (for the most part) do not understand or appreciate the needs and requirements of Information Services and the news media it is trying to reach.

/The following

The following recommendations are designed to improve communications between the office of Information Services, the operating divisions in Santiago and subregional offices outside Chile.

The recommendations' aim is to improve the flow of information inside the institution by "sensitizing" ECLAC administrators to the requirements of Information Services and to create regular channels of internal communication, without which no programme of external communications can succeed.

1. INFORMATION SEMINAR: Under the auspices of the Executive Secretary, the Chief of Information Services should organize a seminar for senior administrative and professional staff to acquaint them with the operations and requirements of the Information Services office; its various publications; and its other efforts to promote and publicize ECLAC documents, conferences and other institutional activities.

Local and/or foreign journalists resident in Santiago might be invited to participate in this seminar (or a part of it) to explain the kinds of information that interests them and their working requirements (timely notification of conferences, sufficient background information, etc.).

The Executive Secretary should use the seminar as a venue to publicly express his views on public information programmes, their importance and his determination that they be given higher priority within the institution.

The seminar should help educate and sensitize ECLAC staff to the kinds of information the office of Information Services --and working journalists-- require; it should also alert them to the Executive Secretary's interest in improving ECLAC's overall relationship with the news media.

2. INFORMATION OFFICERS IN ECLAC SUBREGIONAL OFFICES: Although the principal purpose of appointing information officers in ECLAC's seven subregional offices is to improve ECLAC's relationship with key media outside Chile (see part II), these officers should, at the very least, help improve the internal flow of information about ECLAC activities outside headquarters to the office of Information Services in Santiago.

At present, Information Services has little contact with other ECLAC offices; no one in these offices has the responsibility of informing Information Services about the work or activities of the subregional offices; if ECLAC is to develop

/a truly

a truly effective institutional communications system, Information Services must be made aware on a regular and systematic basis of all ECLAC activities that might be of interest to the news media.

Part of the duties of subregional information officers should be to keep in regular contact with Information Services/Santiago, informing the office of reports, conferences, research, etc., underway outside headquarters.

3. TRAVEL PLANS: Except for the Executive Secretary, few ECLAC professionals hold press conferences, give interviews or participate in background briefings outside Santiago.

In order to heighten ECLAC's visibility in media outside Chile at little or no extra cost, ECLAC should take advantage of official travel by appropriate professionals to schedule meetings with the press as a matter of course.

Selected ECLAC administrators and other professionals should be required to notify Information Services/Santiago of their travel plans, giving Information Services as much advance notice as possible so that interviews, briefings and other public appearances can be arranged.

4. SCHEDULED MEETINGS WITH INFORMATION SERVICES STAFF: If it is to effectively promote ECLAC activities, Information Services must be well informed in advance of conferences, research, studies and other documents planned or underway by ECLAC's various divisions and subregional offices.

At ECLAC headquarters, division directors or their designees should meet, perhaps once a month, with Information Services staff. The purpose of these meetings would be to keep Information Services up-to-date about all ECLAC division activities, research, etc., and to develop co-operative efforts to promote and publicize those conferences, reports or other activities which could be of interest to the news media.

5. EXECUTIVE SUMMARIES, CLARITY OF WRITING: To improve the utility of ECLAC studies and other documents to all consumers, including the press, a greater effort should be made to enforce already existing requirements that all ECLAC documents include an executive summary or, at the very least, an introduction and concluding summary of recommendations or findings.

It cannot be assumed that long documents will always --or even usually-- be read in their entirety; without some kind of summary, even the best documents can be "lost" because many journalists, government officials and others do not have

/enough time

enough time to read all the written material they receive, especially when they have no quick way of finding out what the document is about or whether it contains new ideas or information that may interest them enough to spend an hour or more with a single document.

All ECLAC documents should also be reviewed more rigorously for clarity of writing and organization; even technical documents can be well-written.

6. CLOSER CO-OPERATION AND CO-ORDINATION: No ECLAC division director would think of planning a conference without taking care that an appropriate list of participants was prepared and then making sure the desired participants were invited with enough notice to increase the likelihood that they would attend.

As a general rule, division directors and professional staff should think of Information Services as a participant in each and every conference or other public activity; a spirit of close co-operation with Information Services is a pre-requisite for an effective system of external communications; indeed, improving internal communications and co-operation may be the single most important step ECLAC can take to increase the likelihood that its work and activities will receive the attention they could --and should-- receive from the news media in Latin America, the Caribbean, the United States and Europe.

/Part II

Part II

TOWARDS CREATING A PUBLIC INFORMATION SYSTEM FOR ECLAC

As part of the United Nations "family", ECLAC should be able to rely on United Nations Information Centres in Latin America, the Caribbean, the United States and Europe to publicize its activities, arrange press conferences, distribute documents, and carry out other public information functions.

The terms of reference for this study called for visits to several Information Centres (Buenos Aires, Rio de Janeiro, Bogotá and Mexico City) to determine current levels of co-operation between these Information Centres and ECLAC offices in Argentina, Brazil, Colombia and Mexico.

The Executive Secretary also asked for an analysis of the capabilities of the United Nations Information Centres, to determine whether they might provide additional services to ECLAC in an effective manner, obviating the need for ECLAC to set up a parallel information system.

A close examination of the four United Nations Information Centres referred to in the preceding paragraph revealed a shortage of competent personnel and a debilitating confusion as to the Centres' mission. Although all Centre directors said they were willing to do what they could to assist ECLAC, they also explained that a shortage of personnel and resources precluded them from taking the initiative on ECLAC's behalf.

For the most part, the Information Centres view their principal task to be publicizing issues of international concern mandated by the General Assembly or promoting information programmes paid for by nations with narrow political aims. Very little time is spent by the Centres promoting or publicizing "in country" or regional activities by United Nations agencies that might reinforce the United Nations presence in, and relevance to, Latin America.

Typically, United Nations Information Centres are run by a career director who employs a "local" information assistant, usually a former journalist, who has charge of relations with the local media. In Argentina, Brazil, Colombia and Mexico, the local information assistants are uniformly energetic; they seem to have regular contact with the local media, trying principally to interest them in the "international" issues mandated by New York (disarmament, peace,

/Namibia, apartheid

Namibia, apartheid, a homeland for Palestinians and human rights) except in those countries where one or more of these issues (e.g., human rights) are considered objectionable to the host government, in which case the Information Centres do not seek to publicize the United Nations' positions.

Contact with "foreign" correspondents, mostly representing United States and European publications, as well as contact with the international wire services, is generally reserved for the Information Centre director rather than the local information assistant; in fact, however, conversations with both the Centre directors and "foreign" correspondents, revealed there is virtually no contact whatsoever (the United Nations Department of Public Information has the mistaken impression that information released to "international" or United States media with correspondents accredited to United Nations headquarters in New York will be written about there or transmitted to appropriate correspondents in other parts of the world).*/

There is also little or no contact between the Information Centres in Argentina, Brazil, Colombia and Mexico with other United Nations agencies, including ECLAC, in those countries; in some cases, because the other United Nations agencies have specifically told the Information Centres that they do not wish their local activities publicized; in other cases, for no clear reason at all.

(It is no wonder that several United Nations organizations (e.g., the World Bank, UNICEF) have created their own independent information systems employing competent professionals to publicize their work and activities.)

There would appear to be some possibility for greater co-operation between ECLAC and the United Nations Information Centres in Argentina, Brazil, Colombia and Mexico (the Centres are capable of organizing press conferences, providing up-to-date mailing lists and, in some cases, distributing documents).

But it would be unrealistic for ECLAC to expect these Centres to devote the time and resources necessary to develop an effective regional information system capable of substantially improving ECLAC's contacts and relations with the media outside Chile.

---

*/ As a former Latin America correspondent for The Washington Post (1978-1980), I can attest that, except for major political issues, information concerning Latin America released at UN headquarters was "lost", neither written about in New York or forwarded to me in Buenos Aires.

/It is

It is recommended that ECLAC create a parallel information system, making use of Information Centre personnel, resources and facilities when and where feasible but not relying on the Centres for more than marginal assistance (the situation in Brazil is particularly bad; the Information Centre in Rio, even though it has one of the best local information assistants, has virtually no money for travel, has no way of distributing documents outside Rio except by mail and has no funds for telexing press releases or other information except in "emergency" situations).

ECLAC has clearly paid a price for having relied on United Nations Information Centres in the past.

Conversations with leading journalists in Argentina, Brazil, Colombia and Mexico revealed that ECLAC's current work and activities are virtually unknown to them, that few have had direct contact with ECLAC personnel, including the Executive Secretary, that few ECLAC documents, studies or other publications are distributed on a regular basis, that very few of them are aware that ECLAC has offices in the countries mentioned and that, as a result, ECLAC's image as an activist organization with original ideas relevant to the economic and social development of Latin America and the Caribbean has suffered over the years.

To the extent that ECLAC has tried to disseminate its research, publications and policy recommendations over the past ten to fifteen years, it has done so in Chile, depending on international wire services to transmit information to other countries which are members of the Commission. Except for the Executive Secretary's year-end press conference, ECLAC's information programmes appear to have had little impact outside Chile and only recently a little more impact inside Chile, where the government and the press were until recently extremely hostile to ECLAC's positions and general philosophy.

Although ECLAC's reputation has suffered, its public image remains relatively intact; this is important because a concerted effort to reach the media should succeed, if for no other reason than the climate in which it will be undertaken is favourable to ECLAC.

To increase its visibility and improve its public image, ECLAC should pursue a two-fold strategy: first, it must develop materials and systems useful to working journalists; second, it must create a rapid and dependable system for

/distributing documents

distributing documents and transmitting information. ECLAC should also make a greater effort to "cultivate" news organizations and journalists so that they will be more inclined to use the materials they receive.

ECLAC's goal should be to reinforce its image as THE centre for economic research and policy analysis in Latin America and the Caribbean.

To do so, ECLAC should play to its strengths... the Executive Secretary, who is extraordinarily articulate in five languages, and its store of regional statistics --while developing new and improved publications to "popularize" research and analysis which, at present, is too often "buried" in studies and reports of little use to working journalists unaccustomed to technical language.

ECLAC should also make better use of its subregional offices, both in terms of keeping Information Services in Santiago apprised of research and other activities underway in these offices and in developing contacts with the media in countries outside Chile.

Although the Chief of Information Services/Santiago should oversee ECLAC's overall public information programme, it is unrealistic to assume that three information specialists at headquarters can develop and maintain a truly effective regional information system; each subregional office should have one part-time or full-time staff member assigned to public information activities.

The following recommendations are designed to help ECLAC develop a comprehensive information system, improving the quality and especially the utility of ECLAC's written materials while, at the same time improving ECLAC's ability to disseminate information in a rapid and effective manner to key news organizations throughout the region as well as in the United States and Europe.

1. SUBREGIONAL INFORMATION OFFICERS: If ECLAC is to develop a truly effective regional information programme, it must make better use of its regional offices in Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, Mexico, Trinidad and Tobago and the United States.

The offices in Argentina, Brazil, Colombia and the United States should designate one staff member as a part-time press liaison; the offices in Mexico City and Port of Spain should hire an experienced journalist as a full-time press liaison; all should be given sufficient time, resources and incentives to perform their duties in an active and fully professional manner.

/The principal

The principal duties of these press liaisons should not be to write press releases or duplicate other written materials already produced in Santiago. The regional press officers should concentrate their efforts on meeting and cultivating "key" journalists, including correspondents of major United States and European publications, acquainting them with ECLAC's activities and providing a point of contact for journalists when they have questions or need information which ECLAC can provide.

The press liaisons should keep in frequent contact with Information Services in Santiago, providing information about regional office activities, offering suggestions for ways to increase contacts between traveling ECLAC professionals and the media and generally sensitizing the regional offices to the need for greater efforts to disseminate ECLAC's research and activities through the press to the public.

These regional press officers would also offer a point of contact for the Chief of Information Services in Santiago, who might well call of them from time to time to arrange press conferences or interviews for the Executive Secretary or other appropriate ECLAC officials.

Whenever possible, the Executive Secretary and other ECLAC officials should hold press conferences and grant interviews in the regional offices, to acquaint journalists with their location, personnel, and areas of expertise.

The press liaison officers should spend at least one week a year in Santiago, re-acquainting themselves with ECLAC's overall operations and the priorities of information services.

2. CULTIVATING KEY MEDIA: While traveling outside Chile, the Executive Secretary should meet, as a matter of course, with one or more key media executives. These meetings should be arranged by the regional press liaison officers in countries where ECLAC has offices or by the Chief of Information Services/ Santiago where ECLAC does not.

Although the Executive Secretary does grant press conferences and interviews from time to time outside Chile, it is perhaps of even greater importance that he personally meet with, and explain, ECLAC's philosophy, positions and other activities to key editors and news executives --especially in Mexico, Brazil and the United States, where ECLAC's current work is largely unknown to the media.

/These meetings

These meetings need not result in published interviews or statements; the Executive Secretary can, if he wishes, stipulate that these are private visits to exchange views on topics of mutual interest and concern; there is nothing more flattering or likely to win lasting goodwill among newspaper executives, editors and journalists than to be "consulted" by recognized experts.

The Chief of Information Services/Santiago should also travel more frequently, meeting key newspaper, magazine, radio and television journalists and executives, acquainting them with ECLAC and its information programmes. These meetings will also acquaint him with their information needs and interests.

3. "FOREIGN" CORRESPONDENTS: Many important United States and European publications have correspondents based in Buenos Aires, Rio de Janeiro and/or Mexico City. Their job is to write about Latin America and the Caribbean, an almost impossible job considering the number of countries for which they are responsible and the vast distances they must travel.

Foreign correspondents are always interested in studies or other written materials which provide insight into the way the people of Latin America or the Caribbean live; they are also more likely than "local" journalists to care about regional trends, especially in the areas of economic and social development. They provide a ready audience for ECLAC.

But these correspondents have little time to sift through all the documents they are sent, much less read long and complicated reports. They need to be approached, a relationship needs to be cultivated and story ideas need to be "planted".

If this occurs, an institution such as ECLAC can expect far more coverage --and many more references to its work-- in newspapers like "The New York Times", "The Washington Post", "The Economist", et al.

In practical terms, this means that the Executive Secretary and the Chief of Information Services should make a special effort to meet and engage these correspondents, always having something "special" to offer in the way of interesting findings or statistics or reports which demonstrate a regional trend or a policy recommendation that might be significant and therefore newsworthy.

Contacts with these "foreign" correspondents is an area in which the United Nations Information Centres are particularly weak.

/4. BACKGROUND

4. BACKGROUND SEMINARS: From time to time, ECLAC should organize background seminars for journalists outside Chile. These seminars should focus on substantive issues of current interest to the press and the public (e.g., the debt crisis).

ECLAC should also consider holding background seminars or press conferences outside Chile to gain greater attention for its year-end economic trends report, which currently receives far less attention and publicity in member countries outside Chile than in Santiago, where the annual press conference is held.

5. BACKGROUND REPORTS: Although ECLAC's office of Information Services has significantly improved the content and presentation of press releases and other publications over the past year, Information Services has not had the time, staff, resources or co-operation necessary to develop written materials (other than press releases) designed to provide "background" material to journalists based on statistics and analysis available within ECLAC.

The IMF and some other international organizations publish monthly or quarterly magazines which seek to summarize (in fairly sophisticated but non-technical language) the thinking and activities of these institutions.

ECLAC need not publish a magazine; it should, however, publish an ongoing series of "background papers" for working journalists (and others) on topics of current interest.

These background papers should be thought of as quick reference guides to topics of regional or subregional importance (e.g., the debt crisis, poverty, trade, CARICOM, the Andean Pact), providing key statistics, key historical developments and analysis in easily understood, non-technical language.

The value of these background reports is that journalists will use the statistics and analysis contained in them, citing ECLAC as their source of information. These references should reinforce ECLAC's desired image as an authoritative but neutral source of information.

To be done properly, these background papers would require co-operation between Information Services and ECLAC's various operating divisions and sub-regional offices; it would be unrealistic, both in terms of expertise and personnel, to expect Information Services to prepare these background papers by itself.

/To help

To help improve their utility to the widest number of journalists and news organizations, these background papers should be published simultaneously in Spanish, English and Portuguese.

6. TELEX INFORMATION SERVICE: Of all the ideas discussed with working journalists in the countries visited, the one idea that all agreed would be extremely useful was a statistical information service via telex.

Working journalists are always in need of statistics; they need them to be reliable and they often need them quickly. At present, there is no adequate system for journalists, especially when they are traveling away from their home offices, to obtain the statistical information they need.

No other recommendation contained in this report could have as immediate and important impact in terms of ECLAC's utility to the press, as an affirmative decision by ECLAC to initiate a statistical information service for accredited journalists via telex. By providing such statistics, ECLAC's image as THE authoritative source of information related to the economic and social condition and development of Latin America and the Caribbean would be significantly enhanced.

Although some technical and bureaucratic details will undoubtedly have to be resolved, the cost to ECLAC of such a system should not be prohibitive; the statistics are already available "in house". A clerk would be needed to man a telex machine at headquarters, and another person of professional rank would be needed to obtain the requested statistics from ECLAC's various divisions.

The key to such a system is time; journalists must feel secure that they will receive an immediate reply to their requests (two hours) in the form of a return telex either containing the statistics they have requested or acknowledging that ECLAC has received their request but does not have the required statistics at hand.

If the system is abused, ECLAC could place a limit on the number of statistics it would provide in response to any single request. But, in general terms, ECLAC should look upon a statistical information service as its premier information programme and should do as much as possible to respond to all requests as quickly and completely as possible.

To avoid requests for statistical information which ECLAC does not have readily available, it should publish a short "News Media Guide to ECLAC" describing the telex information service and the kinds of statistical information the system can provide.

/7. NEWS

7. NEWS MEDIA GUIDE TO ECLAC: In addition to the above, the "News Media Guide" should contain telephone and telex numbers at headquarters, short descriptions of each division with lists of key personnel, publications and other information available to accredited journalists, either in Santiago or in other ECLAC offices.

The Guide, in effect, should be seen (by ECLAC and by journalists) as an invitation to the news media to look to ECLAC for help and to reinforce its image as an open and responsible source of information, the first step in any effort to improve ECLAC's relationship with the press.

The benefits of creating this kind of atmosphere should become quickly apparent: journalists will use more information provided by ECLAC, cite ECLAC more often in their reporting, and be more receptive when ECLAC issues a document or statement or holds a conference which it wants reported in the news media.

8. MAILING AND TELEX LISTS: A review of mailing lists revealed that many are out of date; documents and press releases are too often sent to newspapers, magazines and other media which have moved or no longer exist. This is especially true outside Chile.

Information Services should carefully review its current mailing lists, requesting assistance from United Nations Information Centres where necessary, in order to improve its current distribution system (as indicated earlier, ECLAC cannot always depend on the Information Centres to distribute its documents and other information).

An up-to-date (and complete) telex list of key media in member countries would give Information Services the additional capability of communicating quickly and directly with these media when warranted (e.g., should the Executive Secretary decide to hold a press conference on short notice outside Chile).

/PRINCIPAL RECOMMENDATIONS

PRINCIPAL RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That ECLAC commit itself to developing an effective information system reaching beyond Santiago, providing the resources and personnel necessary to promote ECLAC's research and institutional presence in key member countries such as Argentina, Brazil, Mexico and the United States.
2. That, as a first step, ECLAC offices in Buenos Aires, Brasilia and Washington appoint one staff member to serve as a press liaison officer with sufficient resources and incentives to develop news media contacts and promote publication of ECLAC documents, statements and other information.
3. That ECLAC regional offices in Mexico City and Port of Spain hire a local journalist to serve as a full-time press liaison and public information officer under the joint supervision of the office director and the Chief of Information Services in Santiago.
4. That the Executive Secretary and division directors, when traveling, pursue opportunities to hold press conferences, give interviews and/or take part in public forums as a matter of course; that these ECLAC executives notify the office of Information Services of their travel plans and co-ordinate their public appearances through the office of Information Services/ Santiago and press liaison officers in countries where ECLAC has offices.
5. That the Executive Secretary and Chief of Information Services spend more time outside Chile cultivating key news executives, editors and working journalists to acquaint them with ECLAC, its activities and the information services ECLAC can provide.
6. That the Executive Secretary and Chief of Information Services make a special effort to meet with correspondents of United States and European publications in Buenos Aires, Rio de Janeiro and Mexico City, where most of these correspondents have their offices.
7. That the Executive Secretary, whenever possible, hold press conferences and interview in ECLAC country or regional offices to acquaint journalists with these offices, their location, areas of expertise and personnel.

/8. That

8. That ECLAC undertake a series of background seminars in all member countries on topics of current interest to both the mass media and specialized publications.

9. That the Executive Secretary and division directors hold regularly scheduled meetings, perhaps once a month, at headquarters with Information Services staff to acquaint them with future meetings, documents, technical missions and other ECLAC activities that should be promoted for news media coverage.

10. That the Chief of Information Services organize a seminar for all division directors and other appropriate professional staff to acquaint them with the operations of the Information Services office, to explain the kinds of documents, statistics, research, conferences and other activities of interest to the news media and to emphasize the institutional need for increasing ECLAC's visibility in the mass media.

11. That all ECLAC studies and other documents be reviewed for clarity of writing and organization as well as content; and that all published documents include an executive summary, preferably written in non-technical language, to increase the utility of these documents for working journalists.

12. That the office of Information Services, in conjunction with all other divisions, produce a series of "background papers" specifically aimed at the news media on topics of current interest, using already available ECLAC statistics, summarizing other research, analysis and information. These background papers should be thought of as quick reference guides for working journalists.

13. That ECLAC begin a statistical information service for accredited journalists via telex, providing the opportunity for journalists to telex ECLAC/Santiago with specific requests for statistical information with a guaranteed two-hour "turn around time".

14. That the office of Information Services prepare a short News Media Guide to ECLAC, listing areas of expertise, available statistics, key reports and documents, telephone and telex numbers.

15. That the office of Information Services prepare a comprehensive, up-to-date mailing list in member countries outside Chile to insure that ECLAC documents, etc., reach their intended audience in the news media; that the office of Information Services also compile telex numbers of key media in each member country to notify such media of visits by Executive Secretary and appropriate division directors.