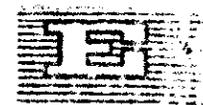


UNITED NATIONS
ECONOMIC
AND
SOCIAL COUNCIL



64296

Distr.
LIMITED



E/CN.14/ESD/14
13 January 1962

Original: ENGLISH

ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR AFRICA
Working Party on Economic and Social Development
Addis Ababa, 15 - 27 January 1962
Provisional agenda item 7(b)

WORKING PAPER ON THE PROPOSED ESTABLISHMENT
OF AN AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT
AND PLANNING INSTITUTE

(Note prepared by the Secretariat)

PREFACE

A working paper on the proposed establishment of an African development and planning institute was prepared by the Secretariat as a basis of discussion for the Panel of Experts which met at Addis Ababa from 4 to 7 December 1961.

After the meeting of the Panel, it was found necessary to review the working paper in the light of the experts' recommendations, which mainly concerned types of training. The Secretariat had also to take account of the views expressed by certain African governments during an exploratory mission carried out in November 1961 by Mr. Ismail Mahroug, ECA consultant.

The present document will serve as a basis of discussion for the Working Party on Economic and Social Development, which is to meet at Addis Ababa from 15 to 27 January 1962.

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Table of Contents

	<u>Paragraphs</u>
I. Origin of the Project	1 - 6
II. Functions of the Institute.	7 - 29
A. Training	9 - 17
B. Research	18 - 24
C. Advisory Services	25 - 29
III. Organization of the Institute	30 - 41
A. Stages of Growth of the Institute	30 - 31
B. Recruitment of Staff	32 - 36
C. External Relations of the Institute	37 - 40
D. Site of the Project	41
IV. Conclusion - Important Questions	42

AFRICAN INSTITUTE FOR ECONOMIC
DEVELOPMENT AND PLANNING

I. Origin of the project

1. Since its inception the Economic Commission for Africa has had regularly on the agenda for its annual sessions the question of training facilities in economic and social planning for African States. In pursuance of the various resolutions adopted by the Commission, and in particular of resolutions 16 and 17 (II), the Secretariat decided to launch an "intensive programme of study and training designed to meet the need for an increasing number of economists, statisticians, public administrators and managers of industry who are able to handle the problems and techniques of development programming."^{1/}

2. At its third session, held from 7 to 18 February 1961, the Commission noted with interest the Executive Secretary's statement that negotiations were in progress for the establishment of an economic and social development training and research institute. The latter will help the African countries in the applied research activities required for their economic development plans and thus provide practical training for the African technicians associated in its work, either in the various countries concerned or within the institute itself.

3. In this way was launched the idea of an African planning institute, soon to be taken up by all the independent African countries, which submitted to the UN General Assembly a draft resolution (A/C.1/L.271/Rev.1), dated 12 April 1961, proposing the establishment in Africa of a development institute.

4. The fact that ECLA has already taken action on similar lines and that ESCAPE is preparing to do so indicates that the same need

^{1/} Cf. Project 41-02, Programme of Work and Priorities for 1961-62, Report on third session of ECA.

is felt in the three regions to establish an institute for the basic and further training of national planning staffs. Africa's peculiar situation may make it still more urgently necessary to establish such an institution, which can play an essential role in speeding up economic and social progress in the African continent and become a privileged instrument of international technical assistance and at the same time a valuable tool in the hands of the Economic Commission for Africa.

5. There are two major factors in favour of the early establishment of an African development and planning institute:

(a) The planning idea is gaining ground in Africa, with the progressive advance of the African countries to independence and their leaders' assumption of responsibility for guiding their peoples towards economic and social development. This trend towards planning, which is increasingly marked in less developed countries, is readily understandable. In the first place, local private capital is in most countries incapable by itself of ensuring a rapid growth of the economy; in the second, activities in the public sector directed not only to the economic and social infrastructure (e.g. transport and education) but also to productive branches (agriculture and industry) are bound to expand substantially, precisely because private enterprise is proving unable to cope with those tasks. Lastly, as available funds and personnel are inadequate to achieve the many large-scale economic and social objectives set, governments are compelled to select short-term targets and to distribute national resources in accordance with a scale of priorities, which presupposes choices and by that very fact implies the planning idea.

(b) But, when the young African States decide to adopt this economic planning policy, they come up against a serious difficulty: the shortage of indigenous staff trained in planning methods and

techniques. Few of the picked men trained in the past were trained as economists, fewer still as planners. Hence all African countries without exception now feel a pressing need to provide basic and further training for national planning personnel. For the moment, training of varying quality is being given on the job, in contact with foreign experts and in very empirical fashion. The trainees themselves realize the inadequacy of this empirical training and the need for better-organized and more systematic training facilities.

6. The establishment of an African development and planning institute will therefore meet real needs expressed by all the independent African countries that sponsored the resolution of 12 April 1961. If it is to meet these needs, the proposed institute must take account of two factors:

the variations in the stages of development reached by the African countries, under the impact of varying natural and human conditions; and

the special nature of the development problems facing the African continent, which will entail original research for their solution, as Africa cannot be content with slavishly copying the techniques and experience of the other continents.

In that connexion, the countries of the region may be divided into three groups according to progress made in the organization of planning activities:

- (a) those with a planning body that have launched a real development plan with relative success;
- (b) those that have set up a planning body with a view to launching an economic and social development plan; and
- (c) those that are still working on public expenditure programmes covering several years.

In view of these diverse situations, the institute must start off in a very flexible and empirical manner, although its activities may be expected to revolve around three poles: education, research and advisory services.

II. Functions of the institute

7. The African development and planning institute will function under the auspices of the Economic Commission for Africa, so close relations will have to be arranged between it and the ECA Secretariat.

8. In an initial phase the institute's main, and priority, activity will be training and research directly related to teaching needs, the aim being to provide the African States fairly quickly with the economic and social planning personnel they now lack. If, however, the training given by the institute is to answer real needs, instruction must be based on the results of new research into present economic and social development conditions in the African countries.

Later, when the institute has won its spurs in the fields of teaching and research, it may be expected to be in a position to offer advisory services in planning to governments requesting them.

A. Training

9. It is generally admitted that a university education is inadequate as a training for national planning personnel. Universities are few in number in Africa, and most of them are still marked by two characteristics that make them unfit to cope with the training of planners: (1) the instruction they give is often purely theoretical, and (2) the tools they use in economic analysis are those used in the developed countries of Europe and America.

10. Moreover, the Conference of African University Rectors held at Khartoum in December 1960 implicitly acknowledged the defects of instruction in the economic sciences now given in Africa. Some of the recommendations made by that Conference pave the way to fruitful collaboration between the universities and the future African planning institute. Among these were:

- (a) that future university professors and public officials should be eligible for admission to training establishments enjoying international backing;
- (b) that consideration should be given to the establishment of a training centre on the setting-up and evaluation of development projects for economists and technicians; and
- (c) that a concrete research programme on economic and related subjects, should be laid down for the African universities and estimates made of the resources needed to carry out the programme for which assistance would be required.

11. The establishment of an African development and planning institute would be in line with the African universities' recommendations, particularly that stated in paragraph 10 (b) above. The institute will not, however, be awarding diplomas, but training men who can combine thought with action. This would provide the officials in charge of economic development with practical training to supplement their necessarily academic university education. Executive personnel would, in turn, receive the basic theoretical training they may lack if they have not had the chance to attend a university.

12. The trainees that may be recruited by the institute might be graded in the following three categories:

- (a) senior officials serving in economic administrations (planning, industry, trade, agriculture etc.);

- (b) young officials engaged in planning work, either at central planning level or in technical departments; and
- (c) students who are aiming at posts in public or private administrations connected with economic and social planning.

Preference for admission to the institute would be given to the first two of these categories, i.e. officials engaged in planning work, these being the particular categories that must be trained or perfected in planning techniques and methods.

13. The content of the instruction to be given by the institute was the subject of careful study and of detailed recommendations by the Panel of Experts which met at Addis Ababa from 4 to 7 December 1961 (E/CN.14/ESD/18). Three types of course are proposed:

- (a) 9-month courses on planning techniques;
- (b) 3-month courses of two possible types: one on the methods generally used in preparing plans (a general training course that might take the form of direct preparation for the 9-month planning course), the other on some specific development problem of interest to a specific category of trainees (specialist training for officials unable to take the 9-month planning course); and
- (c) seminars of a few weeks' duration for senior officials on subjects related to specific problems or techniques.

14. The number of courses or seminars that can be held each year will depend on the effort governments make to send trainees to the institute. An initial approach made to seven African governments in November 1961 brought out the interest of the countries concerned in the project and their preference for courses centralized at the institute proper. The interest and preference evinced should encourage governments to strive continuously to seek

out and select candidates, in order to ensure fairly rapidly a minimum total of some 15 for the 9-month course and of 30-40 for the 3-month one.

15. Should governments be unable through actual shortage of staff to free enough civil servants to take courses of a few months' duration abroad, the institute would have to consider bringing the training facilities to the candidates by decentralizing its activities out to the various countries. Indeed, decentralization would have certain advantages, such as providing direct contact with national planning staffs, who are keenly aware of the need to perfect and develop their working methods, and giving institute staff, by direct contact with countries, concrete knowledge of the human and technical problems that confront the African countries in their economic development planning. Again, with the backing of the existing African universities and training centres, decentralization of the institute's activities would result in strengthening inter-African co-operation while at the same time stimulating national training activities.

16. From the beginning the institute will try to instil in the minds of all its trainees the idea that economic development planning is an inter-disciplinary technique. Accordingly, the economists should take elementary courses in industrial and agricultural technology; planners specializing in one sector or another should be taught the essential principles of modern economics; public administrators should have the opportunity of familiarizing themselves with economics and the elements of industrial and agricultural technology. In a word, all should acquire knowledge of the social aspects of development. They should also be taught economic and industrial statistics, and the use of economic statistics and accounts in the preparation of plans.

Apart from courses and seminars, organized study tours with a view to investigating development projects on the spot would drive home in the minds of all the idea that planning requires collaboration between all disciplines.

17. The problem of the language or languages to be used in instruction deserves close attention. The principle must be laid down that, like the Commission, the institute shall have two official languages: French and English. Thus only will it be true to its pan-African mission of bringing together trainees from all countries, whatever their working language, and accustoming them to study their problems against a multi-national background. But the difficulties that will arise in practice, when the institute has to run courses with different linguistic groups, should not be underestimated. Such difficulties simultaneous interpretation cannot be relied upon to solve. It is therefore essential that the institute have at its disposal a body of bilingual teachers and arrange intensive courses in French and English for trainees requiring them.

B. Research

18. The training and advisory services provided by the institute will fully meet the specific needs of the African countries only if based on the results of new research into the economic development of these countries. It is impossible ever to overstress Africa's poverty in facilities for research into its own, and particularly its economic, problems. Surveys and publications on economic development in Africa often emanate from research centres outside Africa; higher education in African economic problems is actually based on such surveys and publications.

19. Present research facilities in Africa are too scanty to sustain the enthusiasm of the dedicated African researchers to be found here and there, so that professors of economics at African universities think it more worth while to maintain contacts with their colleagues at European and American universities than to indulge in meetings and exchanges in the region.

20. The institute can be a not unimportant means of breaking down the isolation in which African researchers and university workers

live. It should serve as a cross-roads for the African universities, through refresher courses or discussion groups on African topics, and also provide a link between the few research centres in Africa and the more important ones in Europe and America. In a word, the African development and planning institute can and should occupy a very special place in the organization and conduct of African economic research, whether the latter is done inside or outside Africa.

21. Put in this light before the universities and scientific institutions concerned with economic development in the African countries, the project may be expected to win the active support of the various national and international bodies in that category. If, however, it is to answer the high hopes the African countries may repose in it, the institute must bring a new spirit to African research and adopt a work programme definitely directed to the specific development problems of these countries.

22. Bringing a new spirit to economic research as applied to African countries means above all that the researchers must approach their task from the point of view of genuinely national economic development, while at the same time not disregarding regional or international affinities based on geography or history. Most of the independent African countries are engaged in a dual struggle, i.e. for their economic development and their economic liberation - a struggle against internal under-development factors that demands far-reaching structural reforms, and another against certain dependency links with the former colonial powers that are a hindrance to these countries on their way to balanced national development.

Accordingly, economic research designed in the interest of Africa will be aimed at two series of problems: how to overcome internal obstacles to a rapid and balanced advance of the national economy, and how to develop international economic relations the better to serve the interests of the African economies.

These two sets of problems must be taken into consideration when the institute is working out and implementing its research projects; only if that is done will the projects awaken real interest in the Africans.

23. The second condition to be satisfied by the institute as a guiding line in its research work concerns the content of its work programme. The type of research undertaken, whether fundamental or applied, must be such as will give a better insight into economic and social development problems and methods in an African country. In other words, the priority studies and research activities for African countries that have opted for economic development through planning are those which clarify the choices most urgent for a rational development policy.

There is no denying that the economic research done during the colonial period passed over many problems affecting the internal balanced development of the dependent countries' economies. The achievement of independence by these countries demands a re-orientation of economic and social research activities.

The acceptance of this rule that research should be aimed at satisfying planning needs will result in the institute's having a work programme that is original compared with those of research centres established outside Africa, and one that will produce results of which full use can be made by African countries in search of solutions for their own specific problems. During its initial years, with the object of working up the necessary training material, the institute will concentrate on comparative critical studies of planning techniques used in Africa: elaboration methods, priorities, content (investments, standards of living, increases in productivity, production and employment); critical analysis comparing projects and results; conditions for implementing plans and programmes (steps taken to direct resources, credit, subsidies and taxation, guided self-financing, budgetary reform, mobilization of the under-employed rural masses etc.).