

UNITED NATIONS
ECONOMIC
AND
SOCIAL COUNCIL



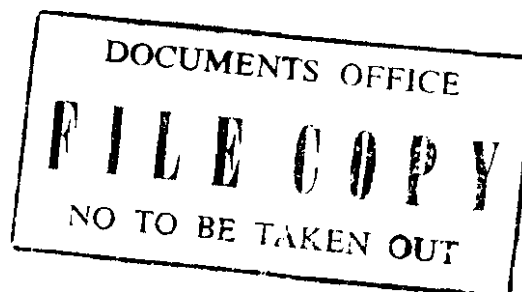
Distr.
LIMITED



E/CN.14/UAP/36
10 June 1964

Original : ENGLISH

ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR AFRICA
Seminar on Central Services to
Local Authorities
Zaria, 29 June - 10 July 1964



THE CONTRIBUTION IN PERSONNEL AND TRAINING WHICH THE LOCAL AUTHORITIES
OF DEVELOPED COUNTRIES CAN MAKE TO LOCAL GOVERNMENT IN AFRICA^{1/}

^{1/} This paper has been contributed by the International Union of Local Authorities, the Hague, at the invitation of the United Nations. The paper does not necessarily express the views of the United Nations.

INTERNATIONAL UNION OF LOCAL AUTHORITIES

The contribution in personnel and training which the local authorities of developed countries can make to local government in Africa

One of the most serious obstacles to decentralization in many of the new States is the dearth of men capable of assuming local responsibilities. This situation has in fact contributed to the centralism that is a common feature of administration in many developing countries.

There is hardly a country in Africa today that does not have some type of training programme for public officials, but few offer training designed to meet the needs of local government. The desperate shortage of qualified men at the centre must, quite understandably, take priority, although it might be argued that field service needs officials of an even higher quality. They have to be in a position to use their discretion, to take decisions without benefit of expert advice. They cannot share responsibility with others. They have to be capable of training their subordinates and, frequently, inexperienced elected officers as well. Above all, they must be fit to exercise authority with probity.

The urgent needs of central government, combined with the attractions of serving in a national capital, make it difficult for local authorities to recruit personnel with an adequate basic education, to say nothing of the technical and administrative skills required to run the most essential services a community requires.

Vocational training of the type needed for recruits to local government is often non-existent, or is concentrated in the urban centres. Strange as it may seem, while professional training in law and engineering may be available, training in the simpler skills is lacking locally. Pre-entry training for municipal clerks, sanitary inspectors and public librarians frequently has to be sought abroad. For example, colleges run by local authorities in the United Kingdom are training hundreds of young Africans for work in local government.

Pre-entry training, it is now generally agreed, is best given in the developing countries themselves. Foreign training is expensive and there is a growing awareness of the difficulties of adaptation encountered by inexperienced trainees. At this level foreign technical assistance can be best utilized for the establishment, locally, of programmes for the training of such personnel as surveyors, social workers, weights and measures inspectors and sanitation engineers. Schools offering this type of education for local government should, ideally, be run by local authorities themselves, on a collective basis, even if they are financed by the central government. This should ensure that curricula are oriented towards the special needs of local authorities and lead to standard qualifications of service.

Associations of local authorities in the developed countries, as well as many staff unions, have had a good deal of experience in conducting training programmes at both pre- and post-entry levels and could advise the developing countries. In those African countries where distances are an obstacle to training, correspondence courses could be considered; here again the local authorities in Europe have had long experience, and existing curricula might be adapted to meet local needs. Foreign lecturers might also be provided as well as training abroad for teaching staff.

Assistance is being offered by the developed countries, usually in the form of receiving African local government staff for on-the-job training, or "attachments" of a temporary kind. Local authorities in the United Kingdom, who have had considerable experience in this kind of training, seem to feel that post-entry training of this nature does not always give satisfactory results. The Bridges Committee has found that officials from the developing countries come with an inadequate knowledge of the structure of English local government and it is often difficult to keep them fully occupied without overburdening the staff of the host authority. Some sort of introductory courses and more carefully planned visits therefore seem to be called for. The German

Foundation for Developing Countries which, before launching its programmes studied the experience of other countries, tries to give local government officials from abroad a solid grounding in the German system and its methods before sending them out to municipalities for practical training.

Local governments in the developed countries have always been ready to receive foreign visitors and tours abroad can sometimes serve a very useful purpose, particularly for those officials who are engaged in seeking new systems and new procedures and who need to make comparative studies of the experience of others in order to find ideas suitable for adaptation to their own needs.

In many of the countries of Africa today systems of decentralization are being elaborated and more needs to be known about what has been done in other countries. The United Nations has for many years offered fellowships permitting comparative study of different national systems. The International Union of Local Authorities is starting a nine-week course next September to give an opportunity to senior central government officials and others interested in local government structures to gain an insight into different forms of decentralization and to compare national systems. This course is supported by the local authorities of three Western European countries. Following their tour, participants will examine in seminar discussions what can be adapted to their own conditions.

Visits to foreign local governments are also useful for the examination of new problems to which a solution may not be readily available in a given country. Training abroad can be particularly effective when linked to a project recommended by a foreign expert, provided the problem has been clearly formulated and a programme devised so as to avoid wastage. Hosts would be greatly aided, and foreign visitors better served, if needs could be defined in specific terms. Only too often fellowships are requested for the purpose of giving an official "insight into the administration of local government". A programme based on such an ill-defined aim can hardly be effective.

In order to provide a channel for aid from the local authorities in the developed countries (who often fail to get a share of technical assistance) to those in the new States, the United Nations and the International Union of Local Authorities two years ago launched the Intermunicipal Technical Assistance Programme. This provides for the secondment of expert officials to developing local authorities on short assignments in addition to training for officials abroad. Local authorities in Europe have responded with great enthusiasm to this new system and, although they have staffing problems of their own, have offered to continue paying the salaries of personnel assigned to foreign countries. Three experts in municipal finance and urban renewal have already completed their assignments and others are being sought for new projects.

The need is often felt by professional personnel in rural areas, in the developing countries as elsewhere, to maintain contact with the wider world. They need refresher courses, literature and meetings at which they can air their problems with colleagues. The International Union of Local Authorities is trying to satisfy this need by providing the means whereby experience can be exchanged and the latest findings of municipal research given the widest dissemination possible, not only in public administration but also in such specialized fields as health, education, engineering and social welfare.

In this task, as well as in technical assistance in general, it has been the International Union's experience that foreign aid can be best utilized when it is shared among all local authorities of a country through a national association. While useful help can be given by one city in Europe to another city in Africa, we should also be concerned with bringing assistance to local governments at large including the smaller communities. This, we aver, can only be done effectively if local authorities establish bodies to further their own development and to make the fullest utilization of the assistance offered both by their own central governments and local governments abroad.