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P O L I C Y

OTHER FUNDS AND PROGRAMMES

UNITED NATIONS VOLUNTEERS

Report of the Administrator

Addendum

Summary

To relieve the critical staffing situation in UNV, in the face of an expanding programme, the Administrator recommends in this addendum that the Governing Council approve a support-cost charge, initially at a rate of 8 per cent and only to UNV-executed projects, to be covered by the support-cost line of the UNDP central resources in respect of UNDP-financed volunteers and by other sources of funds for volunteers financed by them.

1. The United Nations Volunteer (UNV) Programme became operational in 1971, and by the end of that year, 41 volunteers had been fielded. Initially, the growth was slow, reaching 285 by the end of 1976; 307 by the end of 1977; 406 by the end of 1978. The target until that year had been 500 serving volunteers; however, at its twenty-sixth session, in June 1979, the Governing Council in decision 79/24 established a new target of 1,000. At that time, the staffing strength of UNV consisted of 13 Professionals and 18 General Service staff.
2. The programme continued to grow, reaching 863 serving volunteers by the end of 1980, at which time the staffing strength had increased to 19 Professionals and 28 General Service staff. At the time of the staffing survey in 1981, the growth of the programme had continued to the target of 1,000 serving volunteers and the strain of the work-load had become a recurrent theme in the survey report. However, contributions to UNDP had leveled off, and the Administrator had felt compelled to introduce zero-growth budgets and a freeze on staffing levels. UNV lost one of its Professional posts which had been granted provisionally, and the level of 18 Professionals was thereafter fixed until the present biennium, when one more Professional post was added. The General Service was allowed to increase moderately to 30 in 1984/1985 and to 32 in 1986/1987. Nevertheless, the programme has continued to expand, and stands at 1,145 serving volunteers by the end of January 1986. With approximately 650 posts established over and beyond the number of serving volunteers, for which recruitment is currently under way, further expansion seems virtually assured, pointing to approximately 1,500 serving volunteers in 1986.
3. In his oral introduction of the Administrator's report on UNV submitted to the Governing Council at its thirty-second session in June 1985, the Assistant Administrator, Bureau for Special Activities, took up the matter that this increase of approximately thirty per cent in the programme, without any corresponding increase in the already over-loaded staff, had created an untenable situation. Alerting the Council to the problem, he stated that "the strain on the headquarters staff is immense, and if the demand for volunteer services keeps up, I cannot see how we will be able to cope unless given more staff. It is clear that the expansion of the programme goes beyond what was foreseen in the budget. We have been asking so much of the staff for so long that any increase in workload could seriously impair the morale of the staff that until now has been one of the main assets of the operation. I think that it is only fair to alert the Council to the situation, and that it may be necessary to bring this problem to the Council next year."
4. Feeling the need for an in-depth analysis of the work-load situation in UNV headquarters and responding to the appeal of the Executive Co-ordinator and his staff for immediate relief, the Administrator commissioned a thorough review by an outside consultant. The study was completed in early 1986, and the report is available to the Council. The report, pointing out clearly the seriousness of the situation and the negative consequences on the morale and physical well-being of the existing staff members, confirmed an immediate need for additional posts in order to carry the programme at its present level, with the expansion currently foreseen.

5. At present, the UNV organization comprises an Office of Executive Co-ordination (one D-2, one GS), and three divisions. The Programme Operations Division, whose Chief (P-5) doubles as Deputy Executive Co-ordinator, has four sections: two regional sections (two P-4, four P-3 and eleven GS); a Domestic Development Service (DDS)/Youth Section (one P-4, one P-2 and two GS); and a Recruitment and Resources Section (one P-4, one P-2 and four GS). The Programme Policy and Evaluation Division, whose Chief (P-4) doubles as chief of the third division and whose secretary (GS) doubles as secretary of a unit, has two units: External Relations and Information (one P-4, one P-2 and three GS); and Programme Evaluation (one P-2, one GS). The Programme Support Division, which shares its Chief with the second division, has three units: Administration and Placement (two P-3 and 4 GS); Finance (one P-3 and 3 GS); and Registry (3 GS).

6. The recommendations of the consultant are as follows:

(a) Office of the Executive Co-ordinator: Strengthen by the addition of one Professional and one General Service staff;

(b) Programme Operations Division:

(i) Office of the Chief: Add one General Service post;

(ii) Regional sections: Add two Professional posts; add one General Service post; convert two General Service posts to Professional posts (the Professional staff currently works overtime equivalent to five man/years and two General Staff are performing Professional-level work);

(iii) DDS/Youth section: Strengthen by adding one Professional post;

(iv) Recruitment and Resources section: add one Professional and one General Service post;

(c) Programme Policy and Evaluation Division: Strengthen the External Relations and Information Unit by the addition of one Professional post;

(d) Programme Support Division: Add one Professional post, for the Chief, and one General Service post (the Division now functions without a chief, the post being utilized elsewhere);

(e) Administration and Placement unit: Add one Professional and one General Service post;

(f) Registry: Add one General Service post.

7. Based on this report, the Administrator considers that immediate strengthening of UNV headquarters is essential, and that the consultant's recommendations must constitute targets to be realized as soon as possible, and in a certain order of priority. Fully implemented, this programme of strengthening UNV headquarters would require an additional expenditure of

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approximately \$960,000 annually, comprising: \$552,000 for Professional salaries; \$158,000 for General Service salaries; \$170,000 in common staff costs; \$40,000 in staff travel; \$33,000 in office space; \$4,000 in furniture and office equipment; and \$3,000 in supplies and miscellaneous.

8. To provide for this, the Administrator would like to recommend that the Council reopen the question of introducing support cost for the delivery of UNV projects and project inputs. This possibility was first raised at the twenty-eighth session of the Governing Council, where it was decided "to review the question of reimbursement to the UNV programme of costs related to non-UNDP-financed activities at its twenty-ninth session" and where the Administrator was requested "to present related proposals on the specific question of reimbursement" (decision 81/40, para. 8). This review was postponed one year (decision 82/21, para. 5) and took place at the thirtieth session, based on the report of the Administrator on UNV (DP/1983/31).

9. In that report, the Administrator gave an analysis of the different kinds of volunteer projects and concluded that it would be possible to pay support cost to UNDP-financed projects executed by UNV if the Council should so wish; however, he refrained from proposing support-cost charges for UNV-executed projects funded through cost-sharing or trust-fund arrangements and for projects executed by various United Nations agencies because of the discouraging effect that might possibly have on the use of volunteer services.

10. The Governing Council subsequently decided not to change the financial arrangements for UNV as established (decision 83/18).

11. The situation today appears different from that which existed in the early 1980s. The usefulness of the UNV programme is no longer in doubt, and requests for the services of the programme are unlikely to decrease as a result of this modest increase in cost.

12. The Administrator feels, therefore, that as of 1 July 1986, UNV should be authorized to charge support cost, initially at a rate of 8 per cent and only to UNV-executed projects, to be covered by the support-cost line of the UNDP central resources in respect of UNDP-financed volunteers and by other sources of funds for volunteers financed by them. Based on the 1985 programme, this would yield \$586,000, a sum which would give considerable, immediate relief to the administration of the programme. In addition to being administratively simple, this arrangement has the advantage of relating directly to the activities undertaken by UNV, and will increase or decrease with the fluctuations in the programme itself, thereby giving the greater flexibility that is desirable in a programme the volume of which is determined by outside requests for services.

13. In addition to the above UNV-executed projects, United Nations volunteers are also utilized in UNDP-financed, agency-executed projects. For these volunteers, UNV headquarters performs the same services, such as rostering, recruitment, administrative support, etc., as it does for volunteers working in UNV-executed projects. The agencies concerned provide technical supervision. Agencies are paid the full support cost on the UNV component of the project.

14. In view of these facts, the Administrator intends to discuss with agencies an arrangement by which there would be recognition of the costs involved in the work done by UNV headquarters, with some sharing of the support cost be made in favour of UNV headquarters. Such an arrangement would be similar to situations where a co-operating agency or associated agency performs certain functions on behalf of, or in collaboration with, the executing agency and for which some payment is made. If there is agreement with the agencies, the arrangement would be put into effect. In any event, a report will be made to the Council at its next session on the outcome of the discussions.

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