ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR WESTERN ASIA

Fifth Session
2-6 October 1978
Amman, Jordan

Item 6 (a) of the Provisional Agenda

THE ARAB REGIONAL DOCUMENTATION CENTRE
FOR ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Note of the Executive Secretary

78-2078
THE ARAB REGIONAL DOCUMENTATION CENTRE FOR ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

(ARDECES)

Note of the Executive Secretary

1. At its first session the Commission adopted resolution 1(I) approving the programme of work for the year 1975 which included a proposal for the establishment of a documentation centre for the ECWA region in support of research activities on the problems of the region serving all concerned with the promotion of development of Western Asia.

2. ECWA's project proposal for the establishment of the centre was submitted for comments to the Arab Fund for Economic and Social Development (AFESD) and the Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development (KFAED) which agreed to assist financially in the implementation of the envisaged phases of the project with the proviso that pre-project activities should be extended to include all Arab countries.

3. Within the context of ECWA resolution 14 (II) on 'Regional Co-operation', the Executive Secretary discussed with the Executive Secretary of the Economic Commission for Africa the possibility to extend the proposed survey facilities to member countries of ECA. Agreement was reached to this effect.

4. The first phase of the project - consisting of fact-finding surveys of information and documentation facilities - was completed in 1976 with respect to ECWA member states and in 1977 with respect to the Arab countries in North Africa.

The findings and conclusions of these surveys which are annexed to this Note summarize the various problems with regard to information infrastructure and the present regional and international co-operation efforts in this.

5. On the basis of the surveys carried out as well as information on the functioning of existing information and documentation centres and systems, a draft feasibility study was prepared by a consultant. The feasibility study does not only analyse the relationships and linkages between the proposed documentation
centre (ARDCES) and existing national centres and/or focal points and international centres but includes also a full-fledged manual for the operation of the proposed centre's documentation and information service system (ARDSYS). In addition the financial and human resources requirements for the centre's functioning at both regional and national levels have been determined. The Secretariat considers that with the completion of the feasibility study the preparations for the establishment of the documentation centre have reached an advanced stage and that decisions are now required on the actual establishment of the centre.

6. The Secretariat has already taken the following steps in follow-up to the draft feasibility study.

   a) The draft feasibility study is being analysed by the secretariat in terms of its implication for ECWA.

   b) Comments on the fact-finding surveys and draft study have been requested from the Arab Fund for Economic and Social Development (AFESD) and the Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development (KFAED) which both sponsored the surveys and feasibility study. The comments of the funds will be incorporated into the study. In addition the views of the funds on follow-up have been sought.

7. Having considered the nature of the regional dimensions of the proposed documentation centre, the secretariat is of the view that the holding of a regional intergovernmental expert meeting is called for. Such a meeting would constitute the first step towards the project's implementation.

    The expert meeting would in general consider follow-up measures with a view to implementing the feasibility study and would in particular (i) study the implications of the Centre's establishment at national levels and make recommendations in this regard and (ii) study coordination aspects of the project with other efforts in this field.

    In order to ensure coordination with related projects, the Secretariat proposes to invite Arab and regional organizations concerned to the intergovernmental expert meeting.
8. Since no follow-up activities concerning the actual establishment of the centre have been provided for in the 1978-1979 Programme Budget, the Commission may wish to consider ways and means of financing such activities. The regional financing institutions could for example be approached in this regard.
Annex

CONCLUSIONS AND FINDINGS OF THE SURVEY

A.1. Outstanding Problems of the Region with Respect to Information Services:

1.1 The Arab region which as a population of some 140 million and an average annual population growth of 3.1 does not have an adequate number of research and development centres, nor information facilities which normally would play a vital role in technical, economic and social development.

By comparison with other developed and developing regions, as can be clearly seen from Table I., the Arab region needs more and better facilities and services in the field of information.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Population (000) 1975</th>
<th>Annual population rate growth</th>
<th>No. of social sciences publications</th>
<th>No. of information facilities 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>U.S.</td>
<td>211.909</td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td>8,594</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U.S.S.R.</td>
<td>255.037</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>20,269</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brazil</td>
<td>104.243</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>2,970</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>India</td>
<td>586.056</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>5,728</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pakistan</td>
<td>68.214</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latin America</td>
<td>324.092</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>5,807</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arab Region</td>
<td>141.701</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>903</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Africa (excluding Arab states)</td>
<td>303.204</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>1,826</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Therefore serious efforts are required to establish information documentation and research centres.

2/ including only National Universities and special libraries.
1.2 Most of those in charge of the organizations covered by the survey were fully aware of the need for and importance of organized information exchange but because, in general, no national policy-making body connected with information was available, the development of the proper machinery and services has not been possible. (cf. Table II: National Policy).

1.3 A few countries have reached an advanced stage in building their information infrastructure, whereas others have just begun and some are still in the preparatory stage. Absence of legislation and information infrastructure and policy in development plans constitute a handicap to the progress of information services and consequently to the advancement of research and development in those countries. (See Table II: National Policy and Body concerned with National Information Infrastructure).

1.4 There is a serious shortage of skilled and specialized personnel in the information field. This shortage seriously affects the organization and dissemination of information. (cf. Tables II: Manpower and Training).

1.5 In most instances, co-ordination and co-operation among the various national organizations dealing with information and documentation services, are absent or weak and have seriously hampered the processing and dissemination of information, thus leading to duplication of efforts and wastage of human and financial resources. In short, regulation of communication among national centres on the one hand and regional and international services on the other hand is almost non-existent. (cf. Tables II: Needs and Problems).

1.6 In some countries, the acquisition and release of information is restricted and the procedures are too involved, thus creating bottlenecks in the flow of information to the great majority of users.

1.7 There is no standardization of translated terminology in the Arabic language. As a result of this, each country is using different terminology, which causes confusion at the user level. On the other hand, publications in Arabic of technical and socio-economic literature are scarce.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Main Policy in Process</th>
<th>Years In Process</th>
<th>Reports and Documents Achieved</th>
<th>Type of Information</th>
<th>Media and Sources</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
1.8 There is a lack of standards, specifications and procedures for library and information systems in the region such as processing material, cataloguing, thesauri, building bibliographies and exchange and control of information.

1.9 Current awareness and other services, if they exist, are on a small scale or not properly disseminated among users. This also explains the fact that very few users are aware of the advanced technology for transfer of information.

1.10 There are no definite procedures to acquire and negotiate for procurement of library and information systems, equipment and hardware.

1.11 There are also a few information systems in the region particularly of the standard (including computerized and automated) types, as well as a shortage of trained personnel in this field.

2. Needs and Requirements:

2.1 In view of the above, establishment of more and encouragement of existing research and information facilities (e.g. documentation and information centres, libraries and research institutes) are needed to assist in the techno-socio-economic development of the region.

2.2 More efforts should be exerted to create information infrastructures in the countries. The importance of information services in the development of the country should be underlined by the authorities in their development plans and information-awareness activities should also be encouraged.

2.3 Training programmes and curricula are badly needed. The subjects of information, library science and documentation should be included, as a separate discipline, in university education, thus permitting the granting of degrees to future information personnel. (cf. Table II: Manpower and Training).

2.4 There is a pressing need for the establishment of national bodies to undertake the translation of foreign literature and for the co-ordination of such activities with those of other Arab countries.
2.5 Proper attention should be given to the interlinking and establishment of formal contract procedure among the various information and documentation facilities within each country, possibly with the designation of one or more to act as national focal point(s) whose main purpose should be to co-ordinate the activities of the various centres and to establish formal effective and economic links between the country and the outside world of information.

2.6 Compilation of directories of information services available in each country in order to achieve an effective linkage between national and international information services.
RECOMMENDATIONS

Major Role of the Proposed Documentation Centre in Providing Solutions to the Outstanding Problems and the Needs and Requirements of the Arab Region.

3. Establishment of a Regional Documentation Centre:

3.1 The establishment of a regional documentation centre is strongly recommended. The purpose of the centre should be to achieve the following:

3.1.1 Organization of training programmes, seminars and workshops with a view to increasing the number of suitably qualified workers and users and standardizing techniques in the field of technical, economic and social information. (cf. Table II: Training of Manpower).

3.1.2 Motivation and assistance in the creation of a regional network and the interlinking of the national information systems and services with available UN and other international information services. (See Figure I).

3.1.3 Promotion of training programmes among the countries of the region through bilateral and multilateral agreements on information acquisition, dissemination and procedures. (cf. Table III: Needs and Problems).

3.1.4 Encouragement of the pooling of resources and sharing of experience.

3.1.5 Processing technical, economic and social information to satisfy the particular needs of the region.

3.1.6 Encouragement of the formulation of compatible national information handling procedures to advance the flow of information throughout the countries of the region.
Proposed Regional Information Network

Proposed National Focal Point

Regional Documentation Area

Proposed Regional and Sub-Regional

ARDGES

ISIS AGRIS

Others

Other International Systems that input to ARDGES

International Systems inputting to centre

Regional Focal Points

National existing focal points

To be determined on non-existing focal points in the Arab Region
3.1.7 Assisting in the establishment of regional networks, (see Figure I) and the development of information tools, directories, bibliographies, manuals and thesauri so as to ensure a more effective utilization of the available information.

3.1.8 To bridge current gaps in services at a national level.

3.1.9 Translation of important technical, social and economic documentation and literature into Arabic and the standardization and development of relevant terminologies in the above-mentioned fields to serve as a source of reference for national and local institutions in the region.

3.2 In order to assist in the achievement of the above aims, it is recommended that a specialized unit at ECMA be established to carry out the implementation and future organization of the Regional Documentation Centre.

4.1 The Proposed Arab Regional Documentation Centre for Economic and Social Development (ARDCES)

It is envisaged and recommended that in addition to its major role as an Arab Regional Documentation Centre, ARDCES will be providing linkages and network facilities to enable the available information services in the region to communicate with each other, either through ARDCES or directly using directories and other tools for this purpose. It is also strongly recommended that ARDCES will include efficient regional acquisition and dissemination information functions.

4.1 Users of ARDCES:

In the design of any information system, it is essential to identify the potential users and to establish their needs in order to ensure that the substance of the information offered by the system is indeed what the users need, and to also ensure that the form of the information offered by the system is that which the users find the most convenient and acceptable. In other words, information systems ought to be users or mission-oriented as much as possible. In the survey that was conducted in the Arab countries, the users, or the potential users in the techno-social and economic development fields were identified to be:
4.1.1 Policy-makers in the Arab countries who are involved in or assisting the socio-economic development, at both national and regional levels, such as ministers, director generals and assistants, directors and programmers of Arab regional development organizations.

4.1.2 Planners of programmes relating to socio-economic and technical projects as well as others responsible for the formulation of social and economic plans, indicators, forecasting and pre-investment studies, techno-economic and social surveys, scanning of the socio-economic and socio-political studies, assessment performance and evaluation of projects and programmes, example, consulting firms, national and private banks, regional or sub-regional and statistical organizations in the field.

4.1.3 Managers, advisors and assistants of development projects and programmes in the region, consulting firms private or public.

4.1.4 Researchers and teachers, as well as those involved in management of research projects and programmes at the national and regional levels, example, students, professors, experts, consultants of United Nations, Arab Institutes and governmental organizations.

4.1.5 Financiers who provide resources and technical assistance for development projects and programmes and also those who provide consultancy and advisory services, example, central agriculture, national and industrial development banks.

4.1.6 Information services (Libraries, documentation and information centres, data banks) that disseminate information about development policies, plans, programmes and projects to the population at large or to particular sectors.

4.1.7 Other relevant institutions; ECWA research staff; International experts.
4.2 Scope and Subject Coverage:

The Centre should be oriented to the economic and social information or
development literature. The scope can be well defined from the findings of the
surveys. Thus, the information needs concern the following:

4.2.1 Basic factual information and data relating to existing economic
and social conditions including information on production, consumption,
distribution, trade and other transactions for the individual Arab countries
and for the region, as well as information on other developing countries.

4.2.2 Forecasts on socio-economic conditions, projection and statistical
data, particularly with regard to professional and technical manpower within
and outside the Arab world. Information on the brain drain and factors
affecting it in each Arab country as well as in the Arab and similar
developing regions.

4.2.3 Studies and reports of a national nature containing description
and analyses of existing economic, social, political and legislative
situations.

4.2.4 Official statements, commentaries, plans, papers, journals and
periodicals of governments, banks, funds and investment agencies, and
R & D centres, as well as professional institutions and agencies.

4.2.5 Official bilateral and multilateral agreements, treaties,
conferences and seminars relating to co-ordinating and co-operation among
the countries of the region.

4.2.6 Technical literature, including translations of manuals on
machines, tools, patents, technical newsletters, technological processes,
price lists and other relevant information needed for assessment and
feasibility studies of development projects.

4.2.7 Information on modern management and administrative services.
4.2.8 Courses, curricula and other material relating to technical and professional training, school, university and higher education relevant to the needs of the region, also documentation, systems and services outside the region, as well as reference material such as directories, bibliographies and manuals.

4.3 Over and above the points already mentioned previously, the typical functions of the ARDCES visualized below and based on the findings of the survey are regarded as being essential needs in the field of information for most of the countries visited. (See Figure 2).

4.4 Equipment:

The Centre will need to be provided with all the appropriate equipment necessary for the discharge of its functions in the most efficient and proper manner. This equipment will be specified in as much detail as possible in the project document.

4.5 Staff:

The Centre will be manned by specialized library personnel and information scientists together with subject specialists in the Centre's substantive departments. Details of the staffing of the documentation centre will be discussed in the feasibility study.

4.6 Focal points of the Documentation Centre:

The survey has indicated important focal points for ARDCES (see Table III) This will be dealt with fully in the feasibility study.

*****************************
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Suggested National Focal Points</th>
<th>Suggested National Focal Points</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1- Algeria</td>
<td>National Centre for Economic and Social Documentation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Scientific, Technical and Transfer of Technology Information Centre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2- Bahrain</td>
<td>No Focal Point envisaged (contact all facilities)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3- Democratic Yemen</td>
<td>No Focal Point envisaged (contact all facilities)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>General Egyptian Book Organization.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4- Egypt</td>
<td>Various focal points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5- Iraq</td>
<td>Jordan University Royal Scientific Society</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6- Jordan</td>
<td>Various focal points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7- Kuwait</td>
<td>To be identified</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8- Lebanon</td>
<td>To be identified</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9- Libya</td>
<td>To be identified</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Various focal points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10- Morocco</td>
<td>National Documentation Centre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11- Mauritania</td>
<td>To be identified</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12- Oman</td>
<td>To be identified</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13- Qatar</td>
<td>To be identified</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14- Saudi Arabia</td>
<td>Central Planning Organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15- Somalia</td>
<td>Documentation Centre State Planning Commission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16- Sudan</td>
<td>National Documentation Centre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17- Syria</td>
<td>To be identified</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18- Tunis</td>
<td>Centre for National Documentation National Library</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19- United Arab Emirates</td>
<td>To be identified</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20- Yemen</td>
<td>To be identified</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Arab Republic</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5. Typical Tasks of the proposed ARDSES: (See Figure 2)

5.1 The main task of ARDSES is to provide information to its various users (ECWA member countries and the other Arab States). In addition, it will act as a clearing house for regional documents, reports and other publications. The mode of information exchange will be active and not just passive. This means that in order to provide information, the centre has to collect, process, analyse, disseminate and publish information efficiently and rapidly. The media of information may be either paper, microfiche and microfilm or other forms of reprography, magnetic material or visual display tubes, etc. Processing the information may be done through appropriate system techniques and equipment and analysing the information may comprise of, (a) automated indexing, abstraction or annotation of documents, (b) building country and regional subjects, title, author and project bibliographies and (c) preparing information reports and other profiles requested by user countries.

5.2 Translation Services: As mentioned in paragraph (1.7) one of the outstanding problems of the region is the lack of proper and adequate translation facilities, procedures and general agreements. ARDSES should bridge the gap in providing efficient and economic translation services and publication of translated works.

5.3 Preparation of information systems and procedures: In order to achieve its objectives efficiently ARDSES would rely to some extent on international systems and procedures which means that it would be engaged in preparing and translating when necessary directories, manuals, profiles, thesauri and listings of its own materials, as well as of those of other national and regional users.

5.4 Publication: The centre would publish reports of its activities, indexes and other material relating to its functions such as catalogues of its holdings, translated information and manuals, directories, manuals, thesauri, bibliography, brochures and directories of services linked with the centre, and/or available at the national, regional and international levels.
Structure of the Arab Regional Documentation Centre for Economic and Social Development

- Management
- Operations Control
- Interfacing and Public Relations
- To and from user countries
- To and from international and sub-regional centres.

- Development and Training
- Information and Data Processing
- Research and Statistics

- Reprography
- Publications
- Binding
- Press
- Library

- Translation

---

- Image
- Text
- Diagram
Functions of Each Unit of ARDCES:

6.1. The Management (1) (See Figure 2 for unit numbers)
   (a) To administer the Centre
   (b) To prepare its budget
   (c) To prepare the work programme
   (d) To follow up on general services activities.

6.2. Operations Control (2)
   To ensure smooth flow of internal activities and maximum efficiency
   of each and every department of the Centre.

6.3. Interfacing (3)
   (a) To link ARDCES with national focal points in the Arab region.
       (See Table III).
   (b) To link ARDCES with sub-regional, regional and international networks.
   (c) To keep records of all incoming and outgoing information such as
       mail, telex and telegram.
   (d) To distribute incoming requests to the departments concerned, to
       convert these requests to the standard format used by ARDCES and/or
       international services linked to it.
   (e) To compile outgoing responses in a format usable by the original
       requester of information.
   (f) To refer users to other sources of information.

6.4. Development and Training (4)
   (a) To prepare courses and curricula.
   (b) To establish study standards and specifications.
   (c) To establish programmes and curricula for:
      i    short courses
      ii   in service training
      iii  workshops
      iv   seminars
6.5 Informatics and Data Processing (5)
(a) Acquisition and dissemination techniques.
(b) Processing and analysis of information.
(c) Indexing
(d) Abstracting
(e) Building bibliographies
(f) Other informatics and data processing services related to the objectives of ARDCES.

6.6 Reprography (6)
(a) Photocopying
(b) Microfiche/film processing
(c) Photography

6.7 Research and Statistics (7)
(a) To conduct research for users.
(b) To conduct research for the work of the centre, standards, specifications.
(c) To compile statistics on issues of vital importance to the region. Example - Statistics on skilled manpower
Brain drain
Migration, etc.
(d) To prepare manuals, handbooks, guidelines etc. for information users.
(e) To compile directories of information services to be used as built-up facilities.

6.8 Publications, Binding And Press (8, 9, 10)
(a) To publish work of the centre.
(b) To publish translated books, directories, manuals, standards etc.
6.9 **Translation** (11)

(a) To translate manuals, standards.
(b) To translate reference books and other important publications into Arabic for dissemination among the Arab countries.
(c) Other translation activities.

6.10 **Library** (12)

(a) To collect material for the Library.
(b) To classify the collected material.
(c) To offer user-reader service.
(d) Other library functions.

7. The ARDCES should serve the entire Arab development community and should take future expansions and requirements for at least the next decade into account.