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Programs for Assistance in Fishery Development

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Abstract

The United Nations Special Fund was established in 1958 under a resolution adopted by the General Assembly to assist developing countries in their efforts to accelerate economic development. The financial resources of the Special Fund are derived from voluntary contributions by government members of the United Nations or of one of the Specialized Agencies. As of September, 1964, contributions pledged by governments to the Special Fund amounted to the equivalent of US\$330.6 million. By June, 1964, the Governing Council of the Special Fund had approved 402 projects in 87 countries and territories, and 19 regional and inter-regional projects, each of which involved more than one country, and had earmarked approximately US\$374 million. The governments of the countries assisted have undertaken to contribute a total of the equivalent of US\$545 million to these 421 projects.

So far the Special Fund has supported mainly survey, research, and training projects, which are likely to make early contributions towards the economic development of the countries concerned. Many of these projects might be regarded as pre-investment studies, the principal aim of which is to facilitate new capital investments of all types by creating conditions which would make such investments either feasible or more effective.

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THE UNITED NATIONS SPECIAL FUND was established in 1958 under a resolution adopted by the General Assembly, to assist developing countries to accelerate economic development. Its financial resources are mainly derived from voluntary contributions by 112 governments which are members of the United Nations or of one of its specialized agencies. As of September, 1964, contributions pledged by these governments to the Special Fund amounted to the equivalent of US\$330.6 million. By June, 1964, the Governing Council of the Special Fund had earmarked approximately US\$374 million for 402 projects in 87 countries and territories and for 19 regional and inter-regional projects, each of which involves more than one country. The governments of the countries assisted have undertaken to contribute the equivalent of US\$545 million to these 421 projects.

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A Special Fund supported project is implemented by what we call the Executing Agency, normally a specialized agency of the United Nations (such as FAO, UNESCO, ILO, WHO), or the United Nations itself. The Executing Agency may sub-contract a part or all of the project to a non-UN organization. To date, the Special Fund itself has not participated directly in the execution of projects.

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Many developing countries, including those which have become independent in recent years, are anxious to develop fisheries to improve the diet of their peoples and to increase their incomes. This is most understandable, since, under favorable conditions, the building-up of a new fishing industry can take place within a short period of time. There are few, if any, institutional problems at the initial stage of developing a new fishery. The application of modern technology in this field is relatively easy. The turnover of capital is usually much faster than in most other types of business. In fact, the recent history of the world's fisheries is characterized by the establishment and rapid development of new fisheries in the areas where potential resources have been greatly under-exploited. This has occurred not only through the expansion of overseas fishing operations by advanced countries, but also by a great up-surge of fishing activities in the less-developed countries. The Peruvian fishing industry, for example, has grown into one of the largest in the world within the past ten years: its total landings, mainly anchovies, now exceed (in volume) those of any other country. The Chilean fisheries are also showing a rapid growth in a somewhat more diversified way. Many new fishing enterprises are springing up on the west coast of Africa. A number of Asian countries are successfully modernizing their fisheries. Modern shrimp fishing fleets are now found in many of the countries in Central and South America.

In view of the dynamic nature of fishing development, the Special Fund has taken a somewhat flexible approach in its attempt to assist low-income countries in this particular field. The kind of fishery development project likely to produce desirable results will naturally vary with the particular needs, opportunities, and industry conditions in each country. No standard approach can be applied to cover all projects.

For example, resource surveys and related hydrological and biological studies may be of considerable importance when the magnitude and availability of fishery resources are insufficiently known. Experimental or demonstration fishing might be a matter of great interest to countries where the extractive

phase of the industry is underdeveloped. On the other hand, marketing surveys may be more urgent than fishing operations in countries where the major factor hampering the development of fisheries is the lack of modern marketing systems. There may also be cases which require pilot projects to demonstrate the industrial feasibility of fishing, processing, and marketing methods. Since the development of fisheries is often hindered by a dearth of masterfishermen, technicians, and fishery officers, projects for training the personnel required may deserve outside support. Also, as conservation may be of utmost importance when exploitation of fish stocks is already intensive or likely to become so in the near future, the Special Fund might consider the possibility of giving assistance in carrying out studies required for the establishment of a conservation regime on a national or international basis.

In Peru, where almost the entire fishing industry depends on one species of fish, namely anchovy, the work of the research institute, supported by the Special Fund, has emphasized biological and oceanographic studies to reveal factors causing fluctuations in the abundance and availability of the anchovy stocks. The institute, now operated largely by Peruvian staff members with the assistance of a few international experts, has revealed, to a large extent, the causes of the drastic changes that have taken place in the abundance and composition of anchovies during the past year. The industry has recognized the importance of the institute's work and is now financing more than one-half of the maintenance of the institute.

The Chilean fishery institute, also supported by the Special Fund, is tackling a variety of problems, since the needs and opportunities of the industry are more diversified than in Peru. In Korea, where large capital investments are being made by the government to build up an entirely modern high seas fishing fleet, the Special Fund will support a project devoted to the training of masterfishermen and technicians required for manning the fleet. In the Gulf of Aden, where great investment opportunities seem to exist in the field of fishery development, the Special Fund plans to assist in a pre-investment survey to provide potential investors with basic information needed for new ventures.

Apart from assistance in the development of marine fisheries, the Special Fund is considering the possibility of supporting the initial stages of long-term limnological research in some of the large man-made lakes in Africa.

As in the case of any other international organization, the Special Fund operates within its terms of reference and established policies. It cannot, for example, make direct capital investment, nor it is normally prepared to support a project beyond a five or six year period. The government must assume certain obligations in any project, including provisions for practically all local currency expenditures. It must provide a counterpart staff to work with the international expert team. According to the established practice, the Special Fund does not directly participate in the execution of a project. So far the Special Fund has depended on FAO to act as its Executing Agency for the fishery projects. Most of these projects are still in the early stage of implementation, and it is too soon to determine whether our approach has been successful.

Although there exists a growing body of international competence in these matters, the demands of the developing countries and of the Special Fund have placed a considerable strain on FAO in carrying out major fishery development projects calling for the procurement or chartering of large vessels and the supervision of extensive fishing surveys. Some of the difficulties experienced

in mounting these operations have contributed to the delay in getting the Caribbean Fishery Development Project under way.

This Special Fund supported regional project, which may have bearing on some of the topics of this meeting, was conceived when Dr. Charles P. Idyll and I visited the region in 1962 as consultants to the Managing Director of the Special Fund. Our mission was to review a proposed fishery scheme in the light of the status and future prospects of the local fisheries. We visited nine countries to discuss fishery problems with government officials, industry personnel, and others concerned. In considering the possibility of developing local fisheries in the Caribbean region, we were aware of various limitations from natural and social causes. Because of the oceanographic conditions prevailing, the Caribbean Sea, as a whole, could not be considered as an area of high natural productivity. Most of the countries concerned were too small to be large markets for fish and fishery products. The amounts of public and private capital potentially available for investment in the industry were not great.

Nevertheless, we considered it possible to develop the local fisheries to levels considerably higher than at present. The demand for fish was great in practically all of these countries, and their per capita fish consumption was among the highest in the world. Roughly two-thirds of the fish consumed, however, was imported from countries outside of the Caribbean area.

We recommended a regional project consisting of three parts: exploratory fishing by five medium-to-small vessels, marketing research, and training of fishermen and fishery officers. The fishing part was primarily for the purpose of studying the feasibility of developing somewhat industrialized local fisheries for pelagic species in waters off the Caribbean islands. The marketing phase was considered more important than the extractive phase in the countries along the northeastern coast of South America, where profitable trawl fisheries could easily be developed if marketing problems could be solved. Since a shortage of trained personnel appeared to be one of the factors hampering development, it was recommended that the project provide some training. It was not recommended that extensive oceanographic and biological investigations be carried out; nor was it suggested that there should be set up a permanent training institute which would have represented a continuing financial burden on the governments concerned. It was anticipated that there would be nine participants in the scheme under a share system: Barbados and Antigua, British Guiana, Dominican Republic, Haiti, Jamaica, Netherlands Antilles, Puerto Rico, Surinam, and Trinidad.

A regional fishery development project based on our recommendations was approved by the Governing Council of the Special Fund at its January, 1963, session, with a total budget of US\$1,448,000 over a period of four years. The governments were expected to contribute to the project the equivalent of US \$773,000. The project is not yet in operation. Negotiations for specific terms of agreement are being carried out with a number of governments. FAO, acting as Executing Agency for this project, is negotiating with the United States Bureau of Commercial Fisheries to supervise the fishing part of the project under sub-contractual arrangements. We hope these consultations will be concluded soon so that we can see some fish being caught by the project vessels.