

**Note on
the Arab Broadcasting and Television
Training Centre (ABTTC) in Damascus
(Syrian Arab Republic)**

*Prepared by
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**Geneva
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I. INTRODUCTION

1. In recent years, the nature and quality of regional training centres and institutes, and their increasing role in technical cooperation among developing countries have attracted wide attention in developing countries throughout the world.

2. Various conferences, within and outside the United Nations system, have been dealing with the multifarious aspects of technical cooperation among developing countries. Much emphasis was placed on the role that regional and inter-regional scientific and technical research and training institutes could play in catering to the needs of developing countries. The culmination of all this was the United Nations Conference on Technical Cooperation among Developing Countries, held at Buenos Aires (Argentina) in September 1978. One of the resolutions adopted by it stressed the need to strengthen the indigenous research and training capacity of developing countries as a basic undertaking to promote technical cooperation among them 1/. Moreover, the Buenos Aires Plan of Action for Promoting and Implementing Technical Cooperation among Developing Countries recognized that regional training was an important component of TCDC 2/.

3. In this context, regional training and research institutions assisted by the United Nations system have a potentially valuable part to play. It is for this reason that the Joint Inspection Unit included in its Work Programme for 1979 a series of studies on the increasing role of such regional undertakings as vehicles for TCDC. This topic was also suggested by the UNESCO in December 1977.

4. The present note on the Arab Broadcasting and Television Training Centre (ABTTC) in Damascus (Syria) forms part of this series of studies. Its purpose is to determine the extent of the Centre's effectiveness, acceptability and impact in the Arab region and its potential within the framework of TCDC.

1/ Report of the United Nations Conference on Technical Cooperation among Developing Countries, Doc. A/Conf/79/13/Rev.1, Pages 23-24.

2/ Report of UN Conference on TCDC, Doc. A/Conf/79/13/Rev.1, Recommendation 6, page 8, and Recommendation 21, page 13.

5. This note is the result of an analysis of background documents on the Centre's activities and numerous interviews which the Inspector had with the Director-General of the Centre, the Assistant Secretary-General of the League of Arab States, and officials of the UNDP Office in Damascus and of the UNESCO Development of Communication Systems Division in Paris who, in one way or another, were involved in the project. The Inspector visited the ABTTC's headquarters in Damascus in March 1979, together with Inspector J.C. Rodriguez-Arias, and discussed the Centre's programme and prospects with its senior staff.

6. The Inspector wishes to record his gratitude to all those who assisted him throughout this study.

II. ORIGIN AND LEGAL STATUS

7. The Centre is a regional training institution affiliated to the "Arab States Broadcasting Union" (ASBU) as an autonomous legal entity with its own budget. It represents a significant step in the development of broadcasting, audio-visual material and communication media in the whole Middle East area.

8. The Centre was set up in 1972 by unanimous decision of the twelve ASBU Member States ^{3/} as one of the Union's permanent technical organs in Damascus, Syrian Arab Republic. The host country granted an area of land for the Centre. A UNESCO mission visited Damascus when the site was chosen and prepared a report suggesting UNESCO's participation in the various aspects of the projected Centre, such as in the definition of its objectives and in personnel training programmes for the initial and operational stages of the Centre. In light of that report, the project was modified in order eventually to meet the requirements of the whole Arab area. So far seven countries ^{4/} fully paid their contribution to the project, totalling two and half million US dollars; but this amount falls far short of the estimated four million dollars required for the initial establishment. Several Arab countries have indicated their intention to contribute in the next fiscal period.

9. At its periodic sessions over the last three years, the Council of Arab Information Ministers supported this project and endorsed it as the technical centre in charge of intermediate and higher training for the whole Arab world and as a permanent contributor to, and coordinator of local centres. At the time of the Inspector's visit to the Centre (6 and 7 March 1979), the Union's membership comprised all members of the League of Arab States.

^{3/} Abou Dhabi, Algeria, Egypt, Irak, Jordan, Kuwait, Qatar, Sudan, Syria, Tunisia, Yemen Arab Republic, Democratic Republic of Yemen.

^{4/} Jordan, Kuwait, Mauritania, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Syria, United Arab Emirates.

III. OBJECTIVES AND FUNCTIONS

10. The purposes of ABTTC as outlined in its statutes include 5/:

- a) programme and engineering training in the fields of radio, television and cinema production units;
- b) combined practical and theoretical training services for higher level trainees to enable them to participate and direct the implementation of training in their countries. Seminars, short and long courses and lectures would be included in the training process;
- c) active pursuit of closer cooperation and coordination between the Arab region and other international institutions concerned, in order to deepen technical, practical and programming knowledge; and
- d) development of research, studies and documentation on radio and television activities with a view to raising the standard of training, issuing periodical bulletins, magazines and publications and translating into the Arabic language any existing relevant works.

IV. TRAINING AND ENGINEERING CURRICULA

11. With regard to programme training:

- a) The Centre will be able to receive about 200 trainees from Arab States in various fields of radio and television for periods of one, three, six and nine months according to the provisions of the Centre's training programme and to the requests and needs of the radio and television networks of the Union's Member states.

5/ See Annex I for full text of the statutes.

- b) Two kinds of courses will be given according to the qualifications of the candidates:
 - i) the first kind for candidates with a university degree and at least one year's experience in the field;
 - ii) the second kind for candidates with a secondary school certificate and two years' experience in the field.

12. With regard to engineering training, the Centre is interested in three categories of trainees:

- i) assistant technicians whose academic qualifications are below the secondary school certificate level but who have not less than 6 years' experience in the field;
- ii) those having no university qualifications, but with some experience in the field;
- iii) engineers and technicians with long-term experience in the field.

V. DIPLOMAS AND TRAINING PRIORITIES

13. At the end of each course, the Centre will award certificates and diplomas to trainees who successfully pass theoretical and practical tests and examinations. In programme training, priority will be given to documentation and library services; preparation and writing of programme texts; qualification of broadcasters, announcers and programme presenters; stage decors and development programmes for rural areas. In engineering training, priority will be given to light, sound, electronic editing and maintenance. The Centre will strive for standardization of basic curricula and training systems through permanent contacts with regional radio and television networks in the Arab Member States.

VI. ACTIVITIES

14. Since the Centre's creation in 1972, links were established with a number of international centres and institutions with similar aims and in particular with the National Audio-Visual Institute (France), the French Radio and Television Corporation (France), B.B.C. (U.K.), Friederich Ebert Foundation (Federal Republic of Germany), and American Associated Press (USA). These links involved the exchange of information and experience, and consultations which have greatly contributed to the preliminary studies undertaken by the Centre.

15. A member of the "Arab Association of Information Training Centres", the Centre has been represented in a number of international conferences and seminars concerned with information and training activities.

16. Continuous contact has been maintained with national, regional and international broadcasting unions and centres in order to:

- a) exchange opinions and information on broadcasting matters,
- b) exchange periodicals, written texts and research,
- c) hold joint seminars and symposia with concerned bodies to maintain and develop training and programming curricula,
- d) exchange experts, advisers, consultants, trainers and lecturers,
- e) benefit from the experience of all unions concerned with training activities,
- f) exchange professional visits to national, regional and international broadcasting institutions or unions, and carry out constant coordination and cooperation,
- g) adopt and adapt plans which could enhance the achievement of common aims, objectives and functions of the Centre.

VII. BUDGET AND FINANCING

17. As provided for in the statute (Section IV), the Centre has an independent budget, annexed to the budget of the Union. It consists of:

- a) contributions from the Member States of the Union, in accordance with the rates specified by the General Assembly at the suggestion of the Board of Directors,
- b) a contribution from the League of Arab States 6/,
- c) contributions from the United Nations system,
- d) donations in cash or in kind granted by Governments of Arab States, public and private bodies and individuals as approved by the Board of Directors.

18. An annual report on the Budget is submitted to the Board of Directors which, in turn, submits it to the General Assembly of the Union for approval.

VIII. CONTRIBUTION OF THE HOST COUNTRY

19. The statute (Section VI - art. 9) requires that the host country (Syria) provide free of charge the land required for the Headquarters of the Centre, as well as general services and facilities for its regular day-to-day activities (telecommunications, lighting, water supply, etc.). The Inspector was told that the Syrian Government granted 13,000 m² of land in a prime residential area of Damascus. Furthermore, legislative decree No 70 issued in 1975 by the President of the Republic permitted the establishment of the Centre with all privileges and immunities granted to the League of Arab States institutions in Syria. The decree also exempted the Centre from all customs duties in an effort to facilitate its operations.

6/ Shares table of the Arab States in the Arab League's annual budget

Algeria	8%	Morocco	5%
Bahrein	2%	Oman	2%
Democratic Yemen	1%	Qatar	4.5%
Egypt	8.5%	Saudi Arabia	14%
Irak	10%	Somalia	1%
Jibuti	1%	Sudan	1.5%
Jordan	1%	Syria	1.5%
Kuwait	14%	Tunisia	1.5%
Lebanon	2%	United Arab Emirates	6.5%
Libya	12%	Yemen	1%
Mauritania	1%		

A later presidential decree provided for the release of the General Manager of the Syrian Radio and Television Board to take charge as the Director-General of the Centre. The Board also released some other senior staff to the Centre, free of charge. Moreover, Syria made an additional financial contribution of 284,000 US Dollars.

IX. ACCOMMODATION

20. At the time of the Inspector's visit, the Centre was located in premises totalling 9000 m², composed of three spacious blocks:

- a) The first is devoted to studios, technical sections and administrative offices. It provides 9 studios of various sizes for different purposes, three of which for radio and another three for cinema and film activities. Annexed to the studios are rooms for control, listening, editing, maintenance and storage purposes. Classrooms, library, reading-rooms, language laboratory, screening room and auditorium are also housed in the block. The auditorium is equipped with facilities for film screening, simultaneous translation as well as offices for administrative personnel, experts, trainers and consultants.
- b) The second block, which is under construction, will be reserved for the accommodation of trainers, teachers, Arab and foreign experts as well as of students. Two out of the six floors have been built so far. A restaurant, cafeteria and other accommodation requirements are provided.
- c) The third block constitutes a connection between the two other blocks. It houses workshops, generators, printing and other machines.

X. RELATIONSHIP WITH UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM

21. In the light of the information gathered during his visit to the Centre and talks with the Director-General, the Inspector believes that the Centre's regional nature and its combination of centralized and decentralized training will enable it to promote and coordinate efforts in the whole region to improve performance in the realm of radio and television broadcasting. The Centre's role would be enhanced through cooperation with similar Broadcasting and Television institutions supported by the UN system in Asia (particularly the Kuala Lumpur Broadcasting and Television Centre), Africa, Europe and America.

22. The Inspector believes that greater thought should be given to putting the finances of the Centre on a much firmer basis than they are at present. Since the Arab Broadcasting and Television Training Centre is a regional training project, help for it might also be sought either through subventions directly from ECWA or through the funds placed by UNDP at the region's disposal every year to finance regional projects and programmes.

23. Since its creation, the Centre has addressed, through some Arab Governments, requests to the UNDP and UNESCO for assistance. It would appear, however, that UNDP's financial support for medium to large projects in communication, has, on the whole, been difficult to obtain. The Inspector was told by officials of UNESCO's Development of Communications Systems Division that the Organization did not receive information about any project proposal submitted by the Government of Syria to UNDP. UNESCO, they said, would in any event be willing to cooperate and contribute with technical advice to any UNDP-financed project to further the development of the Centre.

24. The Inspector came across a letter addressed in January 1977 by the UNDP Resident Representative in Damascus to UNDP Headquarters to which was attached an explanatory note from the Director-General of the Centre requesting UNDP assistance in pursuing the project. It followed up a previous letter to the Resident Representative of 7 June 1976 from the Centre. However, during his visit to the UNDP office in Damascus, the Inspector was unable to trace a reply from UNDP Headquarters.

25. As for UNESCO, it assisted the Centre during the initial phase by providing the services of technical consultants and of the regional communication adviser for the Arab States. In 1977, UNESCO appointed a regional adviser for information whose terms of reference included advisory services to the Centre.

26. Over the past two years, however, UNESCO's assistance to the Centre - and to the communication organizations of the Arab States in general - has been greatly reduced because the post of the regional communication adviser became vacant and remained unfilled since the beginning of 1977. This vacancy might also explain why a letter addressed on 9 November 1977 to the UNESCO's Division of Free Flow of Information and Communication Policies requesting UNESCO's assistance remained unanswered.

27. As for the present state of cooperation with UNESCO, the Inspector was informed that recently the Centre has undertaken the translation into Arabic of some UNESCO publications on the use of communication technology. So far two have been translated: one on the preparation of animated films, the other on simple techniques for the use of Super 8 films. Other publications are going to be translated.

XI. FUTURE PROSPECTS

28. During the next few years the Centre intends to follow up on a number of important aspects of work connected with planning of programmes to meet the requirements of the whole region. Three approaches are being considered to obtain information on these requirements:

- a) by sending questionnaires prepared by the Centre to the region's broadcasting and television stations;
- b) by sending the programme and engineering experts to obtain first hand information from the stations in the region and to assess their potential;
- c) by holding periodical general meetings on programming and engineering.

29. With the training centre complex almost ready, several tasks still remain to be done to complete the development of the Centre's facilities: selection and installation of electronic equipment, training of technical staff and establishment of a training support unit (particularly research and documentation).

30. The Inspector was told, when he visited the UNESCO's Division of Development of Communication Systems in Paris, that UNESCO could provide, within its regular programme 7/, the services of a technical consultant to assist in planning and selecting broadcasting equipment for training, preparing trainers and establishing the research and documentation units. But for long term and large scale assistance, particularly equipment, UNESCO would have to seek some other modes of financing, such as funds-in-trust or bilateral aid. The Inspector was also told that UNESCO was prepared to grant at least two fellowships in 1979 provided the Centre submitted a formal request to the Organization.

31. Other activities foreseen in the regular programme for 1979-1980 include:

- a) translation of communication monographs into Arabic,
- b) survey of the development of performing talent in broadcasting organizations,
- c) assistance network and (under free flow of information and communication policies) preparation for the intergovernmental conference on communication policy of the Arab States 8/.

7/ UNESCO Doc. 20.C/5 para. 4532.

8/ The Inspector was told that under theme 4/9.4 of the Approved Programme and Budget for 1979-80 (Document 20 C/5 Approved) a number of programme actions in the area of broadcasting of concern to Arab States have been included, such as: (see next page)

32. In the light of these findings, the Inspector believes that the UN system and particularly UNDP and UNESCO could offer valuable assistance to the Centre in the area of planning programmes. Naturally any cooperation to be extended by UNESCO and UNDP would have to be at the request of the host country and determined in accordance with the programming practices of these organizations.

	<u>\$ USA</u>
Consultants to advise Gulf States on use of satellite for programme exchanges and Arab States Communication Organization on planning of Arab Satellite Network	10,000
Consultants to assist Arab States regional training programme in broadcasting	6,000
Consultant to assist Democratic Yemen on training programmes	4,000
Consultant to advise Arab Association for Communication Teaching and Training Institutes (AACTTI) on visual training aids	8,000
Commission case studies of communication planning processes in Arab States (in collaboration with ALECSO)	4,000
Consultant to advise Sudan on development of rural television network and to prepare project document for UNDP/FIT financing	3,000
Staff travel to participate in Sudan mission	1,000
Contract ASBU to translate and distribute in Arabic numbers 3 and 4 of Technology monographs	8,000
Contracts to undertake three studies	19,000
TOTAL	<u>63,000</u>

XII. CONCLUSION

33. The Arab Broadcasting and Television Training Centre may potentially become a valuable asset to the Arab States Broadcasting Union (ASBU) which groups all members of the League of Arab States. The support expressed in favour of its functions, scope and activities by countries of the region, by UNESCO and by competent foreign institutions in developed countries, indicates preliminary recognition and acceptability, which are necessary prerequisites to its continuing development in the future.

34. The most important tasks of the Centre will be exchange of technical and practical information, and of experience among the Member States of the Union; supervision of professional training and engineering programmes for the benefit of the whole region; and introduction, under the system of cooperation and coordination, of an advisory and consultation process for national and local development efforts.

35. However, in addition to the financial and technical resources that the ASBU should increasingly provide to the Centre, the UN System could play a major role through technical co-operation and supply of equipment, to enhance the role of the Centre and the achievement of its objectives 9/.

36. Facilities for the Centre's regular day-to-day activities have now been made available by the host country. The Centre currently needs:

- a) technical and administrative staff,
- b) technical equipment,
- c) detailed training programme responding to the needs of the region,
- d) technical expertise,
- e) and funds for scholarships.

9/ It is interesting to note that in 1979 around \$ 1 million have been allocated under the Regular Budget of the UNESCO for broadcasting and television training, consultancy and advisory services. The distribution of resources under the audio-visual programme in 1979 is as follows: Asia 25%, Africa 25%, Latin America 20%, Arab States 20% and Caribbean 10%.

37. Although so far not involved extensively in the Centre's activities, the UN system, and in particular UNDP and UNESCO, could usefully assist and guide the Centre in the initial stages so that it can become fully operational. This, in the Inspector's opinion, would be in line with the objectives outlined by the UNDP Governing Council at its 24th Session 10/.

38. Also, in the spirit of TCDC, the ABTTC could establish fruitful links with the Kuala Lumpur Broadcasting and Television Centre, the aims of which have much in common with those of the ABTTC. Indeed, with financial and material contributions from the Arab States and from other sources, and with initial assistance of UNESCO, the ABTTC could attain the level of similar centres in developed countries.

STATUTES OF THE ARAB CENTRE
FOR
BROADCASTING AND TELEVISION TRAINING
DAMASCUS

Section One

Article One - Establishment of the Centre

A centre shall be established within the framework of the Union of the Broadcasting Services of Arab States to be known as the Arab Centre for Broadcasting and Television Training and to enjoy a legal status and have an independent budget within that of the Union.

Article Two - Headquarters of the Centre

The city of Damascus shall be the permanent headquarters of the Centre.

Section Two

Aims and facilities

Article Three - Aims

The aim of the Centre is to provide training for personnel employed in broadcasting and television in Arab States, to promote and improve methods used in this training to meet the constant development needs of Arab broadcasting and television networks, and to qualify the necessary staffs required for undertaking the basic training programmes in Arab broadcasting and television networks.

Article Four - Facilities

The Centre shall use all the facilities and means that are required for realizing its aims, notably:

1. Contacting Arab and international bodies concerned in broadcasting and television Training with a view to exchanging technical information with them.
2. Appropriation of whatever references, films, and documents whether vocal or written having to do with the aims of the Centre and its activities in the field of training or in researches connected therewith and providing the member states with periodical pamphlets therewith.
3. Conducting researches connected with the aims of the Centre, study of what means should be used to utilize these researches in the day-to-day activities of broadcasting and television. Carrying out a better Coordination of the researches that are conducted in the Arab World, and associating these researches with the activities of other training centres.

4. Development of training methods, programmes and systems, and specifying the periods required for practical and theoretical training in a manner suitable to the conditions of encountered by the trainees in their respective fields of work.
5. Specifying the conditions that must be met by the instructors chosen to supervise the training programmes and the criteria that must be used in assessing these instructors and assigning the various groups of trainees.
6. Issuance of periodic and nonperiodic pamphlets to comprise researches and studies carried out by broadcasting and television experts and specialists and providing the member - broadcasting and television services of the Union with whatever information is possible about scientific and technological progress in these fields.

Section Three

Administration of the Centre

Article Five

The Administration of the Centre shall be undertaken by a director whose appointment and termination of services shall be issued by the General Assembly of the Union at the suggestion of the Board of Directors.

Section Four

Budget of the Centre

Article Six - The Budget

The Centre shall have an independent budget but one which shall be annexed to that of the Union.

Article Seven - Finance: The budget shall consist of:

1. Share of the member State of the Union in accordance with rates specified by the General Assembly at the suggestion of the Board of Directors.
2. Contribution of the Arab League.
3. Contribution of the United Nations and its organs and specialized Agencies.
4. Donations in kind or cash provided by Governments of Arab States and public and private bodies and individuals as approved by the Board of Directors.

Section Five

Relation between the Centre and the Union

Article Eight

1. The Centre shall be considered to be one of the permanent organs of the Union that are established in accordance with Article Three of the Agreement of the Union.
2. The Centre shall present an annual report of its activities accounts and budget to the Board of Directors, which in turn shall present it to the General Assembly for approval.

Section Six

Article Nine - Facilities provided by the hosting State

- A. The hosting State shall provide free the land required for the Headquarters of the Centre.
- B. The hosting State shall undertake to provide whatever general services and facilities are required for the Centre to exercise its normal activities (telecommunications, lighting, water supply, etc.).

Article Ten - Privileges and immunities of the Centre

The Centre shall benefit from the Agreement on the privileges and immunities granted to Arab League personnel.

Article Eleven - Amendment of the Statutes

The Board of Directors of the Centre shall have the right to suggest amendment of the present Statutes if this is considered necessary, but the suggested amendment shall not become valid unless it is adopted by three - fourths of the General Assembly of the Union.

Article Twelve

The Board of Directors shall have the right, if a unanimous vote is taken to propose to the General Assembly that the Centre be dissolved and its property liquidated, in which case the Head of the Union shall summon the General Assembly for an extraordinary session to be held for considering this proposal, which in order to become law must be adopted by three - fourths of the General Assembly.

In the case of the issuance of such a decision to dissolve the Centre all the assets of the Centre shall be transferred to the property of the Union except the premises and the land that shall become the sole property of the hosting state.

