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Africa Regional Seminar on National  
Youth Service Programmes

Addis Ababa, 23 November - 4 December 1970

NATIONAL YOUTH SERVICE PROGRAMMES

(Where have we got to? What is our immediate task?)

M70-2595

National Youth Service Programmes -Where have we got to? What is our immediate task?

1. Much has been done - but even more spoken and written - in the last few years about National Youth Service Programmes. The African Regional Seminar of 1970 provides an opportunity for stocktaking and for making practical plans, preferably on a realistic basis in terms of the financial and human resources likely to be available, for utilising such programmes so as to ensure increased participation of youth in the Second Development Decade.

2. This paper seeks I) to summarize some of the main conclusions and recommendations arrived at in meetings on both a world and an African regional level during the decade which is ending, and II) to pose a number of questions to which it would be useful for the Seminar to provide answers.

I. THE FOLLOWING POINTS HAVE ALREADY BEEN CONCLUDED AND RECOMMENDED BY PREVIOUS MEETINGS HELD SINCE 1962:

3. Definitions a) Youth. It has been found both useful and realistic to define youth as the age-group from 12 to 25 years, but these age-limits need not in practice be precisely observed. In the examination of programmes, it is important to make appropriate provision for the different categories of youth contained within the overall range:

by age  
by sex  
by location (urban/rural)  
by level of education  
by present or intended occupation.

Such a categorization does not necessarily imply that each different group should have a different programme: it may, for example, be valuable to have students and non-students working together; older youth can provide leadership for younger age groups and so on. However, it is clear that in many instances, age, sex, level of education, will have a determining effect on the content of programmes.

4. b) National Youth Service Programmes. This term gives rise to some confusion. Sometimes it is equated with Youth Service or Youth Services to mean the total provision of services of all kinds, including recreational and welfare services, available in a country: sometimes it refers only to such services which are provided by government on a national scale.

5. However, it is also used more strictly and in a more limited sense to describe organizations, usually large-scale and fully financed by governments "concerned to instil the idea of national economic and social development into the minds of young people ..... and to direct the energies of these young people into the work of national development by providing low-level technical and vocational training and by assuming responsibility for carrying out specific development projects ....." <sup>1/</sup>.

6. The Holte 1968 Inter-Regional Seminar concluded that a National Youth Service Programme was "one of the means employed in addition to the usual formal and informal education and training programmes for the implementation of national youth and development policies. It was concerned with the all-round development of young people, male and female, according to their individual needs and capacities and the needs of the country, so as to enable them to participate more effectively in national socio-economic development.

7. "A national youth service programme was considered to have as its principal objectives:

- (a) Organized training and provision of opportunities for productive employment within the framework of national, social, economic and cultural development programmes;
- (b) Organized provision of opportunities to serve the national and local society in bringing about economic and social change.

8. "The existing national youth service programmes have almost all been started during the nineteen sixties and represent a significant break with the customary methods of meeting the needs of youth. They came into being in response to particular urgent national needs. An element common to all national youth service programmes is the provision for an organized, disciplined contribution of youth to national development.

9. "The national youth service programmes differ in the emphasis to particular objectives; in the ages and educational status of the youth involved; in the relative numbers of boys and young men, or girls and young women who participate; in the proportionate contributions by governments, voluntary organizations and youth itself; and in methods of organization and administration. The forms taken by the national youth service programmes are also diverse; they include special training programmes, special employment programmes, national civic service, alternative service to military service, national youth organizations engaged in rural development, and student programmes for service and community development."

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<sup>1/</sup> "Youth and Development in Africa." Report of Commonwealth Africa Regional Youth Seminar. Nairobi, November 1969 (page 147). Commonwealth Secretariat, London.

### Scope and Objectives

10. A national youth policy or youth service, in the broadest sense noted above, should cater for the needs and aspirations of all young people, should seek to mobilize their talents to the maximum for service to and development of their nation and community and should provide the training required to enable them to fulfil their potential as individuals and as citizens.

11. The Holte Seminar described a national youth policy as:<sup>1/</sup> "over-all plans relating to all young people and a wide variety of programmes including in and out-of-school education, training, employment, youth welfare, recreation, cultural activities, and participation in economic and social development. A national youth policy should grow out of the experience of a country and be consistent with its social and economic goals. It should provide a legal basis for action on youth problems, and it should provide for progressive steps in the development of youth and its participation in society. It should be sufficiently flexible to seek solutions to unsolved problems and to lead towards the society of the future. The policy may envisage short-term objectives as well as long-term goals."

12. A National Youth Service Programme in the narrower sense may be directed towards specific groups and most commonly it is aimed at those whose formal education has ceased or those who have had little or no formal education. In these types of programmes it is common to find those who have completed primary school and those who have "dropped out" of either primary or secondary schools without completing the course.

13. A second type of service is found for those who have completed either secondary or university education. While the over-all objective of all National Youth Service Programmes may be the same - the active involvement of young people in social and economic development by promoting a greater national consciousness, by motivating young people to active service and by providing opportunities and facilities for such service, it is clear that the immediate objectives must be different. For the educated youth, a major purpose will be to confront them with the realities and needs of their countries, most often in the context of rural development, since most schemes of higher education still - despite the thousands of words expended deploring this - tend to abstract and alienate students from the needs of rural areas; and to enable them to make some practical contribution to meeting these needs. For the less educated, the partly educated or "un-educated", the objective will be to equip them with some or supplementary education and in particular, practical pre-vocational and/or vocational training which will lead to their personal advancement and enable them too to contribute to the development of the nation. In many cases such an objective implies also that the programme will aim to combat or restrict the rural-urban migration of young people.

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<sup>1/</sup> cf. also the preliminary report by the Secretary-General. "Long-term Policies and Programmes for Youth in National Development". (UN Document A/C.3/613), September 1969.

The context of National Youth Service Programmes

14. National Youth Service Programmes, by themselves, cannot achieve such major objectives as national social and economic development or the restriction of the rural exodus or the improvement of rural or urban communities. Nor can they realise their potential contribution to such aims unless they are planned and carried out within the context of the total national development plan and in relation to the other measures and arrangements contained within an overall national youth policy. The work of governmental youth services and of non-governmental youth organizations, should be complementary, especially with regard to the educational and recreational aspects of the programmes.

Focus on employment

15. National Youth Service Programmes catering for youth with incomplete education and training should be planned in terms of preparing these young people for employment which is known to exist. The provision of vocational training, though useful in itself, can lead to additional frustration and waste, if it has not been linked to, and planned in conjunction with, the provision of job opportunities. The development of employment opportunities and placement services should be an integral part of National Youth Service Programmes. To make training efficient it is desirable to group within particular programmes young people all of whom have reached approximately the same level of education and training.

Special schemes

16. The International Labour Conference (54th session) 1970 adopted the Special Youth Schemes Recommendation, covering:

- (a) schemes which meet needs for youth employment and training not yet met by existing national educational or vocational training programmes or by normal opportunities on the employment market;
- (b) schemes which enable young persons, especially unemployed young persons, who have educational or technical qualifications which are needed by the community for development, particularly in the economic, social, educational or health fields, to use their qualifications in the service of the community.

17. The basic principles of such schemes were laid down:

A. (1) Special schemes should be organized within the framework of national development plans where these exist and should, in particular, be fully integrated with human resources plans and programmes directed toward the achievement of full and productive employment as well as with regular programmes for the education and training of young people.

(2) Special schemes should have an interim character to meet current and pressing economic and social needs. They should not duplicate or prejudice other measures of economic policy or the development of regular educational or vocational training programmes nor be regarded as an alternative to these measures and these regular programmes.

(3) Special schemes should not be operated in a manner likely to lower labour standards nor should the services of participants therein be used for the advantage of private persons or undertakings.

(4) Special schemes should provide participants, where appropriate, with at least a minimum level of education.

B. The essential elements of every special scheme should include the safeguarding of human dignity and the development of the personality and of a sense of individual and social responsibility.

C. Special schemes should be administered without discrimination on the basis of race, colour, sex, religion, political opinion, national extraction or social origin; they should be used for the active promotion of equality of opportunity and treatment.

#### The element of compulsion

18. The debate on the ILO Recommendation centred chiefly on the issue of compulsory service or voluntary service. This issue had been discussed as far back as 1962 in an African Regional Symposium on Unemployed Youth <sup>1/</sup> when attention was drawn to the comments of the ILO Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations which included, *à propos* of compulsory services for unemployed young men found in urban centres, the statement that "nothing justifies the adoption of such economic measures which may in practice be used to obtain cheap labour and which are contrary to the Conventions on forced labour ....."

19. The 1970 Recommendation reaffirms the voluntary principle but makes certain exceptions:

A. (1) Participation in special schemes should be voluntary; exceptions may be permitted only by legislative action and where there is full compliance with the terms of existing international labour Conventions on forced labour and employment policy.

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<sup>1/</sup> Inter-Africa Labour Institute. Publication No. 89. "Symposium on Unemployed Youth. Dar es Salaam 1962, published by the Commission for Technical Co-operation in Africa.

(2) Schemes in respect of which exceptions may be so permitted may include:

- (a) schemes of education and training involving obligatory enrolment of unemployed young people within a definite period after the age limit of regular school attendance;
- (b) schemes for young people who have previously accepted an obligation to serve for a definite period as a condition of being enabled to acquire education or technical qualifications of special value to the community for development.

(3) Where exceptions are so permitted, participants should, to the greatest possible extent, be given a free choice among different available forms of activity and different regions within the country and due account should be taken in their assignment of their qualifications and aptitudes.

B. The conditions of service of participants in special schemes should be clearly defined by the competent authority; they should be in conformity with the legal provisions governing minimum age for admission to employment and in harmony with other legal provisions applicable to young persons in regular training or in normal employment.

C. Participants should continue to have the opportunity of membership in youth or trade union organizations of their choice and of taking part in their activities.

D. There should be formal procedures for appeal by participants against decisions concerning their recruitment, their admission or their conditions of service, as well as informal grievance procedures to deal with minor complaints.

20. Criteria for projects. It is important that projects to be undertaken by National Youth Service Programmes should be selected in the light of the needs of the young people taking part: the need for training, for learning good work practices and to find in such projects work suited to their aptitude and such qualifications as they may have. Clearly, however, projects should also relate to the national needs for development as a whole, for expansion of employment opportunities, for providing training in types of work which will continue to be needed for development, for realistic and viable investment and for maintaining fair work standards and avoiding unfair competition with workers in normal employment.

21. Training of staff. Much remains to be done in devising and carrying out training programmes for the different levels of personnel required to provide leadership, both general and technical in National Youth Service Programmes. The ways in which the basic background subjects of the social sciences are taught have often not been worked out so as to be relevant and applicable to the conditions obtaining in Africa. Much of the training

in youth work itself is derived from experiences in the youth welfare or recreation and leisure field: some of it is culturally foreign and inappropriate. Moreover, the comparatively short time during which youth services of the kinds needed have been operating has essentially been an experimental period of trial and error; a number of programmes have had to be abandoned for different reasons, both technical, economic and political and there has not yet grown up a body of knowledge from which a suitable teaching content and methodology could be derived.

22. Existing youth organizations and organizations involved in voluntary service at a national or local level may have a valuable contribution to make to national youth service programmes, both in terms of training for staff and also in the implementation of different aspects of the programmes themselves. In some instances, foreign volunteers can be utilized especially where there is a temporary shortage of middle level manpower to act as instructors within the programmes. Non-governmental and volunteer organizations should therefore be prepared to co-operate with those responsible for national youth service programmes and to make available to them information and services which they have available.

#### International action

23. Inter-agency co-operation and co-ordination relating to youth policies and programmes is desirable for both the agencies of the UN system and other intergovernmental bodies. The UN and its specialized and operating agencies have afforded assistance to several countries for the development of out-of-school education and extra-curricular activities, the operation of national projects for the training of youth leaders, rural youth programmes and training projects, the appraisal of programmes of education, the establishment of a network of multipurpose youth centres and the establishment of vocational training centres. Financial and technical aid have also been given to a number of individual Member State projects.

24. Such inter-agency co-operation and co-ordination on youth work may be most usefully done at the regional level through the machinery of the regional economic commissions. An Africa Regional Inter-agency Committee on Youth composed of representatives of ILO, ECA, UNESCO, UNICEF, WHO, FAO, UNDP, OAU and OAU, meets from time to time to discover where inter-agency co-operation on youth programmes can be effected. The inter-agency collaboration has as its primary objective the provision of a multi-disciplinary approach to youth programmes and the combining of the resources of the UN family to bring concerted aid to governments through projects and advisory services.

25. The ECA Policy Statement on Youth Work (E/CN.14/C.2/2) sets out the objectives of the policy which may be re-stated as follows:

- (a) To assist African Governments to plan and develop sound and effective programmes and welfare services for youth according to their needs and problems - mainly by advisory and guidance services on organization, administration and training programmes;
- (b) To assist African countries in their programmes by training instructors, technicians, and other top-level youth work personnel on a regional and sub-regional basis;
- (c) To assist in organizing, servicing and co-ordinating regional and sub-regional activities: meetings, seminars, conferences, study tours, regional and international youth camps and festivals with the full co-operation, co-ordination and collaboration of UN agencies and other international organizations;
- (d) To encourage and ensure more effective use of outside assistance to Africa by helping to co-ordinate the activities and aid given by UN agencies and other international organizations;
- (e) To assist and work in close co-operation with regional and sub-regional youth training institutions, information/documentation/research centres, regional or sub-regional secretariats of international voluntary youth organizations - established or planned to be established in Africa by the UN family and other international organizations.

26. A regional meeting on Youth Employment and National Development organized by ECA with the help of DSD, UNICEF and the UN specialized agencies, was held in Niamey, Niger, in May 1968. This meeting made some important recommendations among which were:

- (a) That more intensive efforts be made to correctly identify the quantity and quality aspects of the employment needs (of welfare, of education and skill training, of jobs) of boys and girls, young men and young women, in both rural and urban areas in Africa;
- (b) That the structures of the primary school curricula in Africa should be consistent with modern social and economic requirements. Significant adjustments, however, should be made in the style of what is being taught in order to encourage learning of, and sympathy with, the nation's cultural heritage and present-day policy objectives. Also, material taught in classrooms should, wherever possible, use everyday African examples, and give proportionate weight to history and geography relevant to African conditions and aspirations. Although the curriculum should not be narrowly vocational, where school gardens and school farms and handicraft teaching do exist, these should emphasise not only current practices but also innovation of techniques;

- (c) That decentralization in the siting of industries (especially those processing agricultural products) be encouraged by suitable incentives in order to prevent over-concentration of industries in and around cities, and the consequent over-crowding of urban areas due to the excessive migration of young people towards hoped-for industrial jobs;
- (d) Because employment absorption of youth is, and will continue to be, much greater within the small economic units of the economy (farms, small industries and other small-scale enterprises in rural and urban areas), youth employment needs should be considered as a central element in the creation of policies for agricultural extension, for aid to industries, and the fostering of other labour-intensive enterprises;
- (e) That social programmes of both governments and voluntary associations be viewed as complementary; and that these programmes be assessed in terms of their adequacy in meeting needs of welfare, of skill acquisition, and of shaping young peoples' attitudes and aspirations in respect of work;
- (f) That youth themselves, especially educated boys and girls, should be given the opportunity of assisting in the implementation of social programmes by helping in field work, and also by helping to run their own programmes; and that special attention be given to the following types of youth: (a) the children of migrant workers who move from one African country to another; (b) the children of refugees; (c) newly urbanized youth in "shanty-town accommodations"; (d) physically and mentally handicapped youth; (e) the children of nomadic herdsmen;
- (g) In view of the diverse components that make up a nation's practical approach to meeting the employment needs of youth - and because of the urgency of the youth employment problem itself - each country should make a comprehensive reckoning of what is currently being done (through governments - central and local, and by voluntary associations), and maintain continuous assessment of the results being achieved;
- (h) That the Economic Commission for Africa should strengthen its advisory services to governments in the youth field and should continue to conduct studies (making available to governments the results of these studies) on practical means and techniques for utilizing youth in development and other beneficial programmes and on the reduction of the unemployment problem in the region.

27. ECA, with the assistance of the International Council of Social Welfare, also organized a meeting on Youth Needs, Problems and Measures in Africa, at Kampala, Uganda, in September 1969. The main recommendations made at this meeting included:

- (a) That educational programmes in primary and secondary schools should aim at creating a realistic attitude towards employment relevant to the conditions in Africa, and that educational syllabuses and content of primary education should be adjusted to relate to social and economic realities of each country;
- (b) That in the light of past experience in a number of African countries, any vocational training at the lower levels should be preceded by intensive market research and be strictly geared to the known manpower requirements;
- (c) That the objectives and the resulting programmes of a national youth service be closely scrutinized to determine whether they are the most efficient and economic means of offering vocational training or mobilizing labour for nation building;
- (d) That Governments be requested to consider the possibility of increasing employment opportunities by limiting capital intensive methods to only those projects where they are outstandingly more efficient or more economic than labour intensive methods; and that they should offer protection to village industries, particularly cottage industries providing employment for girls;
- (e) That as a matter of priority, all existing youth programmes should be evaluated to test their effectiveness and how they measure up to the requirements and needs of youth.

28. The UNESCO International Conference on Youth, in Grenoble (France), 23 August - 1 September 1964, dealt with many aspects of out-of-school education and particularly recommended on:

- (a) Preparation of young people for working life;
- (b) Preparation of young people for leisure time activities;
- (c) Preparation of young people for civil and social life; and
- (d) Preparation of young people for international life and understanding.

29. The Organization of African Unity has been endeavouring to work for the harmonization and co-ordination of youth organizations in Africa and to work together with the Pan-African Youth Movement for the establishment of an All African Youth Organization. (Document ECOS/9.111 of May 1967).

Youth participation<sup>1/</sup>

30. One of the greatest tests of youth work lies in its ability to facilitate the process of the participation of young people in the life of society as a whole. This is all the more difficult because in most African countries the society in which they should participate is itself in a state of rapid change: it is all the more difficult because many young people are either largely uninformed about the society into which they are moving or because with greater or less justification they are highly critical of society and sometimes express a wish not to participate in it unless it undergoes radical transformation. Young people have therefore to be helped to develop constructively critical attitudes towards social values and goals and an appreciation of the complexity of most situations facing governments or non-governmental organizations. At the same time they should be encouraged, not to become frustrated but to continue to channel their natural energy and impatience into efforts to accelerate national development.

31. Sometimes it is felt that the large-scale mobilization of youth for development has failed: In any case youth leaders should learn how to promote nationwide voluntary efforts of large sectors of youth in the practice of self-restraint, self-reliance, self-help and creativity. This will also involve creating or improving the channels of communication between young people at the base of society and the leaders at the top.

32. Youth participation should not be wholly confined to the national and local situation. There is sometimes danger that overemphasis on the national aspect - which is highly important in order to stimulate the vital consciousness of national needs among young people and to make them aware of the contribution which they themselves have to make to meet these needs - may lead to a form of narrow chauvinism. The initiation of youth into international participation, through youth service, possible through international voluntary service under the sponsorship of the UN, is therefore highly desirable.

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<sup>1/</sup> cf. Section A of the Conclusions of the Holte 1969 Inter-Regional Seminar on the Training of Professional and Voluntary Youth Leaders.

## II. QUESTIONS FOR THE 1970 AFRICAN REGIONAL SEMINAR

1. To what extent have the recommendations summarized above been carried into effect in the various national programmes?

2. Where they have not been implemented, is this because the recommendations are now out-dated or inappropriate to regional or local circumstances? If so, how should the recommendation be amended or should it be dropped?

3. If the recommendation is still valid, have there been specific obstacles in the way of implementing it?

- If so, have these obstacles been
- a. political
  - b. financial
  - c. lack of administrative capacity
  - d. for lack of technical skills
  - e. other reasons.

4. Have particular ways of organizing national youth service programmes been especially successful? If so, is it possible to identify the essential prerequisites and ingredients for this success?

5. Are certain forms of national youth service programmes only possible within certain political or socio-economic systems?

6. Is it possible within national youth service programmes, as defined in the narrower sense, to determine the extent to which the participants should:

- a) be engaged in training for future employment
- b) be engaged in productive work in projects for the immediate development of their country?

7. What progress has been made in programmes for young women and girls? What is required to make this progress greater and faster?

8. Are there areas of work e.g. training of certain levels of personnel, or joint projects in which neighbouring countries could effectively co-operate in organizing common programmes relating to youth service?

9. What are the forms of external (international, bilateral etc.) assistance which are most helpful and most needed for the expansion of youth service programmes?

What should be the role of ECA: ILO: Other agencies in this? (inter-governmental and non-governmental).

10. What are the precise ways in which the Seminar can be followed up either at regional, sub-regional or national levels, e.g. training workshops, technical discussions, study visits?

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