

MANPOWER AID

An Introduction to Manpower Aid

by Anthony Hurrell¹

The term "technical assistance" appears to have been used first when the UN launched its technical assistance programme in 1948; at that time it meant what it implies - the use of the technical expertise of the developed countries to help solve the technical problems of countries not possessing this expertise. Since 1948, however, the concept of technical assistance has been greatly broadened to include the use of general operational personnel, and education and training programmes which are non-technical except in the widest definition. Technical assistance programmes have become manpower aid programmes intended to provide or produce the human skills and knowledge needed for development. Thus the term "manpower aid" now seems to be more appropriate than technical assistance.

One of the most striking features of the aid scene in the 1960s was the sharp increase in expenditures on technical assistance, at a time when there was relatively little increase in total official aid flows. Between 1962 and 1968 the total official net disbursements of the DAC countries² increased by only 16% while total technical assistance expenditure increased by 99% (see Table I). Thus, during these six years, the proportion of development assistance given in the form of technical assistance increased from 13.5% to 23.1%.

While the proportion of aid given in the form of technical assistance was increased by all the major DAC donors, the increase was particularly marked in the case of France and Germany; in 1968 nearly half of French official aid was technical assistance,

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² OECD countries of the Development Advisory Committee Group.

compared with only a quarter in 1962. Despite only a small increase in total aid flows, the US continued to provide more than two-fifths of all technical assistance, while the UK share dropped from 9% to under 7%.

Table I
Growth of Technical Assistance in \$ million

	US	France	UK	Germany	Others	Total DAC Members
i. Total net official aid						
1962	3271	976	421	400	467	5535
1968	3347	855	428	554	1245	6429
% increase	2	-12	2	38	169	16
ii. Total technical assistance disbursements						
1962	331	256	61	51	46	745
1968	657	403	99	146	162	1482
% increase	99	63	62	186	250	99
iii. Technical assistance as % of official net aid						
1962	10	26	15	13	10	13.5
1968	20	47	23	27	13	23.1

Source: Tables 3 and 20, OECD 1969 Annual Aid Review

Table II
Breakdown of expenditures on technical
assistance, 1967 \$ million

	US	France	Germany	UK	Total DAC
1. Students and trainees	37	22	43	17	151
2. Experts	203	168	31	55	528
3. Volunteers	108	2	6	3	126
4. Equipment	102	13	32	3	155
5. Other and unspecified	114	198	14	13	362
6. Total*	564	403	126	92	1,322

* Any differences between the total and the sum of individual figures is due to rounding.

Source: Table 23, OECD 1969 Annual Aid Review

As Table II shows, the major item of expenditure on technical assistance was the cost of experts but although this amounted to 40% of the total expenditure of all DAC donors, the proportion varied from 60% for the UK to 25% for Germany. The German expenditure on students and trainees was higher than that of any other donor and amounted to 33% of the German programme compared to only 5% for France. Four-fifths of all the expenditure on volunteers and two-thirds of all the expenditure on equipment was provided by the US.

There was also a good deal of variation in the pattern of donors' fellowship and training programmes; the German programme was biased towards training, while both the US and the UK programme were biased towards fellowships. Moreover, the German training programme was concentrated on industrial training, while the British and French programmes were concentrated on non-industrial training (e.g. administration, education etc.)

Table III
 Numbers of technical assistance
 personnel working in developing countries in 1968

	France	US	UK	Germany	Total DAC countries
i. Operational personnel	6,962	Nil	9,878	717	19,927
ii. Educational experts	30,058	1,817	6,198	2,391	44,533
Teachers	25,771	309	5,771	2,160	37,718
Administrators	3,504	8	379	188	4,345
Advisers	783	1,500	48	43	2,470
iii. Volunteers	492	17,396	1,787	2,005	25,555
Teachers	57	8,456	1,215	261	11,650
Others	435	8,940	572	1,744	13,905
iv. Advisers	5,101	9,896	489	873	18,992
v. TOTAL	42,613	29,109	18,352	5,986	109,007

Source: OECD, DAC Statistical Tables for the 1969 Annual Aid Review

The two ex-colonial powers, France and the UK, provided most of the operational personnel. This is in part because their nationals were more readily acceptable in operational posts in many of their ex-colonies than the nationals of other countries, mainly because of the common administrative background. Nearly two-thirds of all French technical assistance personnel in 1967 were teachers, and the number of French teachers was more than a quarter of all technical assistance personnel provided by all DAC countries. The US provided about three-quarters of all the volunteers and more than half of the advisers.

These few facts and figures emphasise not only the rapid growth of technical assistance in recent years, but also the

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variations in the proportion of aid devoted to technical assistance and in the composition of the programmes of the major donors. Variations are partly due to the different historical relationships of the various donors and the developing countries, but these do not explain the main difference. It might be expected for example, that because of their special links the ex-colonial powers might devote a much greater share of their aid to technical assistance than the other donors, but while this is true of France, it is not true of Britain. Moreover, this does not explain the significant differences in the proportion of technical assistance devoted to fellowships, training, teachers, experts and volunteers, or the differences in the composition of these particular programmes. If these differences were complementary for the programmes within the recipient countries they would not be so important; a country might then be able to obtain all the different types of manpower aid that it required. In effect, however, recipient countries are not offered much choice, other than on a small scale, since each of the donor countries concentrates on certain ldc's (usually former colonies or, in the US case, Latin America and South East Asia) to the exclusion of other donors.

THE PROVISION OF MANPOWER AID

Manpower aid can be conveniently divided into three main categories:

Substitution for local skills when these are not available, e.g. operational personnel;

Improvement of local skills, e.g. training programmes, institution building;

Supplementation of local skills, e.g. provision of advisers.

SUBSTITUTION FOR LOCAL SKILLS

Operational personnel other than volunteers

Of the 20,000 operational personnel (other than teachers and volunteers) who were being financed by DAC aid programme in 1968, nearly 10,000 British and nearly 7,000 were French. Similarly, of the 37,700 teachers, who can also be regarded as operational personnel, nearly 26,000 were French and nearly 6,000 were British. The main fields in which these British operational personnel were employed were Education, Works and Communication, Public Administration, Agriculture and Health.¹ Four-fifths were employed in six African countries; Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania (c. 4,700), Zambia (c. 3,250), Nigeria (c. 1,300) and Malawi (870).

¹ Table 16, British Aid Statistics (ODM, 1969)

The provision of French operational personnel was also largely a continuation of previous colonial links. The French effort has been heavily concentrated in North Africa, particularly Morocco, and in the ex-French colonies of West Africa. Teresa Hayter has pointed out¹ that as half of French aid was spent on technical assistance and as nearly half of this was spent on salaries of French operational personnel, a large proportion of French aid was spent on paying its own civil servants. It has also been argued that one of the main reasons for France and Britain providing this type of aid was to find continued employment for large numbers of ex-colonial civil servants. While there may have been some truth in this in the early 1960s it is becoming less and less so.

Volunteers

In the early and mid-1960s volunteers were increasingly used as a form of manpower aid for developing countries. By 1968 there were just over 25,500 volunteers supported by official aid programmes of DAC countries. Of these 21,200 (83%) came from three countries - the US, the UK and Germany - but while the UK and Germany provided only 1,800 and 2,000 respectively, the US provided 17,400. Thus, while US provided practically no operational personnel other than volunteers, it provided 70% of all volunteers, and these amounted to about 40% of all operational personnel provided by DAC countries in 1968. Volunteers were more or less evenly divided among Africa, Asia and Latin America, but the pattern of distribution has changed markedly over the 1960s as a result of changes in the political relationships between US and some of the recipient governments. More than half of the Peace Corps is involved in education and about a quarter in community development projects. Two-thirds of British volunteers were also employed in education, but German volunteers were mainly engaged in crafts, industry and agriculture.

Localization policies and the future demand for operational personnel

Most of the ex-colonies, and particularly the Anglophone countries are following a deliberate policy of replacing foreign operational personnel by their own nationals as quickly as possible. Their plans give first priority to the localization of government services, then to education and finally to the private sector. Localization of central government services is now largely completed in many countries, but even in these there will probably continue to be a need for foreign operational personnel in some of the more specialized posts for some years to come. The recent

¹ T. Hayter, French Aid (Overseas Development Institute, 1966).

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and massive education programmes should also lead to a rapid reduction in the need for expatriate teachers in the mid-1970's, although the short-run effect of these programmes may increase rather than lessen the demand in the next year or two.

The natural desire for localization, the steps taken to provide the skilled manpower required and the growing resentment against the presence of foreign operational personnel in many developing countries are therefore likely to reduce the demand for operational manpower aid, particularly by the later-1970's, when many of these countries will have moved far towards self-sufficiency in the supply of teachers. The peak of the volunteer movement has probably already passed, and the emphasis in the 1970's will be on quality rather than quantity: enthusiasm and idealism will no longer suffice when the main demand will be for technical skills and experience. On the recruitment side salaries and conditions of service originally designed to retain colonial civil servants or to supply large numbers of operational personnel such as teachers may not be particularly suited to new demands for highly qualified personnel in certain specialized fields or in fields such as industrial development which have been largely neglected by many donors.

IMPROVEMENT OF LOCAL SKILLS

Training

The success of localization will depend not only on formal education programmes designed to increase the stock of educated manpower, but increasingly on specially devised training programmes designed to provide the specialized vocational skills and experience required.

Training in developed countries

At present, most of the manpower aid which is given to provide fellowships and training is to provide such education and training in the developed countries. In 1967 (the latest full figures available) 85% of all students and trainees assisted by DAC countries were being educated or trained in the donor country. Proponents of such schemes believe that such programmes bring significant political, economic and perhaps cultural advantages to the donor in addition to the benefits to the recipient countries. They also argue that the lack of local facilities and local expertise as against the extensive and skilled resources available in the developed countries fully justifies such programmes which should be greatly expanded.

At the other extreme are those who argue that such programmes are often of little real benefit to the developing countries and that in some cases they may do more harm than good. They point out that selection procedures are bad; that frequently the study fellow or trainee cannot apply what he has learnt, and even

if he is well selected for an appropriate course, his presence at home is more important than the training. Such critics also point to the much higher cost of study and training overseas and the danger that lavish provision of study and training opportunities abroad may inhibit the growth of indigenous institutions and possibly contribute to the "brain drain".

The truth lies between these extremes. Surveys and evaluation of training programmes abroad have shown that in general they have been used reasonably and responsibly, have produced remarkably little wastage and have been of considerable benefit to the recipient country. Selection procedures of both recipients and donors, however, can be greatly improved. Training courses and fellowship programmes need to be better and continuously evaluated to ensure that they are meeting the present needs of the recipients and that they have not become stale or, because of vested interests, been continued after their original need has disappeared.

Training in the country of origin

In 1967, the numbers of students and trainees directly financed by the major donors were: France 2,576, Germany 1,040, US 146, UK nil. While it can be argued that such local costs should normally be provided by the developing country, there is a strong case for donors helping to provide the skilled manpower needed to establish or support local training schemes. However, apart from the staff needed in local training institutions, donors could do much more to provide ad hoc teams particularly to train trainers in fields such as organization and method, training and staff inspection in the public service and in middle and lower level industrial skills. One of the most important areas for the improvement of local skills is to be found in the provision of local institutions, either new or reconstituted, which are specially designed or adapted to meet the manpower needs of individual countries or a group of countries. Such aid is, however, usually given on a rather haphazard basis with too little evaluation of need, purpose or programme.

Third country training and education

The U.S., France, and Germany finance substantial programmes of third country training and education, mainly in developing countries. The French programme is restricted to students, the German programme to trainees (mainly industrial trainees) while the US programme is divided between the two. Third country training is particularly important when the training required is neither available locally, nor in a developed country. This normally applies only to certain specialized fields, e.g. tropical agriculture. But even if the education and training are available in a developed country, education or training in another developing country is often more relevant, apart from other gains such as lower costs and avoidance of cultural shock.

For political reasons many developing countries are reluctant to accept third country training facilities, and there is also a general reluctance to rely on neighbouring countries for training facilities. There is a tendency by students and trainees to regard training in a developing country as inferior to training in a developed country, though this is often an excuse to conceal a preference for travel. Despite these difficulties, all donors and particularly multilateral donors, could do more to investigate a greater use of manpower aid for third country training.

SUPPLEMENTATION OF LOCAL SKILLS

The use of foreign experts and advisers

Between 1962 and 1967 the number of experts and advisers (*i.e.* non-operational personnel) financed by OECD countries for missions in developing countries increased from just over 6,000 to nearly 18,000 - a sharp increase notwithstanding some re-classification or replacement of operational personnel. It is no surprise that such an increase brought a decrease in quality. Many expatriate experts and advisers undoubtedly know too little about the country they are advising and many are often recruited on a faute de mieux basis.

But it is easy to make the foreign expert the scapegoat for the failure of his mission while in fact much of the blame might rest with those who requested his services without really thinking out why he was required, and with those responsible for recruiting him and preparing (or rather no preparing) him for his mission. Too often a request for an expert is an excuse to put off unpalatable policy decisions, or the request for service is vague and ill-defined. Some experts even find on arrival that their job is entirely different from what they were told on appointment, or that it has already been done.

Many expert missions have failed however, not because of the lack of appropriate professional expertise of the expert, but because of personality defects. The relationship between a foreign expert and the local administration is often a very sensitive one, particularly if the local administrators feel that the appointment of the expert is a reflection on their own capabilities. Thus qualities such as tact, tolerance, adaptability, persistence and above all "understanding" (in the sense of being able to see problems and suggest solutions through the eyes of and with the intellectual and cultural attitudes of the local people) are often as important or even more important than professional skills. It is not easy for recruiting agencies to assess these qualities, particularly if they are engaging experts whom they have not previously employed. Nevertheless, they should do all they can to obtain some outside objective assessments of the personal qualities of applicants who are short-listed for missions, since even one bad appointment can give rise to serious

political difficulties. Careful job briefing and suitable orientation courses can also do a great deal to prepare the expert for his assignment.

Bad conditions of service, such as poor accommodation, may lead to an expert terminating his mission prematurely; or even if this does not happen, an expert may not be fully efficient because of his preoccupation with such matters. A good deal more could be done to standardize conditions of service for foreign experts - a task for UNDP. Finally the use of experts and advisers would be improved if more use was made of lessons learned from previous assignments. Unfortunately, many donors or agencies do not attempt to carry out any systematic evaluation of such aid. Often experts are not even debriefed at the end of their missions.

NEED FOR IMPROVEMENT IN THE ORGANISATION OF MANPOWER AID

Recipients

One of the misconceptions about manpower aid is that because it is usually grant-aided it costs little to the recipient. In fact, the recipients are normally expected to provide a large proportion of the direct costs (e.g. local salaries, housing, office accommodation, transport, medical facilities). In addition, there are a number of important indirect costs, such as the time of local officials and counterparts. Finally, there are opportunity costs to be considered, involving not only alternative uses of the recipient's scarce resources, but also alternative uses of the aid resources. For these reasons, it is important for the recipients to ensure that manpower aid is well planned and organized, if only to make certain that the resources involved are not wasted because of inadequate preparation.

There are therefore strong arguments for encouraging recipient countries to establish machinery for planning, organizing, controlling and evaluating manpower aid. Perhaps one of the top priorities for manpower aid should be to help in the establishment of such machinery. Co-ordination of aid is often left to individual ministries and departments to arrange for the manpower that they require (or more usually are offered) in the particular fields with which they are concerned. Although such delegation may be good in that it allows more flexibility and faster action than might be the case if the administration of all manpower aid were centralized, in the long run such delegation probably leads to a serious misallocation of scarce resources.

Bilateral Donors

Most bilateral donors tend to underadminister manpower aid compared to capital aid. The main reasons for this are the diffuseness of manpower aid, its dispersion over a large number of different agencies and the fact that each individual project costs relatively little. Moreover, manpower aid tends to be

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much more complex than capital aid and it is much more difficult for a general policy-maker to obtain the necessary background and expertise required to plan and control a large programme than it is to plan and control an equivalent amount of capital aid. As a result different sections of manpower aid programmes often expand or contract for reasons which are not related to the manpower needs of the developing countries. Although manpower aid usually involves very heavy donor staff costs - for example, in one large donor country, technical assistance absorbs about two-thirds of the staff but costs about one-fifth of the total aid programme¹ - most of the staff involved are usually of low grade concerned with routine operations such as the placing of trainees.

Aid organizations are, however, usually reluctant to take the necessary steps to coordinate and rationalise their manpower aid particularly when, as in many of the donor countries, such aid is provided by a wide variety of governmental and non-governmental agencies. It is also often argued that, as an important feature of manpower aid is to be able to respond quickly to a wide variety of small ad hoc requests, this necessary speed and flexibility would be lost if all such aid were subject to more centralized planning.

Another of the problems which inhibit the improvement of bilateral manpower aid is that the manpower aid relationship is usually even more sensitive than other aid relationships. It is often more difficult for a country to acknowledge a shortage of skilled manpower than a shortage of capital. Moreover, capital aid can be largely anonymous and the negotiation of such aid involves relatively few people. Manpower aid directly involves hundreds of thousands, and the very presence of the foreign expert usually enjoying a high standard of living, is a constant reminder of this donor-recipient relationship. Because the manpower aid relationship is a particularly sensitive one, some donors, anxious to avoid charges of neo-colonialism, have been much more reluctant to take positive steps to plan and control manpower aid than they have been to plan and control capital aid.

Multilateral Donors

There are many practical arguments for leaving the day-to-day provision of manpower aid in the hands of the bilateral donors. Bilateral agencies have direct access to the sources of recruitment and the provision of most of the training in developed countries. They can usually supply such aid much faster and more easily than multilateral agencies. There is therefore little reason for multilateral agencies to establish their own recruiting agencies for manpower aid which merely compete with the bilateral organizations for the same restricted source of supply (competition which merely tends to increase salaries). The UN and its agencies

¹ Technical Assistance and the Needs of Developing Countries
(OECD, 1968), p. 30.

should concentrate on fields of manpower aid for which the bilateral donors either have no special advantage or have little motivation to help. Examples are the provision of third country training or regional and global projects such as the establishment of regional training institutions and particularly those which link up the aid concentration areas of individual donors and different types of manpower aid.

However, although there are good arguments for leaving the main supply of manpower aid on a bilateral basis this does not mean that there should not be more multilateral planning of aid. Ideally efficient coordination of manpower aid should be essentially the responsibility of recipient governments, but few developing countries yet possess adequate planning and administrative machinery to achieve this. Some developing countries might therefore welcome the establishment of consortia or consultative groups on manpower aid in which the UNDP could play the same role as the World Bank or the IMF in consortia or consultative groups on capital aid. It would be unrealistic to assume that donors would be willing to allow such international meetings to determine the exact shape and size of their bilateral manpower aid programmes, but the main purpose of such machinery would be to hold high level policy meetings about every two years to improve the supply of information about a country's manpower needs, to assess past manpower aid, to give details of existing commitments and, most important of all, to establish priorities and guidelines for future policy.