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14932



Distr.
LIMITED

ID/WG.450/1
16 October 1985

ENGLISH

United Nations Industrial Development Organization

Round Table Discussion of an
Advisory Group of INTIB Users

Vienna, Austria, 23-27 September 1985

**LINKING ULTIMATE USERS OF INDUSTRIAL
INFORMATION TO SOURCES
OF SUPPLY***

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There is great need for technological information in the developing countries, but the actual demand is generally much less, and one cannot be sure that all information supplied will eventually be used for valid industrial purposes. Efforts to make such information available to developing countries, therefore should keep under continuous examination the procedures and agents in the developing countries which can act as intermediaries, whenever necessary, between the ultimate user of information, and the one that places the demand for it from internal or external sources of supply.

In many cases, the ultimate user is not capable of identifying the information that would be useful to him, and would not know how and where to get it. Over selling by supply (mechanisms) leads frequently to non-real demands for information which is not used actually. Much improvements can be accomplished as regards the external sources of supply (which are generally well classified and organised) and as regards the techniques and mechanisms of supply and delivery. Much more is needed to understand the mechanisms and procedures in the developing countries, through which the need for information

is created and becomes effective demand from identifiable sources, and the opposite flow by which information available reaches the ultimate user and is actually used.

To assume that the one who needs is the one who demands is only true in a minority of cases, e.g. scientific research. In most of the techno-economic industrial activities, such as project preparation and evaluation, process improvements, production design, management and forward planning, need exists within a context, which calls for a number of actions, before it is formulated in the form of a demand to information sources. These intermediary actions have to be performed by someone who is simultaneously familiar with the context within which the need arises, and with the possible sources of supply of information. In setting up information systems, careful attention is given to the (technicalities) of hardware, software and assembly of data. Equal attention should be accorded to another (specialist), namely the one who knows, at the local level, the eventual users and relate them to the available suppliers.

As examples, we mention three industrial activities namely production and management at the level of existing enterprises, industrial investment, project identification,

preparation and approval, and industrial macro-policy analysis and planning. In a medium level developing country there are numerous production enterprises, investment and financing agencies, and policy-makers and planners at different levels up to the level of national policy-makers. For simplification, we assume the existence of (intermediaries) as outlined above for each one of these groups of activities. First, the actual authorities in each area, are usually capable by themselves to identify and reach much of the required information. It requires (an intermediary) to help them to find other information, or to suggest to them the examination of other proposals not identified by them (we may call such an intermediary - a consultant or expert). The consultant himself, would have to search for information which has been identified, and to seek suggestions from a more (specialised) source, whether internal or external. Consultants and specialised sources, usually exert efforts to (market) their information and the need for the same intermediaries is equally important in the case of reverse flow of information. In each one of these steps, a certain degree of trust and confidentiality between partners is required. Open information is only one part of what is required.

To build such mechanisms and train people to act accordingly, in order to create a link between sources of industrial information and the ultimate beneficiaries from it, are functions which are complementary and essential to the success of information and data banks, whether local or international. It would be unfair to assume that the industrial and technological information systems, would succeed by themselves in creating the necessary linking machineries.

The design of technological information systems to assist the developing countries, by necessity, follows a concept of needs (but not demands) for such information, and is naturally influenced by the availability of sources of data internationally. Efforts should be initiated at the local level in the developing countries concerned, to build up the linking mechanisms and train persons to use them, while in the meantime establishing a dialogue with the international systems to increase their usefulness to the developing countries.

The international organisations concerned, owing to internal division of labour and narrow terms of reference may not be able to contact directly the spectrum of organisations involved in the chain of links required, but undoubtedly will be able to solicit the support of the appropriate local authorities.