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MISSION REPORT
UNDP/UNFPA EXECUTIVE BOARD

FIELD VISIT
TO
MALAWI AND MOZAMBIQUE

(10-21 June 1996)

INTRODUCTION

1. The visit of 12 representatives of the UNDP/UNFPA Executive Board to Malawi and Mozambique was successful. It enlightened the team in terms of understanding the difficulties of bridging the gap between New York and the field, between theory and practice. UNDP and UNFPA at headquarters appear to have different priorities and perspectives than the offices visited in the field. For example, the team had the impression that headquarters want the field to serve headquarters, rather than the other way around. Field offices in Lilongwe and Maputo are confronted with numerous requests from headquarters that do not seem relevant to the implementation of programmes in the two countries. At the same time, the field offices seem to receive few comments and inputs from headquarters that are considered constructive and relevant to policies and programmes. Furthermore, the team noted that the UNDP/UNFPA bureaucracy makes relatively simple matters (such as the procurement of a vehicle, or the appointment of an officer) excessively cumbersome and slow. Correspondence to headquarters remains often unanswered.

2. The net result of the internal UNDP/UNFPA bureaucracy, combined with the effect of the local bureaucracies in Malawi and Mozambique, is that UNDP/UNFPA staff members have to spend most of their time in the office. Field visits are not frequent enough, and as a result, monitoring is inadequate.

3. Another anomaly which concerned the team was the United Nations System-wide Special Initiative on Africa. High-level officials of Malawi and Mozambique had heard of the Initiative but were unaware of the implications for policy at the national level. United Nations field representatives only recently received some general information on the Initiative and asked the team if it had information on the resources needed to implement it. This made the team feel that the Initiative was not yet rooted in the field. In both countries, it was noted that the heads of the United Nations agencies were not very aware of the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s, which was launched five years ago and for which the mid-term review will take place in September 1996.

I. MALAWI

Background

4. The field visit to Malawi was timely, particularly in view of the fact that the country has had a new multi-party democracy since May 1994. This new democratic system came into being after a peaceful process of transition, in which UNDP played an essential role. The former regime, which had been in power in a one-party system for over 30 years, did not encourage people-centred development. For example, the term "family planning" was still taboo three years ago, contributing to a current population growth rate of 3.3 per cent and an average of 6.7 children per woman. Furthermore, primary education was not a priority, resulting in the current adult illiteracy rate of 70 per cent and a

level of poverty that ranks among the highest in the world (human development index rank, 157; gross national product, \$230 per capita).

5. The new Government is committed to bringing about change by putting into place a national poverty alleviation programme, which is the basis of its development policy. In addition, the areas of population, gender, human immunodeficiency virus/acquired immune deficiency syndrome (HIV/AIDS), free primary education, water supply, agricultural diversification, public sector reform and the participation of the population are addressed as major policy elements. In this new policy climate, UNDP (including the United Nations Capital Development Fund (UNCDF) and the United Nations Development Fund for Women) and UNFPA have a unique opportunity to demonstrate their comparative advantages and to assist Malawi in its efforts to improve living conditions for its 11 million inhabitants (20 million in the year 2014 at present population growth rate). Bilateral donors and the World Bank have also stepped up their assistance to the country.

Main findings

6. The team's general impression was that UNDP and UNFPA have been effective in implementing their programmes successfully, particularly given the fact that Malawi has embraced the work of the organizations only since the government transition. Major constraints include: inadequate and low levels of initiatives by civil servants; weak institutional infrastructure; and a hesitant beginning of popular participation. The road to the sustainable human development of Malawi will obviously be long and hard. Fortunately, the Government appears to be committed to improving economic performance, displaying an open and transparent attitude towards the United Nations, bilateral donors and the Bretton Woods institutions. The Minister of Finance chairs regular donor meetings, as do some sectoral ministries.

7. Evidence of the above-mentioned new commitment is the establishment of a monthly cash budget agreed to under the Structural Adjustment Programme with the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. This obviates deficit spending and overexpenditure, demonstrating the commitment of the Government to keeping its finances under control. The Government's capacities are limited, especially for maintaining infrastructure and providing services.

8. Inflation remains high (80 per cent in 1995), resulting in an increase in the level of poverty. Investments in the private sector have been weak due to high interest rates and cumbersome bureaucratic procedures. This has had a serious negative impact on employment in the private sector.

9. Agriculture is Malawi's mainstay. Fortunately, the prospects for the period 1995-1996 appear promising, with maize production of 2 million tons, compared to 1.6 million tons in the 1994-1995 period, following the drought of 1992-1994. Nevertheless, productivity in the agricultural sector remains very low and agricultural diversification is limited. The staple crop is maize. Previously, individual farmers were not allowed to grow tobacco, the main cash crop in the country, which could only be grown at the estates. In addition, the

price of maize was kept low by the previous Government. Production and prices have now been liberalized, resulting in better returns for maize farmers.

10. The interventions of UNDP consist of policy advice and support at the grass-roots level. The team gained the impression that the former has been more successful than the latter. So far, UNDP has been successful at the governmental policy level rather than at the village level, where closer monitoring and contact with the local population are necessary. UNCDF could play a more substantive role, since it is mandated to assist with local government and small rural infrastructure projects. UNCDF projects (local authorities, schools, housing for teachers) seem to develop adequately. The results of UNDP projects at the village level were difficult to see. There were only a few beneficiaries, which was a point of concern for the team.

11. Although UNDP is self-critical in relation to its coordination function, the team was favourably impressed with the programme's coordination of United Nations agencies, donors and non-governmental organizations. The team was also impressed with the efficient role played by the United Nations system (under the leadership of the Resident Coordinator) during the transition process. The support of the United Nations in the election process was crucial.

12. The request of the Government of Malawi for UNDP support in facilitating donor cooperation in five areas related to governance is an indication of the Government's confidence in UNDP. The areas are: local elections; civic education; logistic and material support for the parliamentary process; local government; and national programme management capacity. The team recommends that capacity-building continue to be an area of focus in UNDP cooperation with Malawi. The Government clearly stated that it considered UNDP support essential.

13. The Resident Representative suffers from a lack of resources, which affects the amount of time devoted to his coordination function. This is aggravated by the downsizing of the Malawi office. Three international staff members and six national staff members were lost despite the fact that the Malawi country programme is the fourteenth largest. The team observed that staff, especially national staff, operate under numerous constraints that require the attention of New York management. The team welcomed the fact that all projects are nationally executed. Nevertheless, UNDP remains fully responsible for managing and monitoring its programmes. Regrettably, there is a dire need for additional human and material resources in order to guarantee appropriate monitoring.

14. The same applies for UNFPA, given the vast gap in reproductive health services and population information in Malawi. It was noted that the office even lacks a four-wheel-drive vehicle, which is indispensable. Team members found this hard to understand.

15. It should be noted that, in rural areas, the contraceptive prevalence rate is often only 1 per cent. Given this situation, it is positive that awareness of HIV/AIDS is said to be high and most of the population seems to be aware that HIV/AIDS kills. This has probably been reinforced by the recent spread of the

epidemic, which has affected many Malawian families. However, sexual behavioral patterns appear not to have changed very much. Indications are that the Government has made the fight against HIV/AIDS a priority, particularly since in some urban areas 30 per cent of the population from 15-49 years old is HIV-positive. In rural areas the percentage seems to be around 20 per cent and rising.

16. The theme group regarding HIV/AIDS and the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS have begun their activities, which will hopefully help the Government to reverse the trend.

17. The country strategy note exercise is under way; the completion and approval process will take some time. The process has been United Nations-driven, although the Government is gradually developing an interest in the matter and is assuming responsibility.

18. In theory, the programme approach is in place, although in practice, there is still an array of project activities.

19. The gaps in the management capacity of the public sector are many and are a serious challenge to the authorities and the donor community. The projects visited and discussions with government officials clearly demonstrate that UNDP has potential comparative advantage for supporting capacity-building for development management and good governance. Examples are UNDP support for the decentralization policy of the Government and the operationalization of District Development Committees and Village Development Committees in 6 of the country's 24 districts.

II. MOZAMBIQUE

Specific aspects of the country

20. In identifying and defining the needs for UNDP/UNFPA cooperation with Mozambique, two elements should be taken into account:

(a) The geography of the country: Mozambique is a large country with a low population density. Its coastline on the Indian Ocean is approximately 2,600 kilometres long. The off-shore capital is located in the southern tip, but the bulk of the population is concentrated in the northern part of the country. Thus, the only effective current means of transportation between the capital and the most populated provinces remains the aircraft. As a result, the bulk of UNDP/UNFPA programmes is concentrated in the most populated provinces, which implies extra administrative costs for implementation and monitoring;

(b) The country is currently in transition from war to peace, as well as from a non-democratic system to democracy. The needs of development cooperation stem from this reality, especially in the field of reconstruction, de-mining, economic recovery, capacity-building and governance.

Main areas of the UNDP programme in Mozambique

21. The new country programme, approved by the Executive Board at its second regular session 1996, responds to the needs of the country as identified by the Government of Mozambique. Many projects initiated in the previous programming cycle will continue. The areas of concentration for the projects identified by the team are: (a) poverty alleviation and post-war rehabilitation; (b) economic and financial management; (c) environment and natural resources management; (d) good governance; and (e) other priorities (e.g., Beira corridor).

22. The team had the opportunity to see the current stage of execution of the national feeder-road programme, which has crucial implications for both the economic and social fields. Local community participation confirms the importance of the project, which will allow for better communication and transportation in the Nampula province. Several United Nations agencies have offered funding for the project. UNDP involvement consists of management assistance and coordination.

23. The visits to a de-mining field as well as to the project for the reintegration of demobilized soldiers allowed the team to get acquainted with the efforts of Mozambique in the post-war period. Mines are a major impediment to the resettlement of refugees and the reestablishment of revenue-earning activities in many villages. In de-mined areas, people return to their homes and fields and start their traditional economic and social activities with increased confidence and hope for the future. The United Nations Department of Humanitarian Affairs (DHA) project, managed by UNDP, provides new opportunities for the social integration of the demobilized soldiers who participate in de-mining activities. In view of the permanent risks to life and the high number of implanted mines in Mozambique, the programme requires specific new techniques and equipment.

24. The social re-integration of more than 92,000 demobilized soldiers depends largely on the possibilities for training. The project aims at offering new skills to the soldiers (carpentry, masonry, shoemaking, etc.).

25. The current UNDP projects in Mozambique relating to post-war rehabilitation are having favourable effects on the economic and social fields as well as on the strengthening of the social cohesion within the local communities. It is envisaged that this will be the case with future projects.

26. Coordination of the United Nations family appears to be working well. The heads of the agencies resident in Mozambique meet regularly, under the chairmanship of the United Nations Resident Coordinator, on matters regarding programme coordination and other issues. A country strategy note was elaborated in 1994, with the active participation of the Government, United Nations organizations and the World Bank. A suitable site has been allocated by the Government for joint United Nations premises, completion of which can be expected in 1999. Most agencies have already indicated their willingness to participate in this exercise.

27. In the field of coordination with multilateral and bilateral donors, the Aid-for-Democracy Group is particularly noteworthy. The Group comprises the heads of agencies and Ambassadors of major donor countries providing development assistance to Mozambique and meets under the chairmanship of the UNDP Resident Representative. The group was established to encourage policy debate and the coordination of technical cooperation and financial assistance in areas relating to the democratization process, capacity-building and good governance, such as support to the new Parliament, policy reform, local elections, the judiciary, independent media, etc.

28. The coordination of support to the 1994 elections is an example of the important role of UNDP. Under a project agreed with the Government of Mozambique, UNDP successfully coordinated support in the amount of \$63 million provided by 16 donors for the elections. Other areas where UNDP has had a leading coordination role include the demobilization and reintegration of demobilized soldiers.

29. After the end of the civil war and the start of reconstruction and rehabilitation, there continues to be a need to consolidate peace. The mission recommends that UNDP continue to play a leading coordinating role in the support to the reconciliation, rehabilitation and recovery processes.

30. UNDP and DHA are playing a key coordinating role in de-mining activities. They have been successful in the implementation of de-mining activities and in the mobilization of resources. However, there is a long way to go in the clearing process. It will probably take another decade and a substantial amount of funds before the country is relatively mine-free.

31. In a meeting with the mission, representatives of major donors highlighted the successful coordination work of UNDP in Mozambique. It was the view of bilateral donors that, in addition to its traditional mandate, the value of UNDP lies in the opportunities that it gives to donors to come together on certain issues and coordinate activities in specific areas and in its comparative advantage in the implementation of sensitive projects and programmes. It was further stated in the meeting that UNDP should concentrate on coordination and on project implementation in the fields mentioned above and refrain from project implementation in other fields where there was no discernible comparative advantage. While this argument may hold some validity with respect to the distribution of tasks and the efficiency of implementation, the mission feels that, in order to play a strong role in coordination, UNDP also needs some substantive capability and experience in the implementation of concrete projects in various sectors at district and village levels.

UNFPA programme in Mozambique

32. Regarding the work of UNFPA, the mission noted the following: Mozambique faces a population growth rate of 3.3 per cent, implying that the population will double within 20 years (1995: 16 million; 2000: 19 million; 2005: 35 million). The population is characterized by high levels of mortality and fertility, a young age structure and substantial movements of people as result of the war and later, the repatriation and resettlement of refugees. Life

expectancy is only 46 years. The team met with high-level officials of the Government who seemed to be aware of the population problems, although the awareness focused mainly on the high rates of maternal and child mortality. Population growth as such was not perceived by many officials as a priority problem for the country. Therefore, reproductive health programmes promoted by UNFPA are tolerated by the authorities but do not seem to be actively embraced.

33. The mission noted that the prevalence rate of HIV/AIDS is 14 per cent, which is lower than that of Malawi (20-30 per cent). Unfortunately, a high percentage of the refugees returning from Malawi to Mozambique are HIV-positive. This poses a serious health problem for the future. The Government recognizes this, but does not have the human and financial resources for a proper response.

34. In this context, UNFPA faces the difficult task of trying to promote sexual and reproductive health programmes, including family planning. It is the intention of UNFPA to encourage the Government to implement a new and active population policy. The ongoing census project will have an important function in this regard, since it will produce hard data on the population situation. The Government indicated to the team that UNFPA support is essential in establishing a sound population strategy.

35. It is the view of the team that UNFPA assistance to Mozambique should be increased and that the office of the UNFPA representative should be strengthened with an additional international staff member.

III. RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The key monitoring function of UNDP and UNFPA should be strengthened by making the necessary resources available.

2. Staffing and national support capacity of UNDP and UNFPA offices should be enhanced, especially in view of the expanding programmes.

3. The possibility of establishing a national Junior Professional Officer programme in Malawi and Mozambique should be considered.

4. UNDP should establish regional arrangements similar to the UNFPA country support teams. These would facilitate the rationalization and delivery of technical expertise.

5. Technical cooperation among developing countries modalities should be built into the regular framework of UNDP and UNFPA activities.

6. Scattered projects in numerous areas should be replaced by the concentration of UNDP activities in a few key sectors.

7. UNCDF should increase its involvement in Malawi and Mozambique and complement UNDP activities in order to reach grass-roots levels and strengthen local authorities;

8. UNDP should take full advantage of the recent global thrust towards decentralization which enhances democratization and delivery of development cooperation.

9. The successor programming arrangement procedures should be simplified in order to facilitate programming at the country level;

10. Field visits greatly aid Executive Board members in appreciating the Programme's work. On this visit, the team also sought to sensitize beneficiaries to the role of the United Nations agencies. This could be replicated in other countries.

11. It is important to enhance the use of radio broadcasting in programme countries with low literacy levels;

12. Capacity-building should remain an area of focus in UNDP cooperation with Malawi and Mozambique.

Annex

PARTICIPANTS IN THE UNDP/UNFPA EXECUTIVE BOARD
FIELD VISIT TO MALAWI AND MOZAMBIQUE
(10-21 June 1996)

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