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ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR LATIN AMERICA
Office for the Caribbean

CARIBBEAN DEVELOPMENT AND CO-OPERATION COMMITTEE

REPORT ON THE TRAINING WORKSHOP FOR
LIBRARY AND INFORMATION PERSONNEL IN
THE MINISTRIES OF PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT

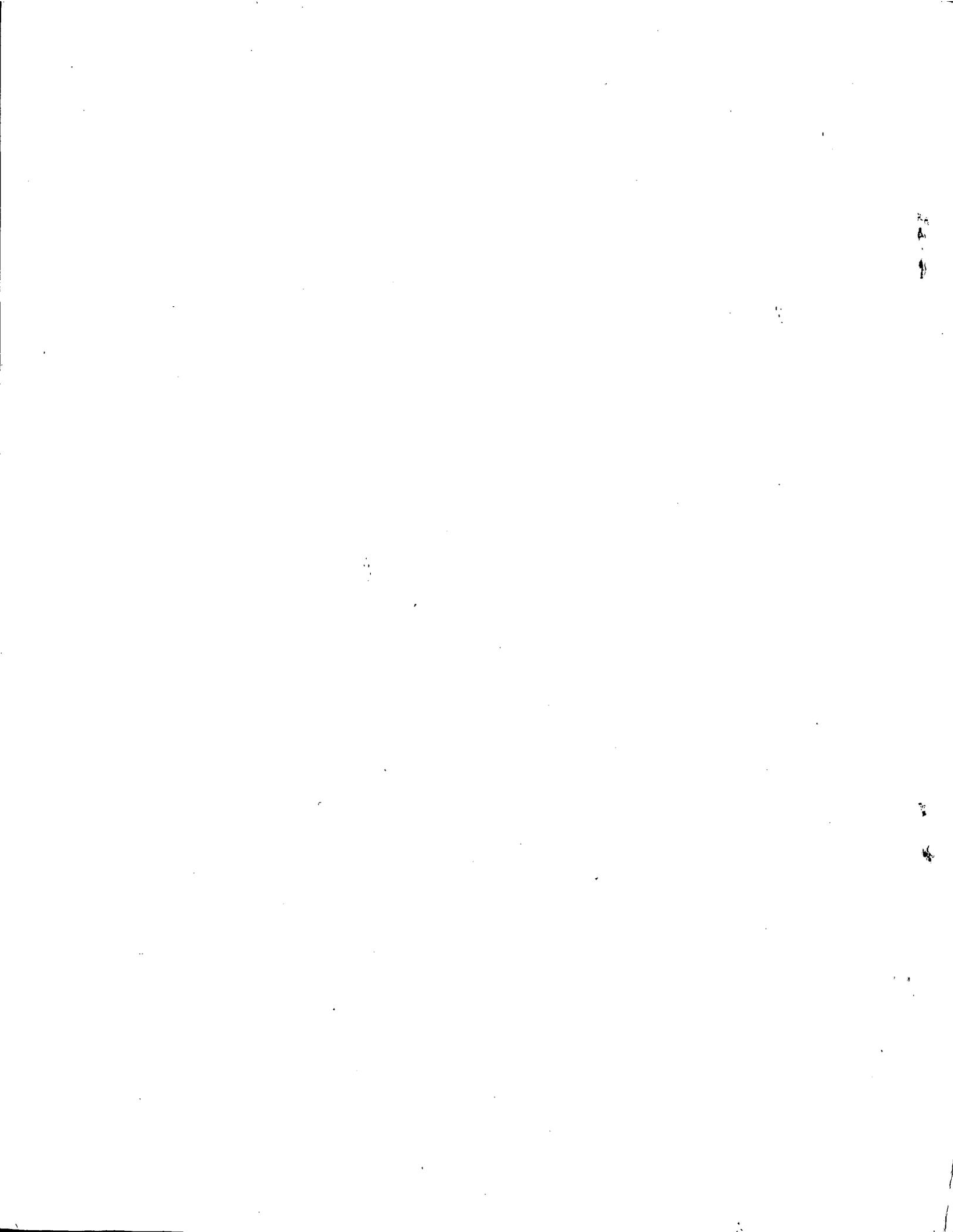
(28 May - 8 June 1979, Trinidad and Tobago)

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UNITED NATIONS

ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR LATIN AMERICA Office for the Caribbean



Report on the Training Workshop for Library
and Information Personnel in the Ministries
of Planning and Development, held in Port-
of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago from the
23 May - 8 June 1979

Background

The Caribbean Development and Co-operation Committee (CDCC) identified Social and Economic Planning as a priority for promoting the development and integration processes in the Caribbean.

It also mandated the establishment of a Caribbean Information System based on effective links of co-operation among library and information units covering sectors relevant to regional and national priorities.

In addition, the First Meeting of Planning Officials in the Caribbean, held last January, emphasized the problem of inadequate information as one of the main obstacles to development planning.

In order to overcome these difficulties and to expedite the process of information exchange among Caribbean countries, the Committee at its Fourth Session in Suriname, endorsed the positive steps taken by the CDCC Secretariat to establish a decentralized Information Network in the field of Economic and Social Planning and to assist in strengthening the planning information infra-structure at the national level.

As a first phase in the development of the network, the CDCC Secretariat has sought assistance to provide training for persons in the Ministries of Planning and Development. This will enable them to organize their collections and provide the Caribbean Documentation Centre with bibliographic worksheets of their country's literature for input to the Caribbean Planning Bibliography.

Participation

The governments of the countries which participate in the CDCC and the main Caribbean integration bodies were requested to send a Librarian or an information person who was or will be in charge of the Information Unit of the National Planning Office.

Ten participants from the following countries attended the Workshop: Barbados, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Dominica, Haiti, Jamaica, Antigua, St. Kitts, Grenada and Guyana.

Three representatives from CARICOM, the Ministry of Finance (Planning and Development) of Trinidad and Tobago and the Caribbean Documentation Centre attended sessions at their convenience.

Objectives

The Workshop was designed to:

- enable personnel engaged in library and information work to establish and/or strengthen information facilities which will support the planning process at the national level;
- reinforce the CDCC principle of self-reliance and the mobilization of local resources for the overall development of the sub-region;
- standardize procedures for cataloguing and indexing the planning literature produced in Caribbean countries in order to ensure compatibility and facilitate the flow of information among national centres and the Caribbean Documentation Centre.

Subjects of Study

- Information as a resource for planning and development.
- Techniques for identifying current and potential users of economic and social planning information.
- Methods for assessing and evaluating the information needs of these users.

- Scope of the Network - types of information to be stored; institutions as producers of information; methods and mechanisms for collecting priority material, especially unpublished and non-conventional documents.
- Bibliographic control of documents and other problems of access; use of a common input sheet; principles of indexing, vocabulary control, search strategies.
- Centralized and decentralized processing, using the OECD Macrothesaurus and the ISIS System.
- Storage, retrieval and dissemination mechanisms.

Method of Work

The Workshop was conducted by Ximena Feliú, Information Training Expert attached to CEPAL's Latin American Centre for Economic and Social Documentation in Santiago, Chile. Theoretical presentations were followed by round-table discussions, and practice sessions. The gradual transfer of knowledge was planned in order to permit each participant to apply in practice sessions, the concepts, ideas or theories presented according to the dynamics of the programme's content. This methodology was developed over a 9-day period, with a total of fifty three hours, from which twenty three hours were dedicated to theoretical presentations; seven hours to discussions; twenty two hours and thirty minutes to practice sessions and half-an-hour to evaluation.

Evaluation

Consisted of two parts, the first - related with the workshop organization, content of programme, level of treatment and quality of presentation, while the second - tried to measure the knowledge absorption degree of each participant.

Results of End-of-Workshop Evaluation

The objectives of the Workshop were accomplished to a great extent when it is considered that 60% of the participants' expectations were completely met, 30% almost completely and 10% partially. In terms of their Institution's goals, 60% considered their participation to be extremely valuable while the remaining 40% were of the opinion that it was quite valuable which, in practical terms means that they will be able to establish and/or strengthen information facilities to support ^{the} ~~of~~ planning process at the national level and reinforce the CDCC principle of self-reliance and the mobilization of local resources for the overall development of the sub-region.

Concerning the acquisition of knowledge for standardization of procedures for cataloguing and indexing literature on planning in the Caribbean, 30% of the participants described the quality of instruction as very good and 70% as good.

The discussion and question periods were considered adequate by 90% of the participants, while the time allotted for practical sessions was adjudged to be right by 60% of the participants with the other 40% expressing a desire for more time. In view of the fact that only 3 participants had previous experience in Information processing techniques, 60% represented a very good average absorption rate of knowledge directed to the application of techniques in the analysis of documents. This assessment is related to the 90% that considered the level of subject treatment about right and the 80% who expressed the view that workshop accommodation was satisfactory.

With regard to the content of the programme and the material presented, 40% viewed the quality as excellent, another 40% as satisfactory and the other 20% as varied. The absolute novelty of the material was expressed by 60% while the rest indicated varying degrees. Material presented comprised CDCC documents and supporting technical documents and diagrams related to the analysis, storage, retrieval and dissemination of Information. Most of the documents were new since they were carefully selected for the workshop based on the review of a very extensive and specialized bibliography in order to condense and thereby facilitate a ready understanding of it.

Referring to the quality of presentations, mention must be made of the high intellectual level of those invited from the University of the West Indies and other local institutions to the workshop, a fact which contributed to the view expressed by 40% that presentations were excellent.

Although 50% of the participants did not give any suggestions for possible improvement of the workshop, those that did, suggested having good interpreting equipment, more practice time and the use of the Documentation Centre.

It is clear from these suggestions that the organization and programme content of the workshop achieved the goals and objectives expected by the participants.

The last section of the questionnaire consisted of eleven questions relating to the subject matter treated at the workshop. More than 70% answered ten questions correctly, which bore a direct relationship to the fact that 90% indicated that the treatment of subject matter was adequate indeed.

Finally, although the workshop achieved positive results, follow-up action is imperative in order to effectively monitor and implement the achievements of the workshop.

Recommendations

This training workshop completes the first stage of a project to establish an information network which would provide planners and decision-makers with an effective information service in support of the planning process.

In view of the fact that at present the life of the project is for one year, and that Caribbean planning officials, supported by CDCC IV, have expressed a determination to strengthen and collaborate with the Caribbean Documentation Centre in its efforts to resolve the problem of inadequate information, considerable support is needed from member governments if national planning information units are

to be established and the first Caribbean Planning Bibliography completed by March 31, 1980.

Short-term Action:

It is recommended that:

- a) CDCC governments, which sent participants to the Workshop, be urged to support the establishment of a documentation centre in their Ministry of Planning and Development, by immediately facilitating the collection and analysis of all documents produced by, or held in their institution;
- b) the documentation centre be at an administrative level which permits easy access to decision-makers as well as researchers. The country's participant at the Workshop should either have the overall responsibility for the centre or for its day-to-day operations;
- c) participants be requested to prepare immediately, a work programme for their documentation centre - a copy of which should be sent to the Caribbean Documentation Centre; participants should also be asked to note their problems for subsequent discussion with the Documentalist/Training Officer;
- d) the Documentalist/Training Officer should visit each participating country for a short period of 3-4 days during the months of August/September to examine the stage of development of the documentation centre. Based on this stage of development, a second visit should be planned during the year in order to evaluate the work of the participants and provide necessary technical assistance;
- e) based on the progress report of each documentation centre, a second-level seminar should be planned to discuss problems and adjust co-ordination; to analyse priority in the types of documents to be analysed and the presentation and scope of the Caribbean Planning Bibliography; and to introduce elementary knowledge of computerized techniques and the ISIS System - the latter would depend on the availability of computer facility at the Caribbean Documentation Centre; and
- f) better translation equipment should be provided at future workshops/Seminars.

Medium-term:

CDCC Countries which were unable to participate in the first training workshop should be encouraged to participate in the system.

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