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PROGRESS REPORT ON THE UNDATS AND THEIR OTHER  
POSSIBLE FIELDS OF ACTIVITIES

Prepared by  
Centre for Economic Co-operation

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<u>Paragraphs</u>	<u>Page</u>
Introduction .....	1 - 2	1
Activities of specific UNDATs .....	3 - 7	1
General review of UNDATs .....	8 - 11	2
The possible role of the UNDATs in Economic Co-operation .....	12 - 16	3
The next focus of the UNDATs resources .....	17 - 20	4
Areas of possible improvements and co-operation with the specialized agencies .....	21 - 24	5

## PROGRESS REPORT ON THE UNDATS AND THEIR OTHER POSSIBLE FIELDS OF ACTIVITIES

### Introduction:

1. The United Nations Multinational Inter-disciplinary Development Advisory Teams (UNDATs) originated under the General Assembly resolution 2563 (XXIV) on the role of the regional economic commissions in the field of development planning during the Second Development Decade, following the recommendations in resolution 1552 (XLIX) of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). In compliance with these resolutions, the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, in collaboration with the regional economic commissions for Africa, Asia and Latin America, has been endeavouring to establish these teams.
2. The objectives of the UNDATs are to (a) advise and assist the governments concerned in relation to the formulation, harmonization and implementation of policies, programmes and projects in the context of a national integrated development framework; (b) advise and assist the governments in formulating, harmonizing and implementing policies, programmes and projects for multinational co-operation; (c) advise and assist the governments in identifying their needs for technical co-operation and external financing in the light of their development situation, aims and resources, and in preparing for and carrying out reviews of technical co-operation programmes; (d) assist the governments in building up local competence and structure in the above-mentioned tasks; and (e) assist, upon request, the UNDP resident representatives in each country in such matters as indicated in (c) above. It should be underlined here that UNDATs are not supposed to supplant the technical assistance the countries are receiving, but to supplement such assistance. In this regard, collaboration between the specialized agencies and the UNDATs is considered of paramount importance for the success of the UNDATs.

### Activities of specific UNDATs

#### (a) The Lusaka-based UNDAT

3. The Eastern and Southern African UNDAT, based in Lusaka and serving twelve countries, will become operational during the first half of 1974. This UNDAT is being financed from the United Nations funds as well as from the USAID which has granted \$US 500,000 each year for two years, with possibility of extending the grant period. Since the area to be covered by this UNDAT is large, a second sub-team to be manned by a limited group of experts and which will operate under the overall jurisdiction of the Lusaka-based team, is planned for Botswana, Lesotho and Swaziland in order to conform to the wishes of the Governments of the area which have expressed the desire to keep together.
4. The work programme, which was prepared at an inter-governmental meeting in Lusaka, 14-16 June 1973, puts emphasis on rural transformation with the aim to creating poles of development in rural areas. The work of the UNDATs is to be mainly multinational in character, although they will still carry out projects of national character that may impinge on projects which are being carried out by other United Nations agencies; hence the need for close co-operation with specialized agencies. In view of the large number of countries to be covered by the Lusaka UNDAT, an initial strength of ten experts and four junior economists has been proposed. This number could, however, be revised upwards and negotiations are still underway. In addition, the Team will be supported by short-term consultants as might be required. At present, recruitment of the

experts is in progress and a substantial number of these are being drawn mainly from the African countries, especially from within the subregion.

(b) The Yaounde-based UNDAT

5. The Yaounde-based UNDAT has provision for seven long-term experts and four junior experts, two of whom are Africans. At the present time, three of the expert posts are vacant and recruitment is under way. The junior experts programme which may be looked upon as an instrument for the transfer of skills, is yielding fruitful results as proved by its success in this UNDAT, where the junior experts are assuming increasing responsibilities and working with diminishing amounts of supervision. Altogether about twenty national and multinational projects are being carried out by this UNDAT, including road and maritime transportation, crop development, employment, rural-urban migration, and integrated rural development. Among the multinational projects being carried out are the cereal project covering Chad, Cameroon and Central African Republic; the live-stock and meat-marketing project for the UDEAC and Chad as well as transport and industrial activities in collaboration with UDEAC. Another important multinational project is a study of the social and economic impact of the Trans-African Highway, which entails assisting the Governments (initially Cameroon) in the formulation of plans to maximize the benefits of the Highway through such measures as the construction of a system of feeder roads.

(c) The Niamey-based UNDAT

6. The Niamey-based UNDAT programme has provision for eight experts, including a rural sociologist, hydro-geologist, human as well as mineral resources experts. Provision is made for three junior experts. Recruitment is proceeding to bring the team to its full complement. The resources of the Niamey UNDAT have been put at the disposal of the Permanent Inter-State Committee for Drought Control in the Sudano-Sahelian area to assist in finding short- and long-term solutions to the ravages resulting from the cyclic drought in that area of Africa. Preliminary investigations and project-related contacts have been made in the area of transport with the Governments of Upper Volta and Niger, Hotafric, Lake Chad Basin Commission and Conseil de l'Entente. The CEAO has also requested the UNDAT to assist in the formulation of the organization's work programme. This UNDAT's work has also converged with that of the multi-purpose Liptako-Gourma Development scheme, on which considerable preliminary activity has been carried out under the General Assembly's resolution on special measures of assistance to the LDCs.

7. The preparation to establish the second West African UNDAT to be based in Dakar is under way and preliminary negotiations to this effect are in progress.

General review of UNDATs

8. The terms of reference of the UNDATs are broad enough to permit flexibility in the use of the teams in response to the urgent and diverse tasks that have been identified in the region. A good example of this is the adaptation of the Niamey-based UNDAT system to assist in the Sahelian rehabilitation programme for the drought-stricken areas of West Africa. The Yaounde-based UNDAT made a positive contribution to the Zambian transport crisis through the services of

a transport economist who spent three months assisting the Zambian Government. The planned UNDAT for Eastern and Southern Africa is expected to include the Zambian transport problem in its work programme.

9. Due to their multi-disciplinary constitution and localized character, the teams' activities interact intimately with those of bilateral donors and specialized agencies. This offers greater opportunities for co-ordination and mutual complementarity in assisting the governments and should thus increase the effectiveness of the overall contribution of the United Nations family of organizations to the governments.

10. Moreover, because they are accredited to several countries at a time, these teams have proved their capacity for playing an important role in strengthening economic co-operation among the countries in their area. For instance, as indicated above, the work of the UNDATs based in Yaounde and Niamey complements the activities of several inter-governmental organizations in these UNDATs' areas of operations. It is expected that the newly established Lusaka-based UNDAT will also render similar services to the Conference of East and Central African States and the East African Community.

11. The three experimental years of the UNDAT programme have confirmed its usefulness to the countries, especially the least developed ones. To enhance its effectiveness, it is planned to increase the involvement of the UNDP and other United Nations agencies in each area in the formulation of the UNDAT work programmes right from the beginning in order to ensure maximum complementarity between the planned and on-going subregional and country activities of these agencies.

#### The possible role of the UNDATs in Economic Co-operation

12. The fact that each UNDAT is to concentrate on a group of countries means that it will acquire intimate knowledge of the development needs of that group of countries. More importantly, the simultaneous concern with the group as well as individual country development problems makes them also multinational in their operations. Thus the UNDATs possess relatively greater effectiveness in the identification of economic co-operation opportunities as well as in the implementation of multinational projects which reduce the constraint of market size, and improve efficient resource utilization, besides enabling countries to pool their resources.

13. Through their techniques of operation, the UNDATs will facilitate the exchange and flow of information on investment opportunities related to multinational and national projects, with a view to minimizing the excess capacities normally created in the absence of co-ordinated production planning. The underutilization of capacity not only wastes scarce resources but reduces the level of potential employment in addition to increasing the cost of products and thereby lowering the standard of living. In their project studies they will generally try to reveal the multinational impacts and potential gains from trade in inputs, final goods, training, and other services. Such assistance would be all the more positive since only in a few countries do the machinery for dealing with multinational co-operation exist on a continuous basis.

14. The UNDATs should also be capable of playing an important role in the implementation of multinational projects within their areas of operation. In addition to advising the countries on how they could benefit from economies of scale arising from multinational activities and projects, the UNDATs are also expected to assist the countries in the preparation of requests for financial and other assistance in the implementation of multinational and national projects. Moreover, they will encourage countries to pool their own resources in the implementation of multinational projects as well as undertaking pre-feasibility studies.

15. The other unique feature of the UNDATs is their inter-disciplinary character. Development scholars are wont to stress the necessity for inter-disciplinary approach to development problems of the developing countries. There are primarily two reasons for this. First, the interactions among the key variables which are normally dealt with separately in developed countries are unusually strong in developing countries.<sup>1/</sup> Thus, the absence of a single historical and sociological context means that a unifying framework for separate disciplines does not exist and development activities undertaken without adequate complementarity or by separate activities may be counter-productive. Secondly, the resources for multi-disciplinary approach in the African region are non-existent and/or unorganized.

16. The incidence of poverty and underdevelopment is multi-dimensional. It reveals itself through combined and simultaneous incidence of malnutrition, ignorance, disease and squalor because the causal factors are highly inter-related. Thus, to be effective, the complementarity of solutions must correspond to the inter-dependence of the causal factors within and beyond the national boundaries of each country. The multi-disciplinary nature of the UNDATs will be useful in fostering and assisting in the development and implementation of complementary solutions in each sector. This will be done through integrated development projects and activities which cut across disciplines in order to enable the countries to obtain maximum benefit in the use of their resources and of resources made available to them by the international community. The UNDATs will thus always try to ensure that, as far as possible, no projects stand alone in isolation but are concretely related to the other sectors conceptually, and implemented together in order to avoid unnecessary bottlenecks, waste and ineffectiveness. They will help the countries to spell out the primary and secondary impacts of each project they undertake.

#### The next focus of the UNDATs' resources

17. The first three experimental years of the UNDAT programme have demonstrated its flexibility in dealing with the changing problems. A large number of the projects undertaken by the UNDATs during this period concentrated on national programmes which meant that the multinational and multi-disciplinary potentialities of the programme were not fully utilized. As the areas of maximum effectiveness for the UNDATs have been clarified, the next phase of the programme will be concentration on inter-country and inter-disciplinary strategy to assist

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<sup>1/</sup> See, for example, Michael Lipton, "Inter-disciplinary studies in less developed countries", The Journal of Development Studies, Vol. 7, No. 1, October 1970.

African countries to accelerate the eradication of poverty, ignorance and disease. This view has been reiterated inter alia by the recommendations of the Technical Committee of Experts of the ECA and the last Conference of African Planners held here in 1972. In each UNDAT area, a relevant programme development committee will formulate suitable work programmes for the UNDATs. Some of the areas in which the resources of the UNDATs can be concentrated are improvement of the living conditions of the poor, rural transformation and integration in the rest of the economy, raising of the productivity of agriculture, ensuring adequate remuneration of the producers, rural technology, and non-formal education, including the overall increase of economic opportunities and the enhancing of the capabilities of the poor to utilize such opportunities.

18. Since it is clear that no significant increase in rural productivity is possible unless economically attractive and stable markets are assured, a policy of linking several types of farming activities would yield benefits internally as well as subregionally through co-operation of groups of countries. Multi-nationally, production-trade projects backed by trade agreements could be another kind of activity for the UNDATs. In the same vein, UNDATs could undertake studies on national and subregional food and agricultural raw materials consumption patterns and their impacts on nutrition and expected trends in the future, with a view to determining intra-country trade potentialities. National food and nutrition policies as well as production-trade agreements would benefit greatly therefrom.

19. Apart from assisting countries in the implementation of joint development of water resources (river basins, lakes, etc.), the UNDATs may assist countries by disseminating information on case studies of the most progressive patterns of rural water development. The use of fertilizers, pesticides, artificial insemination and high-yield seeds is becoming important in Africa although not yet widespread. The use of animal draught techniques is also widely used in some African countries, while almost completely absent in others. Widespread improved use of the ox, horse, donkey and camel to pull carts, ploughs, wagons or to turn pulleys for irrigation (as is the case in India, Egypt and Maghreb) would go a long way in supplementing human energy and in eliminating the use of women as beasts of burden. As an initial step, the UNDATs could facilitate the exchange of designs of animal traction techniques and practices among African countries as well as assist multinational activities in the production of agricultural chemicals.

20. The other areas where the UNDATs could further multinational activities include such areas as setting up a multinational institute of technology for training personnel in various technological fields; the examination of possibilities for inter-country specialization in the different lines of industrial production as well as setting up multinational industries involving indigenous multinational enterprises; identification of needs for improvements in transport and telecommunications, and fostering joint action in the development and utilization of energy resources in order to benefit from economies of scale.

Areas of possible improvements and co-operation with the specialized agencies

21. Usually, the agriculturist, the extension worker, the health inspector, the nutritionist, the educationist, and those dealing with human settlements, housing, the provision of transport and communication as well as environmental

sanitation and water development work almost in total isolation. This strategy may be effective when the problem consists of marginal adjustments to an existing structure, but not when new structures are to be created from scratch and the danger exists of some activities neutralizing others or just affecting symptoms whose real causes are due to the high degree of complementarity of activities.<sup>2/</sup> Frequently, the service and/or resource, given by one agency, may contradict that given by another or may be rendered useless by unanticipated bottlenecks of a complementary service or resource. Thus the very nature of the development problems involved calls for concerted actions on the part of all agencies which are involved in assisting the African Governments in their efforts to eradicate poverty and underdevelopment. In particular, the need for co-ordination of the activities of the specialized United Nations agencies has never been more obvious.

22. The effectiveness of the feedback between ECA headquarters and the UNDATs will be under continuous review to ensure the flow of experience and work relevant to African needs. In this connexion, the UNDATs will also be encouraged to have close working relations with formal and informal inter-governmental groupings as well as with IDEP so that they could benefit from the African experience of these institutions and, wherever possible, use IDEP personnel as consultants and together mobilize African academic community in the solution of African development problems.

23. The ECA is giving consideration to some useful improvements in the UNDAT programme. Some of the possible improvements being explored in the UNDAT assistance programme may lie in the area of project and budget programming long enough for effective establishment but short enough to accommodate only the resource already made available. The criteria for project selection as well as the process of project submission constitute yet other areas where improvements could be made in order to offer clear guidelines in the resource use between national projects with multinational components and primarily multinational projects.

24. Another important area of possible co-ordination and co-operation lies in the preparation, submission and selection of UNDAT projects. In this connexion, the UNDP resident representatives, United Nations specialized agencies as well as the bilateral donors could play an important role in project preparation and selection. However, the role of project submission ultimately resides with the governments. In this connexion, ECA is giving consideration to the creation of programme committees consisting of (1) representatives of the countries served by the UNDAT, (2) the UNDP resident representatives of those countries, (3) representatives of specialized agencies and other United Nations participating organs active in the area, (4) representatives of ECA, (5) representatives of CDEPP (New York), and (6) the UNDAT team leader.

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<sup>2/</sup> There is a large amount of literature on the necessity for integration in rural development but most of it does not specify how such integrated approach can actually be implemented in practice. See, for example, Tekola Dejene and Scot E. Smith, Experiences in Rural Development, A selected, annotated bibliography of planning, implementation and evaluation of rural development in Africa, Overseas Liaison Committee, American Council on Education, OLC Paper No.1, August 1973.