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REPORTS OF THE ECA/UNDP EVALUATION MISSIONS ON THE  
MULTINATIONAL PROGRAMMING AND OPERATIONAL CENTRES:  
A SYNTHESIS

Reports of the ECA/UNDP evaluation missions on the  
Multinational Programming and Operational Centres:

A synthesis

A. INTRODUCTION

1. From time to time UNDP undertakes a performance evaluation of the projects which it finances in order to be able to assess whether or not its support for such projects has been worthwhile and whether, in the light of such an assessment, further UNDP support should be stopped, curtailed, maintained or intensified. Following upon the decision of the Fourth ECA Conference of Ministers, which was held in February/March 1977 on the setting up of the International Programming and Operational Centres (MULPOCs), the UNDP allocated financing for the four MULPOCs, based in Lusaka, Niamey, Yaoundé and Gisenyi; for the programming cycle 1977-1981. At its Sixth Session held in April 1980, the ECA Conference of Ministers adopted resolution 384(XV) on ECA/UNDP co-operation, supporting a proposal that a series of evaluation missions be conducted during 1980 and 1981 with a view to, inter alia, enabling the ECA and UNDP to assess the performance of the MULPOCs during the UNDP Programming Cycle 1977-1981 and the financial requirements of the MULPOCs for the rest of UNDP Programming Cycle 1982-1986. This paper is a synthesis of the report and recommendations of the UNDP/ECA Evaluation Missions on the MULPOCs, which were mounted in compliance with the decision of the Sixth ECA Conference of Ministers.
2. In this connection, it may be recalled that a similar evaluation of the subregional activities of ECA was undertaken in 1976. The mission reports and recommendations were submitted to the Fourth ECA Conference of Ministers. The Conference of Ministers decided that the UNDATs, which were primarily advisory bodies, should be transformed into new subregional entities that would perform both programming as well as project implementation in the field. The Conference also recommended that the new structures should be financed by the UNDP.
3. In the five intervening years, that is, during the UNDP programming cycle 1977-1981 which has just ended, the success and indeed the very survival of the MULPOCs have depended heavily on UNDP financial support, as there has been little or no support from other sources.
4. By the time the evaluation missions on the MULPOCs were mounted, it had become palpably clear, that the effectiveness of the MULPOCs was hampered by inadequacy of financial resources and that the time had come for the financing of the MULPOCs to be put on an established basis.
5. The evaluation of the MULPOCs was confined to the four MULPOCs south of the Sahara - the MULPOC for Eastern and Southern Africa, the MULPOC for the Economic Community of the Countries of the Great Lakes, the MULPOC for the countries of the Economic Community of West African States, and the MULPOC for the Central African countries. These are referred to, for short, as the Lusaka-based MULPOC, the Gisenyi-based MULPOC, the Niamey-based MULPOC and the Yaoundé-based MULPOC respectively. Between them they cover 44 independent African States.

6. The three two-man evaluation teams, which were mounted between April 1981 and March 1982, consisted of the following consultants:

Evaluation mission	MULPOC covered
<u>First Team:</u> Mr. Joseph Abbey - Leader Mr. Dammaka Mettaferia	Lusaka-based MULPOC
<u>Second Team:</u> Mr. Bisengimana Rwema - Leader Mr. Ngole Kapaji	Gisenyi-based and Yaoundé-based MULPOCs
<u>Third Team:</u> Mr. Mamadou A. Aw - Leader Mr. Kalidu M. Bayo	Niamey-based MULPOC

7. The terms of reference for each team were broadly similar: in each case, the objective was to evaluate the performance of the MULPOCs with a view to determining whether assistance beyond 1981 was justified within the framework of the third regional programming cycle of UNDP. The missions were requested to bear in mind the short-term and long-term objectives of the MULPOCs, the approved work programmes which they were required to implement, and their achievements and limitations; and make recommendations for future action.

#### B. THE MAIN FINDINGS OF THE MISSIONS

8. The findings of the evaluation missions may be grouped into two general categories. The first category relates to those findings which are broadly applicable to the MULPOCs as a whole; the second relates to those which are specific to a given MULPOC or, at least, which apply more particularly to one MULPOC than to another.

##### General findings

9. By far the most important finding that cuts across all the MULPOCs is the fact that the resources at their disposal, both human and financial, have not been adequate for the implementation of their approved work programmes. This constraint has made it necessary for the MULPOCs to choose priorities within priorities, to concentrate on one or, at best, a few projects thought likely to produce the maximum impact. For example, the fact that the PTA project within the Lusaka-based MULPOC has overshadowed all others - a point criticised by the concerned mission - cannot be understood except in this light. The same applies to the other MULPOCs. In West Africa concentration has been on the co-ordination and harmonization of the programmes of some 30 Intergovernmental Organizations, in Central Africa concentration has been on the creation of a subregional economic co-operation arrangement and in the economic community of the Great Lakes on the strengthening of CEPGL.

10. Secondly, the missions found that financial support for the MULPOCs to-date came preponderantly from one source only, namely UNDP. The expected contributions from other donors; from Member States and from United Nations regular budget had not materialized. Thus, what was originally regarded as seed money for enabling the MULPOCs to be properly launched in their early years had come to be looked upon as the main source of support for the MULPOCs.

11. Thirdly, the missions generally found that the decentralization of staff and resources from ECA headquarters to the MULPOCs, from the Specialised Agencies of the United Nations system, as well as from the United Nations headquarters to ECA itself, still left much to be desired. This was a reflection of the slow pace of the implementation of the General Assembly resolutions on the restructuring and decentralization of the United Nations system. There seemed to be a certain reluctance on the part of the United Nations system to implement the General Assembly resolutions on decentralization to ECA and other regional economic commissions; and to recognise ECA and its field operational arms (MULPOCs) as the lead agency in the Africa region.

12. Fourthly, it was found that the staffing of all the MULPOCs was not only inadequate, but insecure. None of the Directors of the four MULPOCs, let alone the other MULPCC experts, had an employment contract lasting more than one year, and the same was true of the general service staff - except for a handful of secretaries or administrative assistants who had been temporarily assigned to the MULPOCs from ECA headquarters. This unsatisfactory state of affairs stemmed from the fact all the key posts were "project posts", and the contracts of project staff were such that appointments could only be guaranteed for one year at a time, even if the prospects of renewal were virtually assured from one year to the next. In these circumstances, it would be difficult to attract, let alone retain, the high-calibre of core staff that the MULPOCs needed. The missions noted with criticism the fact that the turnover of professional staff in all the MULPOCs was relatively high.

13. Fifthly, the missions generally found that the programmes of the MULPOCs and those of the United Nations Agencies in the field were not effectively harmonised, and as a result there was unnecessary duplication of effort. The need for a more systematic and rationalised mechanism for co-ordinating the programmes of the MULPOCs and those of the United Nations Agencies in each subregion is emphasized in the reports of the missions.

14. Sixthly, the consensus of the missions is that the MULPOCs had made a positive contribution to the promotion of multinational economic co-operation in Africa notwithstanding the constraints within which they had to operate. Everywhere they went, the members of the missions were impressed by the enthusiasm with which the member States expressed the usefulness of the MULPOCs as a vehicle for subregional economic co-operation and integration. In all subregions the member States expressed their support for the MULPOCs and urged that they should be strengthened. It was recognized that over the past four years the mere regularity of meetings of their policy organs, to say nothing of the operational activities of the MULPOCs, had had a powerful sensitizing

effect on Member States, and contributed significantly to the creation of a climate that was favourable to multinational economic co-operation. Thus, the view of the evaluation missions is that the problems confronting the MULPOCs are not those of a teething infant but rather those of a mature adult faced with limited means. The general message of the missions' reports is, unmistakably, that the MULPOCs are an indispensable instrument for the restructuring of the economies of Africa through collective action and, therefore, the MULPOCs should be given adequate resources so that the programmes already started can be implemented effectively.

#### Particular findings

15. While many of the problems facing the MULPOCs were broadly similar, some did differ from MULPOC to MULPOC, depending on their individual circumstances. To that extent, the prescriptions or policy recommendations made by the various teams of the evaluation missions were not the same. Moreover, members of the evaluation missions did not, of course, hold identical views or come to the same conclusions on all issues. Accordingly, this section highlights certain findings of particular interest to specific MULPOCs.

#### The Lusaka-based MULPOC

16. (a) The mission noted that from a work programme consisting of a large number of approved projects, the MULPOC had allowed one single project - viz. the Preferential Trade Area - to dominate all its activities. One result of this had been that the Lusaka-based MULPOC had not been able to implement effectively other projects which had been approved by its policy organs. As a result some member States had criticized the MULPOCs for failure to implement projects of special concern to several countries of the subregion;

(b) The mission felt that the short-term contracts of the core staff, especially that of the Director had contributed to the lack of team spirit among the staff members of the MULPOC;

(c) The mission noted the recent emergence of SADC and the creation of PTA and urged that the MULPOC should co-ordinate its activities with those of the two inter-governmental organisations;

(d) The mission noted that no effective machinery seemed to have been established for the purpose of co-ordinating the MULPOC work programme on the one hand, with those of the UNDP and specialized United Nations agencies on the other; and urged that this should be corrected.

#### The Gisenyi-based MULPOC

17. (a) The mission noted that of all the MULPOCs, the Gisenyi-based MULPOC was the only one not carved out of a pre-existing UNDP. Thus, it had inherited no continuing activities at the time of its creation. Moreover, the MULPOC was almost wholly land-locked, making communications, even with ECA headquarters, particularly difficult. Relations between it, the CEPGL secretariat and the

UNDP representatives in the subregion had got off to a difficult start, as the MULPOC and CEPGL — both of them recent creations — tried to define their respective roles. The mission recorded its satisfaction that remedial measures taken by ECA, such as the replacement of the MULPOC Director, the installation of radio facilities to permit permanent contact with ECA headquarters, and the definition of proper working relationship with CEPGL, had had a constructive effect, bringing about an important change in conditions and atmosphere of work;

(b) The mission considered that problems could arise due to the fact that the policy body for CEPGL secretariat consists of Ministers for Foreign Affairs who report to the Conference of Heads of State, whereas the policy body which approves the MULPOC work programme consists of Ministers of Development Planning. Unless proper co-ordination was achieved, the possibility of conflict in development priorities could not be ruled out;

(c) For both the Gisenyi-based and Yaoundé-based MULPOCs, the mission put particular emphasis on the need for decentralization of activities from ECA headquarters, and for giving the MULPOCs virtual autonomy with respect to technical, administrative and financial decisions.

#### The Yaoundé-based MULPOC

18. Findings specific to this MULPOC included:

(a) The functioning of the MULPOC was hampered by a certain lack of political cohesion among its seven member countries, especially the three which were outside UDEAC. Internal political problems in one or two countries added to physical communication problems to reduce the effectiveness of the MULPOC in general;

(b) The MULPOC had excellent relations with UDEAC and with the host country, and enjoyed the active support of both;

(c) The mission observed that the institutional framework of UDEAC differed from that of CEPGL in that the Conference of Heads of State was advised by a Council of Ministers of Finance and Planning instead of Ministers of Foreign Affairs. Since the former were the same Ministers who approved MULPOC work programmes, the chances of conflict or inconsistency between decisions made by UDEAC and by the MULPOC were minimized. The mission considered that this feature was worth retaining if and when the seven countries served by the Yaoundé MULPOC become members of the same Economic Community.

#### The Niamey-based MULPOC

19. (a) As the presence of a large number of IGOs was a unique feature of the West African subregion, the need to define a proper role for the MULPOC, as a co-ordinating body, was crucially important;

(b) The bilingual nature of the West African countries was a matter which the MULPOC serving this subregion must be able to cope with, if it was to be effective;

(c) There was a clear need for the creation of a mechanism that would effectively co-ordinate the activities of the MULPOC with those of the UNDP and the specialized agencies in the subregion.

#### C. PRINCIPAL OBSTACLES TO THE OPERATIONS OF THE MULPOCs

20. The missions' reports demonstrated clearly that the limited effectiveness of the MULPOCs was due to a number of obstacles which hampered their operations, chief of which were the following:

(a) Instability of leadership at the MULPOC Director level. Directors had changed too frequently. The main contributing factor had been job uncertainty. All the missions agreed that it would never be possible to attract and retain MULPOC leaders of the required calibre and ability on the basis of one-year contracts;

(b) High levels of staff turn-over. The causes and consequences were similar to those under (a). This aggravated the problem of manpower shortage;

(c) Insufficient financial and manpower resources to implement the approved MULPOC programmes. Even if leadership had been firm and stable, and staff turn-over down to normal levels, the established staff strength of the MULPOCs was barely enough for the effective implementation of the work programmes of the MULPOCs;

(d) Decentralization of staff, resources and responsibility of the MULPOCs from ECA headquarters had not proceeded far enough nor fast enough. This was itself partly a reflection of the slow pace of decentralization from New York Headquarters to ECA;

(e) There was a general lack of information on the role of the MULPOCs and their specific activities on the part of Governments, IGOs and United Nations agencies;

(f) The role of the MULPOCs and their specific relationships with Governments, the UNDP the United Nations specialized agencies and other IGOs in the subregion, was not yet sufficiently well understood;

(g) Where this had not already been done, the institutional organs of the MULPOCs - at the official and ministerial levels - needed to be brought into harmonious relationship with the policy organs of other multinational bodies in the subregion that had similar or overlapping objectives.

D. PRINCIPAL RECOMMENDATIONS

21. First there is a set of recommendations on which all three teams of the evaluation missions appear to be unanimous. They are:

(a) Resources at the disposal of the MULPOCs must be increased to a level commensurate with the requirements of their work programmes and their new responsibilities under the restructuring and decentralization mandates, and under the Lagos Plan of Action. This applies both to manpower resources and financial resources;

(b) Financial resources provided under the regular budget of the United Nations must be increased to enable each MULPOC to attract and retain a permanent core of regular staff, consisting of the Director and a minimum number of professional and administrative personnel. In particular, it is absolutely necessary to put an end to the instability of leadership at the Director level;

(c) The United Nations Development Programme, which has hitherto been the predominant source of funding for the MULPOCs, should continue its support, if possible on an increased basis. But UNDP resources should be regarded as additional to or supplementary with, and not as a substitute for, regular budget resources recommended under (b) above;

(d) Efforts must be stepped up to mobilize additional resources from member States in cash as well as in kind, and from bilateral and multilateral donors, in support of the MULPOCs, thus diversifying their financial sources as much as possible. During pledging conferences for the United Nations Trust Fund for African Development, member States should be urged to make specific pledges for the MULPOCs;

(e) Decentralization of activities and resources from ECA to the MULPOCs, and delegation of authority to match the delegation of responsibility, must be speeded up;

(f) At the subregional level, every effort must be made to have the widest possible dissemination of information on the MULPOCs' activities, and a sharper definition of its role vis-à-vis UNDP, United Nations specialized agencies, IGOs and other bodies operating in the subregion.

22. The second set of recommendations is a mixture of : (i) those recommendations which are not unanimous in the sense of being common in all the reports but which, nevertheless, are of general interest to all the MULPOCs, (ii) those recommendations which apply largely, if not solely, to specific MULPOCs.

(a) In the case of the Lusaka MULPOC, it is recommended that the recently established Supervisory Committee consisting of Ambassadors, High Commissioners and Chargés d'affaires of the member States accredited to Zambia, should be expanded and transformed into a Programming and Review Committee which would include representatives of IGOs, the United Nations specialized agencies and the UNDP Resident Co-ordinator in Lusaka. Its main function would not only

be to assist in the programming, monitoring and review of MULPOC activities, but also to ensure co-ordination and harmonization of the activities of the various agencies in the subregion;

(b) As regards the Niamey-based MULPOC, it is recommended that the existing official and ministerial policy organs should be retained, but have, in addition, a special sub-committee consisting of officials of the MULPOC, the IGOs and United Nations specialized agencies for the purpose of co-ordinating the activities of these bodies;

(c) Concerning the Gisenyi-based MULPOC, retention of the present two-tier policy organs is recommended, but in order to eliminate the possibility of conflicting priorities between CEPGL and the MULPOC, it is suggested that the ministerial council which advises the CEPGL Heads of State, and which presently consists of Ministers of Foreign Affairs, should be expanded to include Ministers of Development Planning;

(d) The evaluation missions generally agree that the integration of women in the development process, which is a component part of the MULPOC work programmes, has been proceeding satisfactorily and should continue to be supported and strengthened. One member of the Niamey-based MULPOC evaluation team has proposed that the women component should be detached from the rest of the MULPOC work programme and turned into an autonomous field programme directly under ECA.

23. Finally, the evaluation team for the Gisenyi- and Yaoundé-based MULPOCs made three further recommendations. First, noting the somewhat arbitrary nature of the MULPOC boundaries, the mission saw the need for strengthening inter-MULPOC relations, and recommended the creation of an inter-MULPOC consultative machinery. Secondly, the mission observed that member States would be prepared to second national experts to the MULPOCs. Thirdly, the mission recommended that ECA should tap the big reservoir of academic talent in the universities, where professors and doctoral students could be encouraged to study problems relating to the implementation of MULPOC work programme.

#### E. CONCLUDING NOTE

24. This summary of conclusions and recommendations is a synthesis, and not a repetition of the recommendations in the Evaluation reports. The present synthesis has tried no more than to highlight the major findings and conclusions, and the principal recommendations, contained in the MULPOC evaluation reports. The synthesis is not a substitute for the reports themselves, which deserve to be read and studied in their own right.

25. That being said, one cannot but be impressed by the virtual unanimity of the reports' major conclusions and recommendations, as summarised in the first set of principal recommendations contained in paragraph 21 of the present synthesis. It is also worth noting that the main findings of the evaluation missions, particularly with regard to the MULPOCs' need for increased regular budget as well as extrabudgetary resources to sustain their increased responsibilities under the structuring and decentralization mandates, are in full accord with the independent findings and recommendations of the Joint Inspection Unit report on the Commission which is before this Conference ( see document E/ECA/CM.8/9).