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William A. Glaser

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and

Making Better Use of Technical Assistance Experts
A-730

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The Soviet System and Modern Society, by George Fischer, New York: The Atherton Press.

Pretrial Discovery and the Adversary System, by William A. Glaser, New York: Russell Sage Foundation.

Folk Song Style and Culture, by Alan Lomax, Washington, D.C.: American Association for the Advancement of Science.

Focus Focus

1975/3

Technical Cooperation

Focus: Technical Cooperation is published quarterly, as a section of the *International Development Review*, and is devoted to the theory and practice of those international activities known as "technical assistance" and "technical cooperation."

Improving Communication in the Technical Cooperation Relationship

William A. Glaser
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Improving Communication in the Technical Cooperation Relationship

A number of steps to improve communication among all parties concerned with a technical assistance project would contribute to the harmonious atmosphere requisite to effective donor-host collaboration.

William A. Glaser
Columbia University

☐ The expert and counterpart have played central roles in traditional technical assistance, whereby a foreigner with extensive knowledge and long experience brings technically advanced skills to a key person in a developing country, who then passes them on to his fellows. Experts and counterparts perform many different tasks, and the relationship therefore varies from case to case: the expert might be giving advice to an official; the pair might be creating a new organization or rebuilding an old one; they might be installing new equipment; the expert might be training the counterpart for a particular job; and so on. (Several books and articles describe how to recruit and use experts.[1])

New ideas on the delivery of technical assistance are now being sought, which would modify, supplement, or even eliminate the customary expert-counterpart pair.[2] Nevertheless, experts and counterparts will continue to exist in many different forms. This article summarizes some of my impressions from a pilot study on how to improve the selection and use of experts and counterparts.[3] I have concentrated here on the difficulties of briefing and communication inherent in the present technical cooperation procedures, an area which seems particularly important and frequently overlooked.[4]

Preliminary Briefings

The usual procedure is to send the expert a letter and a few official project documents. But these are often very terse, telling little about the complexities of the situation. Usually they explain the project as a whole but say nothing about the particular job the expert will occupy.[4]

Some experts get oral briefings at headquarters. But at such briefings the expert usually meets desk

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[1]Such as Maurice Domergue, *Technical Assistance: Theory, Practice, and Policies* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1968), esp. Ch. 11.

[2]Harold Caustin, *The Search for New Methods of Technical Co-Operation–A Report on a UNITAR Weekend Seminar* (New York: United Nations Institute for Training and Research, 1974). The need to reexamine the organization of technical assistance is the *raison d'etre* of *Focus: Technical Cooperation*.

[3]Publication A-721 of the Bureau of Applied Social Research and the Institute of Latin American Studies, Columbia University. The field work was supported by Contract AID TA-C-1052 with the U.S. Agency for International Development. For many valuable suggestions, I am indebted to Denyse Harari, OECD Development Centre; and N. Pattabhi Raman, United Nations Development Programme.

As part of the study, expert-counterpart teams were interviewed in Colombia, Nigeria, and Nepal. The experts were picked from bilateral donors (United States, Great Britain, France, Australia, India, etc.) and from multilateral agencies (UNESCO, ILO, WHO, FAO, and other organizations with the United Nations system). The teams were participating in projects in agriculture, geology, health, higher education, technician training, and many other fields. Therefore, within each country, counterparts were located in a wide range of organizations.

Experts were interviewed and filled out questionnaires concerning themselves and their relationships with counterparts. The counterparts were interviewed separately and filled out questionnaires concerning themselves and their relationships with experts. In addition, the colleagues and superiors of both experts and counterparts were interviewed.

The field work involved a collaboration among several research centers: Bureau of Applied Social Research, Columbia University (William Glaser), Development Centre, Organization for Economic Co-Operation and Development, Paris (Denyse

officers and learns about the donor agency—he rarely meets anyone intimately involved in the negotiation of the project and in the writing of the project documents. At best, he sees the correspondence of the short-term expert who wrote the project document. Even when the expert is joining an established project, he rarely meets any of its current or former members before his arrival.

Because of the niceties of diplomatic relations, he rarely learns about the problems, delays, and conflicts that will bedevil him abroad. He usually does not receive a thorough description of the host organization where he will work; headquarters, in fact, may know little more than its name. He rarely knows in advance the name of his counterpart, even when the latter has already been appointed.

Defining the Project

An article of faith among some donors—such as USAID and UNDP—is that a project must be specified in great detail in the international agreement signed before the long-term experts arrive. Short-term experts or other persons from headquarters produce detailed reports on the scope of work to be done as well as time schedules, both of which are needed if the project is big, complex, dependent on the delivery of equipment and other resources, and subject to disagreements and recriminations.

However, we encountered several projects where experts arrived without detailed assignments and with only a limited exchange of letters between the donor and host. This is common among private donors (such as charitable foundations) and among certain bilateral donors (such as France, India, and other European countries). The expert and counterpart themselves must gradually define their tasks and working relationships. This approach may work well if the project has only one expert, the expert has great professional stature, the expert relates well to the host country in manner and in language, the host government is committed to give much support, and a good counterpart works with the expert from the start.

Occasionally a specific project document turns out to be unrealistic shortly after the expert's arrival. We encountered one expert from a multilateral donor, accustomed to prearranged assignments, who had to rewrite the project after his arrival. The aforementioned conditions for success existed, and the project developed well thereafter. In such situations, the expert must work very closely with the aid mission and with his headquarters, as well as with the counterpart.

Knowledge of Varying Technologies

The expert who is supposed to bring advanced techniques to the host country knows best, of course, what he learned in schools and at work in his home country. Since in many fields the methods of organization and even the technology vary among developed countries, what the counterpart is told often depends on the national origin of the particular expert who happens to be assigned to his project. Whether the techniques of a particular developed country are best for the developing country in question must be established in each case. At present, this match-making is only on occasion given careful consideration by the donor's recruiters and the host's development aid office. Often it is ignored amidst a preoccupation with the expert's personal credentials.

In any case, the expert ideally should learn more about the techniques available from *other* countries for use in his own work. In some developing countries, the expert absolutely needs to know about other techniques because a melange has already been installed. For example, external telecommunications hardware in some developing countries such as Nepal have confusing mixtures in different regions or even in the same places: American, British, Canadian, Dutch, French, German, and Swedish equipment and operating systems have been introduced by the former colonial government, by private contractors hired by the national government, and by the donors of development aid. If the expert's job is to plan a national system, combine lines and plants in the field, or write syllabi for training schools, he must know all the parts.

Furthermore, each expert who belongs to a multinational team must understand systems from other developed countries so that the team can create a synthesis. Otherwise, the counterparts will be given contradictory information.

Harari); Checchi and Company, Washington (Richard Ellis and Gladys Kuoksa); Oficina de Investigaciones Socio-Economicas y Legales, Bogota Colombia (Cecilio Munoz de Castillo and Camilo Cardenas); Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Lagos, Nigeria (Oladejo Okediji); and Centre for Economic Development and Administration, Tribhuvan University, Kathmandu, Nepal (Daya Upadhyaya).

[3]Mr. Glaser will discuss other areas of importance in a second article to appear in a future issue of *Focus*. Ed. note.

[4]On the weaknesses of briefing at present, see Robert G. A. Jackson, *A Study of the Capacity of the United Nations Development System* (Geneva: The United Nations, 1969), Volume 2, pp. 80-81 and 361-363, and A. I. MacBean and Kathryn Morton, *Draft Report on Survey of Technical Assistance Experts* (Paris: Organization for Economic Co-Operation and Development, 1971, TECO (71 11), pp. 21-23.

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Briefing of Headquarters by Expert

The usual plan is to keep the expert a *tabula rasa* until headquarters tells him what to think. A better idea might be to let the expert visit the project for a short time prior to his meeting with headquarters. He would probably understand the subject matter better than anyone at headquarters and could note the problems and needs of the project. Together they could work out a strategy for the future, correcting misconceptions in the project document, such as an unrealistic timetable, right from the beginning. In addition, an early visit to the project might hasten the appointment of a counterpart.

The extra travel expense of such a preliminary trip would be negligible, and the benefits would be great (in some cases no extra expense would be involved). Our survey, for example, showed that headquarters for one project refused to allow an expert to visit the site of the project beforehand, despite the fact that it was a normal stop on the air route between the expert's home base and headquarters. The expert knew the subject matter of the project thoroughly, while no one at headquarters did. After a long and unproductive visit with headquarters, the expert doubled back on the route and reported to the project. He soon noticed several problems that needed to be discussed with headquarters.

. . . besides understanding developing societies in general, the expert . . . needs to anticipate the dynamics of the particular society where he will work.

Perhaps every expert should visit the project before he definitely accepts the assignment. He could thereby help crystallize the project cooner: too often, neither the donor nor the host thinks about the project between the writing of the project document and the expert's arrival for work. Preparations, such as procurement, allocation of office space and housing, and appointment of a counterpart, would be speeded by his mere appearance in advance. On the other hand, preliminary meetings might establish that the project cannot (or should not) start on schedule.

During on-the-scene meetings, before the expert has become irrevocably committed and burned his bridges at home, signs of incompatibility may be detected and remedied. (One discovery might be that the expert and counterpart will not work together harmoniously, and that a different person should come.) Moreover, such meetings would provide a clearer insight about what advice and information the expert should bring when the project starts.

Recently the United Nations Development Programme has begun to experiment with approaches like these. Some project managers begin work before the projects officially begin and put the final touches to the work plans and schedules. In one UN project, the experts were brought in as short-termers to help develop the final plans before their long-term appointments began.

Country-Specific Briefings

In addition to a full understanding of the project, the expert needs to know about the society in which he will be working. On paper, a project in one country is much like similar projects in other countries, but the way it works may depend on the particular aspects of the country in question, such as its civil service system, the customary speed in making decisions, level of corruption, hospitality toward foreigners, and so on.

A recurring theme during my interviews with foreign experts in Nigeria was the perception that their Nigerian experience differed from their earlier experiences—both at home and abroad—and the wish that they had known more before arriving.[5] An expert on his first assignment of course needs to know how any developing society differs from his home[6]; but besides understanding developing societies in general, the expert—no matter what his level of experience may be—needs to anticipate the dynamics of the particular society where he will work.[7] Such an understanding, by both the expert and his family, of their environment would have a positive effect on morale, which in turn would influence the expert's performance.

Recently donors have become aware of the need, not only for better briefing of experts about the project and donor agency, but also for "country-

[5]Described in part in Alvin G. Edgell, "Aid Encounter in Iboland," *Focus: Technical Cooperation*, 1973/4, pp. 3-7. Such a frank report about the problems encountered in a developing country almost never appears in print, in official files of donors, or even in oral briefings at headquarters.

[6]The earliest literature about work overseas described the "culture shock" experienced by Westerners anywhere overseas and prescribed remedies. For example, Harlan Cleveland et al., *The Overseas Americans* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1960), esp. Ch. 3; and George M. Foster, *Traditional Culture and the Impact of Technological Change* (New York: Harper and Row, 1962), pp. 188-194.

[7]On problems of adjusting to the unique features of each country, see Francis C. Byrne, "Role Shock: An Occupational Hazard of American Technical Assistants Abroad," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, Volume 369 (November 1966), pp. 95-108, esp. p. 108.

specific briefings."[8] This would require meetings between new experts and others who previously served in that country. At present, even when they work in headquarters, the new expert on a visit rarely meets them. This type of realistic briefing would require a frankness about the host society that international agencies—and some other donors—hesitate to exercise.

Briefing the Counterparts

UNDP offices and executing agencies within the UN have lately developed a clearer philosophy of technical assistance which is conveyed to their experts. But no one briefs the counterparts.

As a result, wide differences in expectations exist about the proper roles of experts and counterparts among receiving countries, among agencies in the same country, and among counterparts in the same project. To some counterparts, the relationship they were supposed to have with the experts was never clear; others seem unhappy because they expected the expert to behave differently than he has. Some counterparts seem to think that, because it is their country, they can treat ("use") the expert in any manner they wish.

Briefing the Group

Experts and counterparts in large projects often meet, but they primarily discuss formal business. Judging from the many minutes I have read, the one subject they almost never broach is their relationship. This occurs only when battles have arisen involving the manager, so serious that the project faces imminent cancellation and an investigator-mediator must be called in.

At the start of a project, and periodically thereafter, the agenda should include discussions of the relationships between experts and counterparts. Such discussions should consider the donor's philosophy of technical assistance, the hosts' expectations, the roles of each expert, and the roles of each counterpart.[9]

Group discussions could promote better teamwork. At present, small groups of experts work together—or at least communicate often—on most projects. Larger projects have less teamwork, particularly if the members work at separate sites, a common occurrence in agricultural projects. Even if the experts keep in touch among themselves, the counterparts at present rarely do on their side.

[8]Donald C. Dunham, "Project in Search of a Pilot," *Focus: Technical Cooperation*, this issue; and Maurice Domergue, *Technical Assistance* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1968), pp. 116-117.

[9]The meetings could discuss papers specifying everyone's roles, such as the example published by N. Pattabhi Raman, "A Framework for Effective Interaction between National and International Personnel," *Focus: Technical Cooperation*, 1973/2, pp. 23-25.

Improving Communications at Higher Levels

Relations between experts and counterparts, and between the top-level donors and hosts, have always had problems as well as pleasures and accomplishments. The difficulties were recognized at the start and were listed in many able in-house reports and publications.[10] A depressing observation based on my field work is that the problems first encountered in the early 1950's still exist in 1975, and there is little evidence of any systematic attempts to remedy them.

Many problems in relations between experts and counterparts arise from a persistent failure to establish continuous and frank communication between donors and hosts.[11] Moreover, they arise without their superiors knowing. Ultimately the superior may learn about problems, but often he is too slow to act in an effective fashion, let alone communicate with his own equivalent in the aid relationship. Usually he is desk-bound by habit, preoccupied with many other tasks, and hopeful that problems in social relations within projects will disappear by themselves. When the managers finally confer, the situation may be beyond repair, the managers may be pressed to back up their subordinates, and their intervention may even add to the tension.

Building mutual confidence and a sense of collaboration at the executive level is essential, because the higher managers must be able to overcome nationalistic sensibilities when problems require solutions. If something is wrong with the qualifications or behavior of a counterpart (or expert), the manager of the donor (or hosts) must be able to raise the subject without being told that it is none of his business. True collaboration requires a long prior period of discussion, the building of mutual trust, and the demonstration that all the higher managers on both sides are dedicated to their common effort.

Periodic meetings among all sides, such as UNDP's new Tripartite Reviews, are good to have, but they are too formal, ceremonial, and infrequent. Moreover, the procedure for conducting them is

[10]For example, Clarence E. Thurber, *The Problem of Training Americans for Service Abroad in U.S. Government Technical Cooperation Programs* (Stanford: dissertation for the Ph.D. in political science, 1961), esp. Chs. 2-4 and 6; the many end-of-tour reports and debriefing interviews reported in Sidney C. Sufrin, *Technical Assistance* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1966); and Frank N. and Helen G. Trager, "Exporting and Training Experts," *The Review of Politics*, Volume 24, Number 1 (January 1962), pp. 88-108.

[11]On the absence of effective communication in development aid generally, see the editorials by Andrew E. Rice entitled "Something is Wrong" and "A Disappointing Dialogue," *Focus: Technical Cooperation*, 1973/3 and 1974/2, respectively.

still being worked out. Few bilateral programs even have these type of periodic meetings. In fact, at present higher executives from donors and from hosts have regular informal encounters only at occasional cocktail parties, where the conversations are brief, general, and frequently interrupted.

High-level communication is valuable for reasons other than maintaining harmony within the project. For instance, the donor can learn whether its largesse does more harm than good. Some host countries have been given so much aid and are required to supply so many counterparts to projects that their Ministries are disrupted and understaffed in their regular work. The donor should also coordinate its project with those of other donors, so their contributions can be cumulative rather than competitive and wasteful bidding for scarce counterparts can be avoided. □□□

Résumé

Amélioration des communications dans les relations de coopération technique

La façon dont on présente actuellement sa mission à un expert n'est pas satisfaisante. Il ne reçoit habituellement que des renseignements très généraux sur l'ensemble du projet, et rien de précis ne lui est exposé concernant la tâche qui lui est confiée. Cette présentation, faite au siège —quand d'ailleurs elle a lieu—ne porte que sur une introduction à l'organisme donateur. Il est rare que l'expert rencontre quelqu'un qui participe véritablement au projet, ou qu'il soit informé des services qui le recevront et avec lesquels il travaillera.

A la lumière de la façon dont l'expert comprend le sujet, il serait bon qu'il puisse visiter le projet avant cette rencontre au siège. L'expert et le siège pourraient ainsi mettre ensemble au point une stratégie plus conforme à la réalité. Si l'on veut éviter par la suite que surviennent des désaccords, le projet doit être précisé dans tous ses détails et inclure des rapports sur la portée de la mission, ainsi que son calendrier.

Une visite préalable de l'expert aiderait également à accélerer la réalisation du projet et à se rendre compte des conseils et informations qu'il devrait obtenir dès le lancement du projet. Dans bien des cas, l'expert constate qu'il doit être au courant des technologies utilisées dans d'autres pays industrialisés pour pouvoir faire face au "mélange" déja en existence dans le pays hôte.

Outre des renseignements plus complets concernant le projet lui-même, l'expert pourrait bénéficier de présentations "propres au pays". Si l'expert et sa famille comprennent la dynamique de la société du pays hôte, son moral et la qualité de son travail ne feront qu'en profiter.

Si l'on considère l'autre volet des rapports de coopération technique, l'homologue devrait lui aussi être informé. De ce fait, peut-être que le fossé qui sépare la conception du rôle de l'expert et de son homologue pourrait être comblé.

Toujours dans le même but, des réunions en groupe où se retrouvent les experts et leurs homologues devraient avoir lieu dès le début d'un projet, puis régulièrement par la suite. La calendrier devrait toujours comprendre de telles possibilités de discussions portant sur les rapports entre les experts et leurs homologues.

Il est également essentiel d'arriver à une confiance mutuelle au niveau des cadres, parce que les responsables au plus haut niveau doivent pouvoir surmonter les difficultés résultant de sentiments nationalistes quand des frictions se produisent entre experts et homologues.

Resumen

Mejorando las Comunicaciones entre Experto y sus Contrapartes

La actual manera de dar información preliminar acerca de proyecto al cual se ha asignado a un experto es inadecuada. Generalmente, el experto recibe solamente información de carácter general acerca del proyecto total —ya nada en particular acerca de su trabajo específico. La instrucción del experto en la sede principal, cuando tiene lugar, solamente presenta al experto a la agencia donante. Raramente tiene oportunidad de reunirse con alguien íntimamente vinculado con el proyecto o recibe información acerca de la organización local para la cual trabajará.

En vista de la comprensión que el experto posee en cuanto al asunto entre manos, sería beneficioso que éste visitara el proyecto con anterioridad a su entrevista en la sede principal. El experto y la sede principal podrían entonces delinear una estrategia conjunta más realista. Si se han de evitar desacuerdos posteriores, se debe especificar el proyecto con gran lujo de detalles, que incluyan informes acerca de la magnitud de la obra a realizar, así como itinerarios relativos a la finalización de diversas etapas.

Una visita temprana por parte del experto también ayudaría a cristalizar el proyecto con mayor rapidez y alertaría al experto en cuanto a qué información y asesoramiento deberá acumular, y traer consigo al comienzo del proyecto. En muchos casos el experto descubrirá que necesitará conocimientos acerca de tecnologías de otros países desarrollados, si es que ha de poder desempeñarse con la melange ya existente en el país anfitrión.

A mas de mayor información acerca del proyecto mismo, el experto se beneficiaría al recibir información acerca del país específico. La comprensión de la dinámica social del país anfitrión, tanto por parte del experto como de su familia, podría tener efecto positivo sobre su estado de ánimo y por tanto sobre su desempeño.

Echando una mirada al otro componente de la relación de cooperación técnica, el contraparte también debe recibir información. Como resultado, talvez amplias diferencias en cuanto a lo que se espera de los papeles efectivos del experto y su contraparte, podrían disminuirse. Con el mismo fin reuniones de todo el grupo con asistencia de expertos y sus contrapartes deberían tener lugar al comienzo de un proyecto y periódicamente a partir de entonces. Discusiones acerca de la relación entre expertos y sus contrapartes deben formar parte regular de la agenda de trabajo.

Es asimismo esencial el establecimiento de consianza mutua a nivel ejecutivo, ya que, los administradores de alto nivel deben ser capaces de superar susceptibilidades de carácter nacionalista cuando surgen problemas entre expertos y contrapartes.

FOCUS

TECHNICAL COOPERATION
COOPERACION TECNICA
COOPERATION TECHNIQUE

Making Better Use of Technical Assistance Experts

William A. Glaser
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Focus: Coopération technique est publié tous les trimestres. Ce supplément à la *Revue du développement international* est consacré à l'étude des problèmes théoriques et pratiques relevant des activités internationales désignées sous le nom d' "assistance technique" ou de "coopération technique". *Focus: Cooperación Técnica* se publica trimestralmente por la Sociedad Internacional para el Desarrollo, como una sección de la *Revista del Desarrollo Internacional*, y se dedica a la teoría y práctica de aquellas actividades conocidas como "ayuda técnica" y "cooperación técnica". *Focus: Technical Cooperation* is published quarterly by the Society for International Development, as a section of the *International Development Review*, and is devoted to the theory and practice of those international activities known as "technical assistance" and "technical cooperation."

1975/4

Making Better Use of Technical Assistance Experts

A team of regional experts or recurrent visits by short-term experts may be sensible alternatives to the prevailing system of full-time, long-term experts assigned to one place.

William A. Glaser
Columbia University

*In his article, "Improving Communication in the Technical Cooperation Relationship" (*Focus *1975/3), Mr. Glaser has already discussed some observations which grew out of a pilot study on how to improve the selection and use of experts and counterparts. The following text,* a continuation of those observations, takes up two distinct issues: 1) the improvement which career benefits and professional awards would bring to the present expert-counterpart system, and 2) possible alternatives to that system.*

Fostering a Career System

Security. A common worry of technical assistance experts is insecurity about the future. Many have no permanent job or employer at home, and they do not know what their next job will be. While they are abroad, few "free-lance" experts hear about employment opportunities at home. They cannot be sure their incomes will be guaranteed at times when they must pay for their children's schooling. As a project approaches its end, unless they have a new assignment, they may persuade the hosts to ask the donor to extend the project.

When an expert is doing an outstanding job and his prospects for future assignments are good, both he and his agency should learn this during his contract—not only at the end. Then he would worry less, and, at the same time, the agency would have a better chance of keeping him.

If a project requires a prolonged assignment, both the expert and the agency should establish this at the start. A few donors (such as UNIDO) may breed an atmosphere of uncertainty by hiring many experts on short-term contracts and then prolonging their assignments with a series of short-term renewals.

Several donors send experts who are on leave from regular governmental or university employers at home. Examples of this practice occur in all Indian technical assistance overseas, in the projects of the International Telecommunications Union, and in the Participating Agency Service Agreements (PASA) of the United States and Great Britain. Secondment from an established employer produces well-qualified persons and diminishes their insecurities.

In the absence of any orientation about the difficulties of working in developing countries, these experts may chafe at delays and inefficiency. Most

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As part of the study, expert-counterpart teams were interviewed in Colombia, Nigeria, and Nepal. The experts were picked from bilateral donors (United States, Great Britain, France, Australia, India, etc.) and from multilateral agencies (UNESCO, ILO, WHO, FAO, and other organizations with the United Nations system). The teams were participating in projects in agriculture, geology, health, higher education, technician training, and many other fields.

are subject-matter specialists, oriented toward specific results rather than helping humanity in general, and are unaccustomed to overseas life. However, some seconding agencies which lend experts to aid agencies have offices that specialize in selecting and orienting employees for technical assistance and in keeping in touch with them while they are abroad (e.g., the Technical Assistance Advisory Service of the Internal Revenue Service of the United States). Such an international office seems to produce a positive attitude toward technical assistance and provides good backup for material and information.

Income and Amenities. Experts' jobs vary in compensation: some experts working for USAID and the United Nations can save considerable amounts, while others associated with certain bilateral programs earn less, permitting only modest savings. Many experts might be satisfied with moderate savings if accompanied by pension benefits; thus the drawbacks of excessively high salaries could be avoided.[1] A trend in domestic employment in Western countries is vesting of pension rights, so that the worker continues to accumulate benefits despite changes in jobs. Such coordination between international and domestic services should be attempted too.

Adequate housing, transport, and other personal amenities are at least as important as pay to the expert and his family. We encountered several experts who were angry because host governments had not fulfilled supposed promises; pay seemed forgotten in a constant battle over housing. Host government performance in this respect varies from country to country. Some governments are successful in managing such amenities. Others seem to have particular difficulty, and as a result they must cope with many angry foreigners who are less attentive to their work, less enthusiastic about the country, and more pessimistic about careers in technical assistance.

Governments should make clear from the beginning what they will provide the experts and then follow through with their promises, so disillusionment does not ensue. The Ministry that is supposed

[1]Douglas E. Hall and Alan E. Dieffenbach, "Compensation of Foreign Advisers in Developing Countries," *Focus: Technical Cooperation*, 1973/3, pp. 3-6.

Résumé

Meilleure utilisation des experts d'assistance technique

Comme beaucoup d'experts d'assistence technique n'ont pas d'emploi permanent dans leur pays, ils s'inquiètent souvent de l'insécurité de leur avenir. Il existe des moyens qui permettent d'y remédier et par conséquent de laisser l'expert se consacrer entièrement à son travail. Il serait bon, par exemple, que ce dernier soit informé en cours de contrat, et non à la fin, de ses chances de nouvelles missions. Il serait aussi bon d'offrir aux experts des contrats à long terme, plutôt que des contrats à court terme suivis d'une série de courts renouvellements (certaines organisations donatrices sont connues pour le faire). Un plan de retraite pourrait être établi qui permettrait à l'expert d'accumuler des avantages malgré les changements d'emploi. Finalement, le soutien d'un employeur dans le pays d'origine de l'expert pourrait atténuer ces incertitudes, tout en permettant d'obtenir du personnel hautement qualifié.

Le moral—et par conséquent la qualité du travail—serait amélioré si certains des mécanismes professionnels courants dans le pays d'origine pouvaient être créés pour les experts qui se trouvent à l'étranger, tels que la publication d'un rapport d'expert sur un projet d'assistance technique. De tels rapports pourraient également représenter une importante contribution scientifique ou à la littérature du développement.

Une autre méthode destinée à améliorer l'utilisation des experts d'assistance technique pourrait être de changer le système actuel d'experts à long terme pour adopter la répétition de missions à court terme, système dans lequel l'expert resterait en fait l'employé d'un organisme de son pays d'origine. Bien que la présence d'un expert assigné à un projet à l'étranger soit en fait brève, ses visites se répéteraient et par conséquent son travail serait en fait continu. Parmi les avantages de ce système on peut noter la possibilité d'avoir recours à plusieurs reprises à une base dans le pays d'origine bien dotée du matériel de recherche nécessaire. En outre, on s'attend à ce que des relations mutuellement avantageuses se nouent progressivement entre l'organisation du pays hôte et celle qui se trouve dans le pays de l'expert.

Une équipe régionale d'experts travaillant à plusieurs projets dans des pays voisins serait encore une autre possibilité pour éviter que des experts restent à long terme en un seul endroit, si l'on suppose qu'il existe au préalable une planification régionale de l'assistance technique. Dans des domaines tels que la géologie, les sciences forestières et la météorologie, il serait logique d'adopter une telle approche régionale.

to deliver the service must coordinate with the Ministry that makes the promises. A government should not embark on a large operational expert (OPEX) system of directly hiring many foreigners unless it knows it can provide all the amenities.

Recognition through Publications. Many experts perform valuable scientific or practical work but do not receive the gratifications of a normal career at home. Their morale would improve if some of the customary professional machinery could be created for experts. For example, many persons write reports of great length and high quality, but they are merely duplicated, circulated within a small group, and filed. A few university contractors encourage publication by their staffs, particularly in agriculture, but these authors are regular university staff members, not persons with careers as experts. Otherwise, publications resulting from projects are usually written by counterparts. Since footnotes of acknowledgment or joint by-lines are not customary in many countries, the contributions of the experts are not recorded.

Many reports are important contributions to science, to development literature, or to the stock of practical knowledge for a particular country. Therefore, they should be published in whole or in part, either as monographs or as articles. Established Western or international journals in the technical fields (such as in agriculture, engineering, meteorology, etc.) should make a practice of publishing the results of overseas projects. Some developing countries already have technical journals, and others can be encouraged to start them now. Also, special new journals might be created which would be devoted to development problems in particular technical fields.

If publication of papers emanating from technical assistance projects became common, experts and counterparts might work more quickly and harmoniously. A team starting a project might learn pertinent experiences from others, possible nowadays only if it has a project manager with extensive contacts in the grapevine. Moreover, in looking for jobs in the future, the expert would have more than letters of recommendation to show for his work on a project.

Another important benefit of such professional journals would be inducing experts to think more

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Resumen

Haciendo mejor uso de asistentes técnicos expertos

Desde que muchos de los expertos técnicos no tienen trabajo en casa, la insequridad sobre el futuro es una preocupación común. Existen maneras para aliviar estas inseguridades y consecuentemente las distracciones del trabajo de un experto. Ayudaría, por ejemplo, si un experto podría ser informado durante el lapso de su contrato, y no al final, que las posibilidades de trabajo en el futuro son buenas. Si se ofreciera a los expertos contratos de largo plazo, en vez de contratos cortos seguidos por una serie de pequeñas renovaciones (como se sabe que algunas agencias donadoras lo hacen), tambien sería favorable. Se podría introducir un plan de pensiones el cual permitiría al experto acumular beneficios, aunque cambie de trabajos. Finalmente, contratos de trabajo en el pais natal podría desminuir inseguridades y proveer al mismo tiempo personas altamente calificadas.

Moral—y por consiguiente rendemiento—mejoraría si algunos de los beneficios profesionales acostumbradas podrían ser creadas para los expertos de ultramar, tal como la publicación de un reporte realizado por algún experto en un proyecto de asistencia técnica. Tales reportes pueden ser una contribución importante a la ciencia y a la literatura del desarrollo.

Otra forma para mejorar el uso de la asistencia técnica de los expertos podría ser el cambiar el sistema prevaleciente de expertos a largo plazo por uno de periodos a corto plazo, por lo cual el experto permanecería empleado en la agencia doméstica en su pais natal. Aunque la presencia real del experto en un proyecto en el exterior puede ser corta, las visitas pueden ser periodicas, por lo tanto su trabajo puede ser en bases continuas.

Entre otras ventajas, tal sistema, muchas veces, proporcionaría la posibilidad de tener una sede bien equipada con materiales necesarios de investigación. Se espera, además, que una relación beneficiosa mutua podría gradualmente crecer entre la organización anfitriona y la agencia doméstica del experto.

Si la asistencia técnica es planeada regionalmente, otra alternativa para los expertos asignados a largo plazo en un lugar sería un equipo regional de expertos trabajando en varios proyectos en paises adyacentes. En tales campos como geología, silvicultura y meteorología, este acercamiento regional sería lo lógico.

about development in general. At present they tend to think about their specific jobs. The country representatives of the donors may discuss the country program with experts, but neither seem to discuss systematically and at length how development is achieved, what pitfalls to avoid, and how the work of a project or of the donor's country program might be helping (or hindering) development in a particular society.

Such journals should be read by both counterparts and host country executives, who could contribute articles as well. Besides widening the perspectives of the experts and their managers, such journals could become vehicles of communication and debate between donors and hosts about the meaning and administration of development.

Another possible way to foster a career system for experts might be through newsletters with personal items. The United Nations Secretariat, several UN specialized agencies, and many foreign offices of governments have such newsletters for their administrative and diplomatic personnel, and these are valuable mechanisms for creating an *esprit de corps*. But news of the experts and of their work usually is not included. Most experts have had enough overseas assignments to be curious about events elsewhere and about the whereabouts of acquaintances. Such newsletters might also include news and debates about the professional problems of experts.[2]

Possible Alternatives to the Full-Time Long-Term Expert

The usual model of technical assistance is to assign an expert to one post for at least two years without interruption. This procedure has elicited several complaints, particularly (but not exclusively) in the developing countries with higher incomes and plenty of skilled personnel. For instance, hosts often say that they require sophisticated advice, but that the ablest experts remain in their normal jobs in developed countries and are unwilling to take long sojourns in less technically advanced places. Another complaint is that having affluent and authoritative foreigners around all the time in an organization seems an invasion of privacy and a distracting obligation.

Recurring Short-Term Experts. Would the use of short-term experts offer an effective alternative to the prevailing system of long-term experts? Many projects mix the two types of experts. In some countries, such as Colombia, there is a shift toward projects consisting predominantly or entirely of short-term experts.[3] The only full-timer is an administrator in the office of the aid mission who handles several projects. He is not a subject-matter specialist located in the host organization.

Most short-term arrangements up to now have enjoyed dubious reputations. The short-term expert is said to know little about the country and its problems before his arrival, he is overworked and rushed during his assignment, he spends much of his time in the country writing his report rather than deepening his understanding, and he never comes back. Many recommendations by short-termers are forgotten because they have not had time to build influential relations with persons in the host or donor organizations.

Nevertheless, it is possible to organize very effective long-term relationships with the same short-term expert. Although his physical presence would be short, it would be recurring, and his work would therefore be continuous. In fact, technical assistance in certain fields might be conducted even more effectively this way, provided the host country has skilled and energetic personnel to continue the work when the expert is absent. Examples are geological exploration and many types of agricultural work.

A Hypothetical Arrangement. Assume that a country wishes to explore for coal and needs advice from the best available expert. The geological service of a donor might be willing to second him for a short time, but it would be unwilling to lose him for a long time, he would refuse to step out of the career stream at home, he would not enjoy working on subjects more elementary than his tasks at home, and (as often happens in very technical fields) he and his wife might not adapt well to prolonged life in a foreign society. However, being invited by another country is flattering, and a short-term sojourn in a new physical environment might be interesting.

Experts learn little about a project and a country before leaving home, and probably the regular short-term expert will be no different. But his

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[2]That such outlets would draw attention is confirmed by the many letters that follow controversial articles in *Focus: Technical Cooperation*.

[3]The following paragraphs were inspired by my conversation with Maurice Brock, USAID, Chief of Party of the Mineral Resources Survey in Colombia. I have since discovered that the idea was anticipated by K. P. Dalal and N. Pattabhi Raman, "A New Approach to Technical Assistance: Periodic Short-Term Assignment of Experts," *Focus: Technical Cooperation*, 1972/4, pp. 12-13.

schedule is organized to overcome such a problem. His first visit will acquaint him with the situation and what is needed. At this point, the long-termer usually finds that he left at home considerable information (such as books) that he really needs overseas, that local sources lack the information, and that requests through channels take time and sometimes are answered erroneously. But the recurrent short-termer soon goes back to a well-stocked home base. He can then mail the missing materials or bring them on his next visit. To answer questions arising from the project, he can consult his library, files, or colleagues. He can write letters asking for information more efficiently at his home base than from overseas. If the draft of an exploration plan is developed during his first visit to the project, he can then obtain his colleagues' opinions while at home.

His subsequent visits will take one or two months a piece, during which he will review the work done in his absence. Moreover, he will participate in big decisions, such as whether to explore in new places, and look over plans for the period until his next visit, such as the drilling schedule.

When such projects yield materials that must be tested, the expert's home organization often has better facilities then the host. Usually the team of long-term experts must do all testing in the laboratories that they or others have set up in the host country. The short-term expert from a well-equipped home base can send or carry such materials back to his home lab. Because this system builds a relationship between the host's organization and the short-term expert's organization, eventually the hosts will correspond regularly with the staff at the expert's lab.

With proper planning of his time, the short-term expert can establish the right priorities between his regular job and the technical assistance assignment. He will then take the right number of trips on a schedule that will meet the needs of the developing country and that will not harm his regular employers. At home his continuing technical assistance work should be part of his full schedule and not "moonlighting" (which invites financial abuses, neglect of some part of his full-time work, and recriminations). In this way, regular short-term experts can become strongly committed to their projects overseas. Furthermore, they may seek additional help in their home countries, an effort which is easier for short-termers since they are usually better connected in their fields than are the long-term experts.

The regular short-term expert's home organization may also profit from such a relationship. For example, in some fields—such as geology, meteorology, plant and animal quarantine, and several other agricultural fields—the overseas project provides valuable information or field practice that the developed country's organization could not obtain at home. Therefore, it may be motivated to help with backup services and, if the regular short-termer drops out, with a replacement.

So far, we know very little about short-term experts in technical assistance, since nearly all research has concentrated on long-termers. In order to make arrangements for future recurring short-term experts, studies should be conducted on any such cases existing now.

Regional Teams. Another alternative to the full-time, long-term expert assigned to one place would be one or more experts working on several projects in adjacent countries.[4] This presupposes, of course, that technical assistance has been planned regionally instead of entirely by country, with comparable projects existing in several places. In certain fields—such as geology, forestry, wildlife conservation, and meteorology—development problems are by their nature regional and logically should be handled together, with one group of experts working with the counterparts in all the projects. Discoveries in one place can then be more readily applied to others.

The team (or individual expert) would not be based permanently in one project, and their periodic absences would perhaps make their counterparts' hearts grow fonder. The counterparts would have to be motivated to recall the experts when they had something to demonstrate. Such an arrangement would, of course, require an adroit project manager, who would keep reminding the hosts of the team's existence and value. □ □ □

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[4]For suggesting this idea, I am indebted to John Blower, Project Manager and Wildlife Management Advisor, National Parks and Wildlife Conservation in Nepal Projects, Food and Agriculture Organization. The UN's past experience with regional experts is summarized in Yonah Alexander, *International Technical Assistance Experts* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1966), pp. 71-74.

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