

UNITED NATIONS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME



UNDP

Distr.
GENERAL

DP/454
20 March 1980

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

GOVERNING COUNCIL
Twenty-seventh session
June 1980
Agenda item 5(b)(i)

PROGRAMME PLANNING AND PREPARATION FOR THE THIRD PROGRAMMING CYCLE

PROGRAMME PLANNING

EXAMINATION OF THE EXPERIENCE WITH COUNTRY PROGRAMMING

Report of the Administrator

Summary

The report makes the following key points:

- Governments value highly the established concepts of country programming and are broadly satisfied with the content and quality of country programmes;
- The dynamics of the development process require continuous accommodation within country programmes of technical co-operation needs arising from changing national development priorities;
- Experience to date indicates a need to improve and make more systematic the programming process both before the approval of a new country programme and more particularly during its implementation. Some of the main recommendations made herein therefore stem from this experience, particularly those relating to the concept of "continuous programming";
- Periodic reviews of country programmes constitute an increasingly important means, not only of assessing the ongoing programme, but of providing an integral, forward-looking component of continuous programming, itself;
- The increased effectiveness of country programming depends importantly upon a more articulated and sustained role by the organizations of the United Nations system in support of government efforts. This role would be in line with the improved co-ordination of operational activities called for in General Assembly resolution 32/197, which urges, *inter alia*, the use of country programmes as a frame of reference for all United Nations system development activities.
- The study reconfirms the inadequacy of resources available for country programming and verifies the potential of effective country programming for the identification of additional technical co-operation requirements and for helping to generate the resources needed to meet them.

Contents

	<u>Paragraphs</u>
I. INTRODUCTION	1 - 11
A. Background	1 - 3
B. Methodology	4 - 7
C. General Observations	8 - 11
II. MULTILATERAL TECHNICAL CO-OPERATION AND NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT	12 - 18
A. Multilateral Technical Co-operation	12 - 13
B. UNDP Technical Co-operation	14 - 15
C. Technical Co-operation and other Development Assistance Available from the Regular Resources of other Organizations of the United Nations System	16
D. Multilateral-bilateral Technical Co-operation	17
E. Cost sharing	18
III. THE UNDP COUNTRY PROGRAMME (the design)	19 - 33
A. Programme Contents	19
B. Relation of Country Programmes to the National Plan and National Priorities	20 - 21
C. Time-Frame	22 - 23
D. Coherence of the Country Programme	24 - 25
E. Concentration	26
F. Reflection of Regional and Global Priorities	27 - 30
G. Relation to Inter-country Programmes	31 - 33
H. Pre-investment	34
IV. COUNTRY PROGRAMMING (the process)	35 - 72
A. Approach to Country Programming	35 - 37
B. The Role of Governments	38 - 40
C. Response to Government Requirements Arising from their own Planning and Programming Processes	41 - 43
D. Practical Application of the Flexibility Criterion	44
E. The Influence of Ongoing Commitments on Programming	45 - 46
F. The Role of Organizations of the United Nations System in Country Programming; Sectoral Reviews and Technical Co-operation Needs Assessment	47 - 59
G. The Role of the Resident Representative in Country Programming	60 - 64
H. Relationship of UNDP Country Programmes to Other Programmes of Assistance; Co-ordination of External Assistance	65 - 72
V. PROGRAMME IMPLEMENTATION	73 - 90
A. Project Identification	75 - 79
B. Project Preparation	80 - 81
C. Country Programme Reviews	82 - 85
D. Role of Governments in Programme Implementation	86
E. The Role of Agencies and UNDP in the Implementation of Programmes	87 - 90
VI. FUTURE COUNTRY PROGRAMMING	91 - 102
VII. DRAFT DECISION	103

I. INTRODUCTION

A. Background

1. In June 1975, the Administrator submitted to the twentieth session of the Governing Council his report on the review of country programming experience undertaken during the previous year 1/. Initiated by the Administrator, the study was intended to determine the best and most practical manner for formulating country programmes in the future. The recommendations, as accepted by the Governing Council, were incorporated in new instructions which were issued later in 1975 for the preparation of country programmes for the second Indicative Planning Figure (IPF) cycle.

2. At its twentysixth session, the Governing Council was informed about steps which the Administrator had initiated for a renewed examination of the UNDP country programming experience, to be undertaken with the co-operation of Agencies, with the active participation of the UNDP/Inter-Agency Task Force (IATF) and in close consultation with governments of developing countries. The main purpose of the study was to identify specific means for improving the country programming process as a basis for enhancing the quality and effective implementation of future UNDP technical co-operation. In particular, the study was to examine practical ways to improve the participation and contribution of the United Nations system in programming UNDP technical co-operation.

3. In this report, the findings of the examination and resulting recommendations are brought to the attention of the Governing Council by the Administrator.

B. Methodology

4. In January 1979, a Working Group was established at UNDP headquarters, with UNDP and IATF represented. The Working Group drafted an outline for the study and addressed a detailed questionnaire to 29 Resident Representatives on the basis of a representative sample of country programmes operating in each of the five regions. Agencies were requested to provide UNDP with their own assessment of country programming experience in the selected countries.

5. It was further considered necessary to discuss directly with a number of governments their experience with country programming in order to determine more fully the difficulties encountered and generally to help make future country programming more responsive to planning and programming needs of the developing countries. Eighteen countries were selected for visits by joint UNDP/Agency missions and the country programmes of 16 of these were included in the sample mentioned above 2/.

1/ DP/116, 19 March 1975, Review of Country Programming Experience.

2/ The country programmes included in the sample are: Guinea*, Ivory Coast*, Kenya, Lesotho*, Senegal, United Republic of Tanzania*, Niger*, Algeria, Democratic Yemen, Iraq, Jordan*, Morocco, Qatar, Saudi Arabia*, Sudan*, Yemen*; Bangladesh*, Burma, India*, Nepal*, Samoa, Sri Lanka, Papua New Guinea*, Argentina, Barbados*, Bolivia, Brazil*, Guatemala*; Poland, Portugal*, Yugoslavia*.
Countries marked with an asterisk were visited by joint UNDP/Agency missions.

6. In the meantime, a decision of the Consultative Committee for Substantive Questions (Operations) (CCSQ(OPS)) of the Administrative Committee on Co-ordination (ACC) had also affected the work of the joint missions. At its second regular session in October 1979, CCSQ(OPS) requested the joint UNDP/Agency missions also to discuss with government authorities questions regarding the implementation of General Assembly resolution 32/197, in particular the use of the UNDP country programming process as a frame of reference for operational activities carried out and financed by the organizations of the United Nations system from their own resources ^{3/}. The information obtained was presented, together with other material, to the Substantive Secretariat of CCSQ(OPS), which in turn prepared a paper for the first regular session of CCSQ(OPS) in 1980 (February 25 to March 4). A summary of the Committee's and ACC's subsequent deliberation on this item is also being made available to members of the Governing Council.

7. Results obtained from the responses of UNDP field offices and Agencies to both the outline and questionnaire, together with the conclusions and recommendations of the field missions, are the basis for this report. Recommendations for future country programming contained in the report are the result of consultations within UNDP and with the IATF and of further review after a general discussion of the report at an Interagency Consultative Meeting convened in February 1980 in New York.

C. General Observations

8. In the course of this study, governments have by-and-large expressed their over-all satisfaction with the value and usefulness of the country programming approach to help meet their development needs. Where they have found fault with the process, their observations, along with those of UNDP field offices and organizations of the United Nations system, have been reflected. This has been done with the understanding that the positive aspects of UNDP activities require less of the Governing Council's attention than the Programme's problems or deficiencies for which the Council's policy guidance is most actively required.

9. Weaknesses in the process of country programming, described herein, are not always caused by procedural, substantive, conceptual or similar obstacles; attitudinal barriers sometimes also need to be overcome if country programming is to be fully effective. Existing problems in this respect range from the lack of compliance with established policies and procedures to excessive formalism and unimaginative application. The problems occasionally include a lack of full involvement of all concerned, on which the principle of partnership of the Programme is based. For country programming to succeed, both the United Nations system and governments must remain committed to the promotion of the Programme's principles and ensure their active participation at all stages of the programming process. Much by way of procedural initiative lies, in this respect, with Resident Representatives, who have a key responsibility for team leadership, in broad support of the Administrator's basic accountability for Programme performance.

^{3/} General Assembly resolution 32/197 - Restructuring of the Economic and Social Sectors of the United Nations system; Annex, paragraph 33.

10. In recent years, the General Assembly has taken important decisions to improve the coherence of the United Nations development system at the country level, in order to optimize the utilization of resources available from the system for operational activities. Some of these decisions are particularly germane to the issue of country programming, including those relating to the use of the UNDP country programming process as a frame of reference for operational activities carried out and financed by organizations of the United Nations system from their own resources. The recommendations which this report makes regarding country programming and the role of the organizations of the United Nations system in the programming process are designed to enable governments to better utilize UNDP technical co-operation and to help create a basis for the kind of improved co-ordination which the General Assembly has called for among organizations of that system at the country level. The creation of a continuing, comprehensive dialogue between national authorities and the United Nations system and the suggested introduction of more structure into the process of continuous programming would enable the United Nations system to respond on a more informed basis, and thus more effectively, to national needs and priorities. It would also facilitate a more effective discussion with governments of the international policies and global priorities adopted by the United Nations system.

11. It should be stressed that this examination of country programming experience was based largely upon: (a) a detailed assessment of programming in 29 countries selected as a representative cross section (see paragraph 4 above); (b) on general comments of Agencies and UNDP Regional Bureaux on their over-all experience in country programming; and (c) on subsequent discussions of the findings within the broader context of policies related to technical co-operation activities of the United Nations system. Inasmuch as the sample was carefully composed to be representative of country programming in each of the various regions, the findings and conclusions of the examination may be considered to be applicable to the Programme as a whole. Nonetheless, care has been taken in the report to avoid unjustified generalizations which might lead to inaccurate conclusions and thus prejudice recommendations for future action.

II. MULTILATERAL TECHNICAL CO-OPERATION AND NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

A. Multilateral Technical Co-operation

12. It is not within the scope of this report to raise the question of resources for development. However, since the availability of additional multilateral resources is in many ways relevant to the use made by governments of UNDP resources, a brief review of opinions expressed by government authorities about the usefulness to them of technical co-operation available from the United Nations system seems appropriate.

13. Technical co-operation from UNDP and from other organizations of the United Nations system is highly valued by participating governments. They are generally satisfied with its quality, while many consider that a special advantage of multilateral technical co-operation is the access it gives to resources and knowledge on a world-wide basis. In that respect, the specialized knowledge and standard-setting role of the Agencies of the United Nations system in many areas of special concern to developing countries is particularly valued. While in most

countries the volume of multilateral technical co-operation is relatively limited, it is nonetheless available for a very broad range of needs. UNDP's contribution assumes special significance in this respect, both because there are few areas in which it cannot be applied and because of the increased versatility and flexibility lent to UNDP technical co-operation through the new dimensions mandate.

B. UNDP Technical Co-operation

14. The broad applicability of UNDP technical co-operation, its freedom from the encumbrances and prerequisites imposed by many donors and the authority of governments to set their own priorities for its use combine to make it, in the opinion of many governments, more responsive to national development needs than most other development assistance being offered. Its neutrality, which lends relative advantages in areas such as institution building and planning and allows governments to be less dependent upon the educational, administrative or planning systems and prejudices of a particular donor, is widely appreciated. Governments may also single out UNDP as a preferred donor in cases where more specialized forms of assistance do not offer the kind of broader, more comprehensive approach which governments often value or where international involvement is perceived to be preferable to a bilateral arrangement. UNDP may also be requested to fill gaps in technical assistance needs which other donors are either unable to meet or uninterested in fulfilling.

15. In terms of the shortcomings of UNDP technical co-operation, governments more often cite relatively cumbersome administrative procedures, a sometimes bureaucratic approach and slow delivery.

C. Technical Co-operation and other Development Assistance Available from the Regular Resources of other Organizations of the United Nations System

16. The preference expressed by many governments for the type of assistance provided by UNDP does not detract from the value attached to other assistance offered by the United Nations system. Given the over-all limitation of resources available, such assistance is usually put to good use. However, because assistance from United Nations system organizations, other than UNDP, is mostly aimed at selected sectors, programmes and activities, governments are inclined correspondingly to limit the application of UNDP resources precisely in those sectors and to apply them instead to other areas of immediate priority. Examples of this can be found in the health sector, in the field of population, and since the establishment of the Technical Co-operation Programme (TCP), of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) also with respect to the immediate short-term needs of the agricultural sector.

D. Multilateral-bilateral Technical Co-operation

17. Governments also usually look favourably upon combined multilateral-bilateral technical co-operation. From the government viewpoint, such assistance helps to overcome constraints which are often inherent in bilateral assistance, while at the same time providing much needed additional aid resources. Governments

also recognize that such assistance, when channelled through Agencies, assumes the characteristics of these Agencies' own technical co-operation programmes.

E. Cost Sharing

18. A growing number of governments supplement UNDP resources with increasing funds of their own through cost sharing in order to expand UNDP-supported technical co-operation in the country; they also use funds-in-trust contributions tied directly to UNDP-assisted projects ^{4/}. This encouraging sign of government appreciation of UNDP technical co-operation and satisfaction with its results is indicative of the expanding scope for UNDP's contribution to development referred to earlier in this report.

III. THE UNDP COUNTRY PROGRAMME (the design)

A. Programme Contents

19. For the purpose of this report, country programmes, as distinct from country programme documents, will be the aggregate of projects, planned and designed to meet a country's development needs, with the co-operation of UNDP.

B. Relation of Country Programmes to the National Plan and National Priorities

20. A cardinal principle laid down in the Consensus of 1970 is that governments themselves have the sovereign responsibility to identify the role of Programme inputs in specified areas within the countries' development objectives ^{5/}. The application in practically all cases of the principle that it is the governments' prerogative to determine the role of UNDP inputs, provides the necessary assurance that UNDP assistance is related as a rule to national priorities as viewed by each government at the time of programme or project formulation.

21. The study confirms that UNDP technical co-operation is generally related to national plans and usually designed to meet national priorities as perceived by the government. However, it is not always possible to determine the comparative importance of activities selected for implementation with UNDP technical co-operation in the context of a government's own efforts and its use of other aid resources. The latter's prerogative to determine where UNDP participation serves them best may result in UNDP inputs being applied in areas which are not of the highest priority but where governments consider these inputs better suited than others to overcome critical constraints. For the same reason, and considering the limitations of UNDP resources, it would also be erroneous to view a country programme as a microcosm of the national plan. Country programmes are usually related to priorities and needs which governments feel the United Nations system is particularly well placed to meet, but in a few rare cases governments have regarded UNDP technical co-operation as a convenient means of filling gaps in available resources.

^{4/} The number of countries which have turned to cost-sharing arrangements has grown from the end of 1977 to the end of 1979 from 50 to 61, while the amount of funds involved almost doubled from \$34.8 million to \$68.8 million.

^{5/} General Assembly resolution 2688 (XXV); Annex, paragraph 2.

C. Time Frame

22. The Consensus requires the country programme to "coincide, where appropriate, with the period of the country's national development plan" 6/. In practice, many country programmes are of five years duration and more or less coincident with the IPF cycle. They often either lag behind national plans or have been prepared well before national plans were finalized. Relatively few programmes reviewed in the course of this examination were phased and planned to coincide with national plans. This lack of synchronization tends to indicate that field offices, and possibly some governments, find it more convenient from the point of view of resource management to programme in accordance with the IPF cycle. However, there are also other reasons for reduced concern about the synchronization of the country programme cycle with that of the national plan, e.g. the limited amount of resources available from UNDP in support of the implementation of the plan, the emphasis in some national plans on physical capital formation, and, perhaps most importantly, the processes adopted by governments for the detailed planning of development activities financed from national as well as external resources. The subject is discussed in more detail below (paragraphs 37; 41-42; Chapter VII).

23. In sum, therefore, it appears that the advantages of adopting the time-frame of the national plan for UNDP country programming are not equally appreciated among both governments and UNDP field offices. Particularly where countries have adopted a rolling plan approach, these advantages are not considered to be obvious. In these cases, consistent application of the principle of continuous programming within the framework of a multiyear programme of objectives and activities 7/ can be expected to contribute to ensuring the desired relevance of UNDP technical co-operation to the dynamics of national development and to priorities as perceived over time by the government, regardless of an identical or near identical time-frame with the national plan. While appreciating the arguments raised in justification of flexibility in the timing of many country programmes, the Administrator nevertheless considers it conducive to increased coherence if UNDP country programmes are appropriately synchronized with planning cycles of the countries concerned. The advantages of continuous programming would not be diminished by such synchronization and might even be enhanced.

D. Coherence of the Country Programme

24. The Consensus states that the UNDP country programme should support activities which are meaningfully related to the country's development objectives. This implies that the assistance provided constitutes a programme which receives its coherence and balance from its relationship to these national objectives 8/. In practice, in the context of national plans, the coherence sought by the Governing Council is usually evident, since activities supported by UNDP are part of larger programmes undertaken by the government. While some projects included in a country programme may be mutually related or reinforcing, there are no instances of over-all internal coherence in individual country programmes

6/ Op. Cit. paragraph 7.

7/ See paragraphs 42 and 98 below for a description of continuous programming.

8/ Op. Cit. paragraph 8.

25. The study demonstrates that while UNDP technical co-operation generally fits into the pattern of national action for development, more efforts should nonetheless be made to establish a better interrelation or integration of activities undertaken with UNDP support in order to maximize the benefits derived from them. Scope often exists for interrelating two or more projects within a country programme in order to enhance their impact in a particular sector or subsector, or to derive greater benefit from related assistance provided in different sectors. The same applies to relationships between technical co-operation provided by UNDP and by other organizations of the United Nations system (see under VI - (h) below).

E. Concentration

26. The Administrator's report to the twentieth session of the Governing Council on the review of country programming experience recommended greater concentration of UNDP assistance in areas where it can have a catalytic effect and where it has a comparative advantage over inputs from other sources. Additionally, it was suggested that UNDP assistance be programmed around particular themes 9/. The policy guidelines issued for programming during the second IPF cycle therefore encourage governments to consider concentration of part or all of UNDP resources. However, experience shows that there are a few examples of such concentration in country programmes. Occasionally, UNDP assistance is sought for related activities in one or several sectors in order to achieve consistency in approach and greater over-all effectiveness. Some governments select priority areas for UNDP technical co-operation in accordance with their perception of the best use that may be made of UNDP resources. Nevertheless, in the countries included in the examination of country programming experience, initiatives taken towards the concentration of UNDP technical co-operation are rarely evident.

F. Reflection of Regional and Global Priorities

27. The 1975 report on country programming experience stated that it did not appear to be desirable or possible to apply global priorities uniformly in the formulation of all country programmes; priorities would differ from country to country. However, the report stressed that the United Nations system should use every opportunity to apprise governments of significant global trends and policies. The report also noted that country programming affords a unique opportunity for the United Nations system to discharge this responsibility 10/.

28. International fora have expressed the view that the UNDP country programme as an international source of assistance should more actively take into account global objectives and priorities. Again, however, experience indicates that country programmes do not as a rule respond to these expectations.

9/ Op. Cit. paragraphs 36-38.
10/ Op. Cit. paragraph 47.

29. The lack of response in country programming to decisions of international fora on global and interregional priorities is not for want of familiarity with such decisions on the part of governments. They are themselves often co-responsible for the adoption of the relevant resolution, and Agencies and Resident Representatives are sufficiently diligent in bringing these issues to the attention of governments, either during the country programming exercise or as other opportunities arise. In most cases, national development plans reflect global and regional priorities of concern to the government involved. Any resources under these plans may be used to meet them, including the governments' own or those available from the United Nations system or other sources. Government authorities with whom the subject was discussed view UNDP country programmes primarily as a means of support for the achievement of national development goals. Most governments pursue global and regional priorities when they are of immediate interest to national development. However, they do not feel obligated to direct UNDP technical co-operation to the promotion of such priorities, nor do they always consider the country programme a suitable or desirable means. As a result, little effort is made on their part to make special provision for it in country programmes.

30. The study therefore has shown that governments are usually aware of global and regional priorities and implement them whenever they are supportive of national development, using the most appropriate resources at their disposal. UNDP and other organizations of the United Nations system should continue their efforts to ensure that government authorities at the central and sectoral levels are informed about decisions adopted by international and regional fora. They should also continue to give operational expression to such global issues as the New International Economic Order, popular participation in development, the role of women in development, and others, in their continuing dialogue with governments.

G. Relation to Intercountry Programmes

31. The Administrator's 1975 report on the review of the country programming experience observed that, in most cases, hardly any account was being taken of activities at the intercountry level in the formulation of country programmes 11/. Information gathered in the course of the present study shows not only that this situation still generally prevails but that the assumed benefits of linkage between intercountry programmes and country programmes are not easily verified at the country level. It is therefore difficult to relate systematically country projects to intercountry programmes which may have quite different priorities, which generally fall within a different time-frame, and which are themselves often made up of projects which are far from being systematically interrelated.

32. One solution to the problem of linkages between intercountry and country programmes lies in still greater efforts by UNDP to base intercountry programmes on the expressed wishes of governments, particularly with respect to assisting regional co-operation efforts. In the course of the survey, several governments noted that deliberate efforts to ascertain government priorities for intercountry projects have been in progress for some time, particularly through UNDP's

11/ Op. Cit. paragraph 22.

initiation of programming at the subregional level, for groups of least developed countries (LDCs) within specific regions, and in areas of common interest to intergovernmental technical bodies. Experience with the implementation of these programming approaches is still limited, but the positive recognition accorded to these initiatives by the governments concerned has been most encouraging. These will be pursued by UNDP in the forthcoming regional intercountry programming exercises for the third cycle. The Administrator's report to the twenty-seventh session of the Governing Council on intercountry programming, DP/435, discusses these issues in more detail.

33. There are also many instances where country projects draw support from relevant intercountry projects, and the possibilities for such linkages should similarly be increasingly explored and taken into account in the formulation and review of country programmes. To this end, UNDP should ensure that all information on ongoing and planned intercountry programmes is systematically and widely disseminated to all concerned with the preparation of country programmes.

H. Pre-investment

34. A separate study of UNDP-financed pre-investment assistance is being carried out and the Administrator is reporting its findings to the Council. The conclusions arrived at by the joint UNDP/Agency missions from their discussions of the subject with governments have been made available for this study and are reflected in the report.

IV. COUNTRY PROGRAMMING (the process)

A. Approach to Country Programming

35. The Consensus requires governments of the recipient countries to formulate their country programmes in co-operation, at an appropriate stage, with representatives of the United Nations system, the latter under the leadership of the Resident Representative. The process of country programming should involve: (a) a broad identification of needs which might appropriately be met by programme assistance; (b) as precise an indication as possible of inputs (government, UNDP and other United Nations system organizations) needed to meet these needs; and (c) preparation of a preliminary list of projects to implement the programme. The Consensus also requires efforts to be made at all levels towards the co-ordination of all sources of assistance in the United Nations system to achieve their integration at the country level 12/.

36. In his earlier report on country programming experience, the Administrator concluded that the basic principles governing the country programming system did not require to be changed and should continue to govern country programming in the

12/ Op. Cit. paragraphs 7 and 9.

future. He urged their effective application and recommended simplification and increased flexibility of UNDP's procedures to allow governments to formulate country programmes in the manner most appropriate to their respective circumstances. One of the most important considerations concerned the enhancement of governments' own capability to formulate sound country programmes 13/. The various modalities suggested to meet these criteria served to guide country programming for the second cycle. The procedures adopted by UNDP and promulgated in the new manual issued in December 1975 envisaged a process evolving in several stages:

(a) establishment, in consultation between the Resident Representative and the government co-ordinating authority, of a work plan for the programming exercise; (b) the preparation of a note setting forth the Resident Representative's views regarding the possible orientation and contents of the new country programme for consideration as appropriate by the government; (c) discussions at the central and sectoral levels of government, about the contents of the UNDP programme; and (d) the preparation of the country programme document in accordance with the wishes of the government.

37. The examination of country programming experience undertaken in 1979 included a review of implementation of this modified approach. The study confirms that governments, as a rule, perceive a very clear relationship between national plan objectives and the application of external aid. In many countries included in the study, the programming of external aid resources is an integral part of the national planning and programming process; consequently, many of the governments concerned favour multiyear programming of aid resources as a function of that process and generally find UNDP's approach to programming to be responsive to their needs. Thus, while there is scope for further improvement of the country programming process, in their opinion it should not be fundamentally changed.

B. The Role of Governments

38. While governments in general have accepted UNDP's programming procedures, their perception of the place of UNDP technical co-operation in the national development effort and its relation to other foreign assistance varies with national circumstances. Thus governments assume different roles in country programming in different countries; the practices adopted by them thereby tend to be determined, to a large extent, by their own approach towards planning for development and the administrative structures and capabilities created for the purpose. Some governments rely heavily on the UNDP office for the preparation of the country programme; others conduct the exercise entirely on their own. In most cases, programme formulation is a joint effort of both the government and UNDP, in which the government determines the content, in close consultation with the Resident Representative, and the UNDP field office assists in preparing the document. These arrangements have been found satisfactory by governments and UNDP field offices alike for the type of country programme document which is now required.

13/ Op. Cit. paragraphs 20 and 30.

39. Governments of the countries included in the examination usually assign responsibility for the co-ordination of external assistance to a central authority, Council or Cabinet. This co-ordinating authority also has the major responsibility both for the process of consultations to be conducted in preparation of the country programme and for the determination of priorities for the use of UNDP resources, guided, as appropriate, by the recommendations of the planning ministry or similar authority. Planning authorities normally consult with the sectoral ministries to determine these priorities. In other instances, the national planning organization uses the national plan as the basis for the country programme without the involvement of sectoral ministries.

40. The study has further shown that contributions from sectoral ministries are usually project-specific and often consist of project proposals developed in the course of an ongoing country programme. These latter are then reviewed for possible inclusion in the programme being prepared. In some instances the central planning authority issues directives to sectoral ministries regarding the intended use of UNDP resources prior to consulting them on their specific needs. In other cases the consultations between planning organizations and sectoral ministries take the form of obtaining lists of projects to be included in the country programme.

C. Response to Government Requirements Arising from their own Planning and Programming Processes

(a) National planning

41. With a few exceptions, the countries included in the examination of country programming experience have multiyear national development plans reflecting broadly based development objectives and priorities. Experience with planning and plan implementation has led many of the governments of these countries to the conclusion that detailed project identification carried out too far in advance is unrealistic. It is too often difficult, if not impossible, to predict with reasonable accuracy the changes in priorities and needs which arise in the course of plan implementation. For this reason, project identification is usually undertaken in conjunction with the implementation of the plan and takes place on an annual basis, when the national budget is being prepared. Some of the governments concerned prepare annual development plans for this purpose or, in the case of a rolling plan, annually roll-over their plan by another year throughout the plan cycle. Projects are adjusted, cancelled or added as the need arises.

(b) UNDP country programming

42. The 1975 report on experience in country programming introduced the concept of continuous programming of UNDP resources, within the framework of multiyear programming, based upon country programme documents which identify technical co-operation requirements mainly in terms of objectives and activities. For the purpose of programme management, country programme documents were to specify ongoing projects and those at an advanced stage of preparation or due

for implementation during the first two or three years of the programme. For the remaining years, country programme documents would include an indication of activities or projects to be worked out in detail at a later stage. The concepts were endorsed by the Governing Council at its twentieth session 14/, and subsequently included by UNDP in the guidelines for country programming.

43. The modified approach to country programming is generally considered by governments to be an improvement. They permit planning in the use of UNDP resources in accordance with changing needs of the country, and, in particular, in conformity with the governments' own approach to planning and plan implementation as outlined above. They allow for project identification in conjunction with the preparation of annual development plans and budgets. However, as explained below, practical application of the concept leaves something to be desired, both in terms of programme formulation and implementation.

D. Practical Application of the Flexibility Criterion

44. The Consensus requires UNDP assistance to be "sufficiently flexible to meet unforeseen needs of recipient countries....." 15/. The introduction in 1975 of the concept of continuous programming referred to in paragraph 42 was expected to advance this flexibility requirement. The recent examination of country programming experience has shown, however, that a large number of country programme documents still elaborate considerable project detail and frequently continue even to include a statement of anticipated annual disbursements broken down into individual projects for the entire country programme period 16/. The extent of carry-over of projects from previous country programmes, as discussed below, is an important additional determinant of programming flexibility.

E. The Influence of Ongoing Commitments on Programming

45. The 1975 financial crisis has undoubtedly had some impact on programmes formulated in its wake. Apart from the need to recover lost ground due to projects or project components cancelled or deferred, the crisis also created attitudinal barriers. Governments and Resident Representatives became hesitant to make firm commitments for a period longer than two to three years and held a considerable portion of UNDP resources in reserve. Additional factors influencing the resources outlook for the second cycle were the extent of over-programming during the first cycle and the actual borrowing which took place against the second.

46. Experience during the first and second programming cycles shows that in many cases projects continue longer than originally anticipated and sometimes require considerable expansion of inputs or extension of duration through new phases. Additionally, activities initiated as a programme approaches its final years are bound to continue into the subsequent programme, making a first claim on

14/ Op. Cit. paragraphs 33 and 34; 44; E/5703/Rev.1, Report of the Governing Council, twentieth session, paragraph 109.

15/ Op. Cit. paragraph 12.

16/ The subject is treated in greater detail in Section VII on programme implementation.

available resources. This claim is considerable, averaging from 40 to 60 per cent of programmable resources and in some cases exceeding 70 per cent, leaving little room for new initiatives 17/.

F. The Role of Organizations of the United Nations System in Country Programming; Sectoral Reviews and Technical Co-operation Needs Assessment

(a) The involvement of Agencies and organizations of the United Nations System

47. Agencies are justifiably concerned about the attention given to areas of their competence in the programming of UNDP resources. In its Report on Country Programming, the Joint Inspection Unit found that Agencies of the United Nations system were for the most part excluded from preparations for the country programming exercise both at Headquarters and local levels 18/. The view is shared by most Agencies; they are generally disappointed with the extent to which they have been involved in the country programming process. Only in a limited number of cases have some of the larger Agencies been invited to send

17/ It is perhaps not sufficiently appreciated that the average cost and duration of projects has a profound impact on the resources picture for future years. The list of approved projects in any given year casts its shadow in terms of financial commitments, several years ahead, as clearly shown by the following table:

Projects not officially completed (i.e., projects whose accounts have not yet been closed) as of December 1979

Approved UNDP assistance	Average operational duration*	Number of projects
less than \$100,000	2.1 years	3 541
\$100,000 - 250,000	3.7 years	1 398
\$250,000 - 500,000	4.3 years	1 106
more than \$500,000	5.5 years	1 957
All projects	3.5 years	8 002

* Based upon actual and planned expenditure according to approved project budgets; delays in closing of accounts are not relevant.

18/ JIU/REP/76/10 - Report on Country Programming as an Instrument for Co-ordination and Co-operation at the Country Level; paragraph 46(c).

field missions to participate in the preparation of a new country programme. A factor which undoubtedly has influenced such Agency participation has been the amount of UNDP resources available for programming of new activities 19/. In addition, when IPF resources are limited and the cost of fielding Agency missions correspondingly becomes prohibitive, many Resident Representatives rely on Agency staff in the country to render assistance in programming activities. Thus, the extent of Agency presence in the field at the time of programming often determines the nature of their involvement in the preparation of the programme.

48. Smaller Agencies seldom have the opportunity to participate fully in the programming of UNDP assistance, especially when they are not already involved in operational activities in the country concerned. Their anxiety about the lack of attention to development constraints in areas they consider of vital importance to a country's development is justified. On a few occasions, smaller Agencies have financed their own consultants' missions, but with little success in terms of seeing their area of concern incorporated in the UNDP country programme. It is expected, however, that the relatively modest financial backing provided by UNDP for the sectoral support activities of some Agencies will lead to improvements in this situation.

49. Many Agencies have observed that IPFs are usually grossly inadequate for the development needs of the countries concerned. The competitive demand for UNDP assistance from various sectoral ministries within governments is usually so great that only a fraction of the needs can be met. This competition for limited resources further underscores Agency concern to be drawn into the programming process at a very early stage.

50. In responding to the questionnaire, UNDP field offices, while at times critical of the manner in which Agencies approach country programming, generally recognized that they can make a significant contribution and envisaged a more systematic involvement of Agencies in the programming process for the next cycle. Many of the Resident Representatives interviewed noted that Agencies make a substantial and valuable contribution to programme development through participation in programme implementation and the planning of further activities as their projects progress and are being reviewed. Some Agencies have expressed similar views. These same Resident Representatives favour a more systematic and sustained dialogue at the field level involving Agency personnel and the government as a basis for future programming. In addition, they found a need for a better flow of communication between Agency headquarters and UNDP field offices. Agency policies are not always communicated to Resident Representatives as a matter of course, and UNDP field staff are frequently insufficiently aware of changing policies and developments at Agency headquarters and in their governing bodies.

19/ There have been instances where available resources were so limited that the government and the Resident Representative saw no point in embarking upon an elaborate multidisciplinary exercise.

51. Government co-ordinating authorities consulted in the course of the examination did not perceive an urgent need for a more direct role of organizations of the United Nations system in the country programming exercise 20/. In their view, the existing relationships between Agencies and sectoral ministries usually ensure good collaboration at the technical level which normally will find expression in the contribution of sectoral ministries to national planning and plan implementation. These co-ordinating authorities usually are confident that in programming the use of UNDP resources appropriate use is being made of the specialized knowledge available to the respective ministries from the Agencies. They attach great value to good working relations between the technical ministries and the appropriate organizations of the United Nations system and consider that Agencies should play a more sustained role in country programming through an improved dialogue at all levels and through over-all sectoral advice. It would seem prudent, therefore, that United Nations system Agencies take appropriate steps to improve their participation in such a dialogue and to render the advice required.

52. While recognizing the important contribution which Agencies can make at the sectoral level, aid co-ordination as well as central and sectoral planning authorities with whom the subject was discussed nonetheless expect the United Nations system to continue to respect their prerogative to determine the extent to which use will be made of that potential.

(b) Sectoral studies and the assessment of technical co-operation needs

53. The Consensus holds that assistance from the United Nations and the Regional Economic Commissions in the general field of planning, and from the Specialized Agencies in sectoral planning, be available to governments for the support of the formulation of national development plans or priorities and objectives 21/. The 1975 report on country programming reconfirmed the need for active co-operation between the United Nations system and governments in reviewing the various sectors of the economy with a view to determining priority sectors, areas or themes where United Nations assistance might be needed. In-depth studies of these sectors - if not already carried out by the government, or otherwise - were recommended. They would serve the dual purpose of assisting governments in the preparation of national plans and, by contributing to the identification of technical co-operation needs in the sectors concerned, aid in the formulation of the UNDP country programme. The report further stated that a comprehensive identification of technical co-operation needs can provide a useful basis for defining the proper role of UNDP and others in meeting national development requirements 22/. It has thereby been understood that a decision

20/ The country programming exercise encompasses the activities initiated in consultation between the Resident Representative and the government co-ordinating authority, aimed at the preparation of the country programme document; the exercise which takes place once in three to five years should not be confused with the programming activities of the government, UNDP and Agencies, undertaken throughout the programme cycle.

21/ Op. Cit. paragraph 5.

22/ Op. Cit. paragraphs 34 - 43.

from the government to seek assistance from the United Nations system in general and sectoral planning should precede actions by UNDP or Agencies in that respect.

(i) Sectoral studies

54. The term sectoral study or analysis is used in different contexts by different individuals. Its varied meanings can be a cause of misunderstanding. UNDP usually understands sectoral studies to be those carried out in support of planning activities; they include comprehensive studies of an entire economic or social sector or subsector; or they deal with selected aspects of development within a sector; or they may be concerned with certain topics or areas of interest common to several sectors. Although sectoral and intersectoral studies are considered an essential part of the planning process, few countries embark upon such a programme of major studies for the preparation of their national plan. Presumably this is because technical ministries, through their planning units or cells (if available), are continuously engaged in a review of sectoral development and concerned with new needs arising from these developments. UNDP recognizes the usefulness of sectoral studies and technical co-operation needs assessments carried out in the context of development planning. While, in the Programme's view, the existence of such studies would greatly assist the programming of UNDP resources, it is not proposed - nor has it been in the past - that sectoral studies should be specifically conducted for the purpose of country programming.

55. With the exception of the various reviews conducted by the World Bank and other exercises, such as country health programming undertaken in certain countries with the assistance of the World Health Organization (WHO), few of the countries visited in the course of the study have conducted or are planning to conduct formal, comprehensive sectoral reviews in preparation of their national plan. None has indicated an intention to do so in connexion with the preparation of UNDP country programmes ^{23/}. Many of the governments concerned have adopted a "bottom-up" approach towards national planning. In these cases, sectoral ministries, guided by over-all national priority directives issued by the central planning authorities, each prepare project and programme proposals in accordance with both these directives and the ministry's perception of sectoral needs. The assessment of these needs is usually based upon data derived from sectoral reviews or information obtained from earlier sectoral or subsectoral studies. The same process is followed for the preparation of annual development plans, and when "rolling" a multiyear expenditure plan.

56. The examination of country programming experience indicates that Specialized Agencies and other organizations of the United Nations system can further contribute to sectoral and intersectoral planning activities by making

^{23/} One government indicated that it desired involvement of the United Nations system in sectoral reviews to be undertaken prior to the preparation of its national plan.

specialized knowledge available to those in government engaged in planning, and by participating whenever requested by the government concerned in planning activities.

(ii) Technical co-operation needs assessment

57. A few governments of the countries included in the examination have made an attempt to prepare a comprehensive inventory of their technical co-operation needs or are planning the preparation of one for the future. In some instances, assistance was provided by UNDP in conducting the exercise. The results of such exercises were not always used for the preparation of the national plan or the UNDP country programme; there seemed to be some doubt among governments that the information generated by assessments of technical co-operation needs had value for general planning purposes. Some of the governments felt there was no need for a special effort to prepare a comprehensive inventory of their technical co-operation needs, as these were, in their view, adequately covered by sectoral and other studies undertaken by them for national planning purposes. Commonly, technical co-operation requirements are determined at the sectoral level when projects and programmes are prepared for inclusion in the national/annual plan.

58. Among the countries included in the study, the determination of technical co-operation requirements in the context of the country programming exercise was undertaken in most cases by extracting relevant information from the national plan or through consultation with sectoral ministries. In some of these countries, Resident Representatives tried to determine technical co-operation needs in the major sectors in collaboration with available field staff of the United Nations system. Such efforts were usually helpful in identifying possible areas of assistance and in highlighting some of the major constraints on national development.

59. At the same time, it would appear that in their endeavour to perfect the programming of their resources through sectoral studies and preparation of inventories of technical co-operation requirements, UNDP, and Agencies, sometimes promote activities whose urgency is not always equally perceived by all departments of government. This is clearly an issue of exceptional sensitivity which should not be subject to preconceptions; it should be approached with great caution and with full regard for the wishes and prerogatives of the government concerned.

G. The Role of the Resident Representative in Country Programming 24/

60. As noted earlier, Resident Representatives and UNDP field offices often play a central role in the formulation of the country programme and in most cases

24/ This section deals strictly with experience as regards the role and activities of the UNDP Resident Representative in UNDP country programming and the conclusions to be drawn from it for future programming. The broader issues of co-ordination of all sources of assistance of the United Nations system (Consensus; paragraph 9) and of improved coherence of action and effective integration of the sectoral inputs from the United Nations system (General Assembly resolution 32/197; Annex, paragraph 33) will be discussed separately.

in the actual drafting of the country programme document. This direct involvement of Resident Representatives and other UNDP staff has often stimulated active participation of government authorities at the central and sectoral level. Many of the Resident Representatives who responded to the questionnaire felt that through their note (paragraph 36) they had considerable impact on the design of country programmes in their respective countries. However, in discussing the usefulness of the Resident Representative's note as a basis for a dialogue with UNDP for the preparation of the country programme, joint UNDP/Agency missions learnt that government authorities did not unanimously share the Resident Representative's views. Although in some cases these authorities were guided by the recommendations of the Resident Representative in determining the contents of a country programme, more often the latter's contribution through a written communication had been found to be of marginal value. It can be concluded, therefore, that the constant dialogue which the Resident Representative maintains on a daily basis with central and sectoral authorities probably is the single most important factor in shaping country programmes both before and during their implementation. Broadening this dialogue by encouraging the participation of organizations of the United Nations system would further enhance the over-all effectiveness of country programming.

61. Also in this connexion, the examination of country programming experience has shown that direct consultations between Resident Representatives and both the sectoral ministries as well as the Agencies often leaves something to be desired. Contacts between Resident Representatives and sectoral ministries should be more regular, without infringing the prerogatives of the national planning authorities. More use should also be made of opportunities for direct consultations between UNDP field office staff and various Agency headquarters. Resident Representatives have indicated that they often find the discussion, dialogue and feed-back obtained during their visits to Agency headquarters superior to that obtained from Agency written comments on their proposals and notes and on draft programme documents.

62. Some Resident Representatives reported that they had been successful in actively stimulating a dialogue between government aid co-ordination authorities, UNDP and other members of the United Nations system and, as appropriate, bilateral donors, in the interest of coherent action by all concerned. However, much scope remains for further initiatives towards that end on the part of UNDP, as well as the appropriate authorities within governments.

63. In response to a request for their views on future country programming, Resident Representatives made a number of concrete suggestions for the improvement of the process of consultations at the field level, with both government authorities and the Agencies. Some suggested continuous programming as a means of achieving more coherent programming; others favoured the establishment by the appropriate government authority of a group or committee for the co-ordination of all technical co-operation activities, including those of the United Nations system and of bilateral aid. It was further suggested that workshops or seminars be held to familiarize government staff of the central planning or sectoral ministries with the country programming process prior to programme formulation. In at least one instance, UNDP and the governments have jointly established an interagency/governmental working group for the purpose of country programming.

64. In sum, while there is no doubt that the design and content of the country programme reflects decisions of the government concerned, it is recognized that the influence which Resident Representatives and UNDP field offices have on the manner in which country programming is conducted, in particular if they successfully promote over-all collaboration and government participation at all levels, affects programme design and contents.

H. Relationship of UNDP Country Programmes to Other Programmes of Assistance; Co-ordination of External Assistance

(a) UNDP technical co-operation and other programmes of assistance

65. It is generally recognized that the responsibility for the co-ordination of external assistance rests with governments. Most of the UNDP country programmes reviewed have been developed without specifically relating them to other programmes, although efforts have been made to avoid duplication of assistance provided from other sources. Only in a few instances have governments taken special steps towards the co-ordination of UNDP technical co-operation with that of other programmes, or made use of country programming for the planning of other external assistance. Where the relative size and impact of UNDP resources represents only a fraction of total assistance, the incentive towards more general aid co-ordination through country programming, as a rule, is equally modest.

66. Apart from aid-group or donor meetings sponsored by UNDP and/or or the World Bank, Organization For Economic Co-operation and Development and some bilateral donors, Resident Representatives, in the programming of UNDP resources, are often actively involved in discussions with major bilateral donors and other United Nations programmes. Participation of government authorities in these discussions is rare; they see no added advantage in the creation of co-ordinating machinery for technical co-operation in addition to that already established for their own purposes. Additionally, government participation would endow such inter-donor discussions with an aura of officiality which governments sometimes wish to avoid.

(b) Co-ordination of assistance available from organizations of the United Nations system

67. The joint UNDP/Agency missions for the examination of country programming experience have discussed with government authorities General Assembly resolution 32/197, and in particular the implications for future country programming of the use of the UNDP country programming process as a frame of reference for the operational activities of the United Nations system ^{25/}. It is important to note that governments were not always wholly prepared for the discussion of this subject, which is relatively new and was at the time awaiting further consideration of relevant issues in the General Assembly. Many governments probably have not yet established a firm policy towards various aspects of the resolution policies which will also affect its future implementation. The views expressed in the following paragraphs should, therefore, not be taken as the considered opinion of the

^{25/} See paragraph 6 above.

governments concerned, but rather as an indication of the various attitudes adopted by government officials towards the resolution, and some of the possible approaches which governments may take towards its implementation at the national level.

68. Apart from the special purpose programmes and funds of the United Nations system, and excluding capital assistance of the World Bank, assistance financed from Agency regular programmes is limited, although in a few cases bilateral funding of development through selected Agencies (multibi) may assume significant proportions. These facts may have contributed to the low-key reaction to suggestions for improved co-ordination within the United Nations system encountered in some countries which have developed a well-articulated planning and programming system, and excellent capability for the co-ordination of external assistance. While government of these countries do not reject the idea of a more coherent approach by the United Nations system, they do not expect this to affect the manner in which they are handling co-ordination.

69. Some government officials in countries whose planning and external assistance co-ordination systems are not as comprehensive, expressed doubts whether efforts on the part of the organizations of the United Nations system to change the approach to the programming of multilateral assistance would lead to the desired results. They are satisfied with current practices in the programming of multilateral assistance which in their opinion offer adequate opportunities for co-ordination, and they are not as yet convinced of the practical feasibility of harmonization of programming processes of the United Nations system.

70. However, several other governments saw advantages in efforts of the United Nations system toward greater co-ordination at the country level in support of national action for the improvement of planning and co-ordination. These governments welcomed the resolution, feeling that improved co-ordination within the United Nations system would effectively contribute to relating assistance more coherently to changing national development objectives and priorities and would provide governments with an updated picture of the system's capabilities with respect to current and future national needs.

71. Perhaps central government authorities perceive that the main advantage of a more coherent approach by the United Nations system will be to foster recognition and acceptance of the internal co-ordinating responsibilities of the central authorities, and thus make for improved working relations within governments between sectoral ministries and central planning authorities. In that context, governments generally welcome the single official concept and appointment of a Resident Co-ordinator.

(c) Joint programming of resources

72. The Administrator's report to the twenty-fifth session of the Governing Council on the Role and Activities of UNDP suggested, inter alia, the possibility of joint programming of UNDP's IPF resources and regular budget resources of other organizations of the United Nations system. The proposal met with the support of members of the Council 26/. However, while most country programmes include references to the assistance provided by other United Nations system Agencies, funds and programmes such as World Health Organization (WHO), World Food Programme(WFP), United Nations Children's Fund(UNICEF), United Nations Fund for Population Activities(UNFPA), etc., joint programming has yet to emerge from its experimental stage.

26/ DP/319, Role and Activities of UNDP; paragraph 27, E/1978/53/Rev.1; Report on the twenty-fifth session, paragraph 296.

V. PROGRAMME IMPLEMENTATION

73. Essentially, programme implementation involves the identification, formulation and implementation of projects (including project review, evaluation and follow-up). This report will deal with the specifics of project implementation - a subject of continuous concern to UNDP and the Executing Agencies and the object of many earlier studies - only to the extent that it affects the implementation of country programmes.

74. In countries included in the study, from seven to 10 out of each 10 projects identified in a country programme document are actually implemented 27/. Causes of deviation of the operational programme from the country programme document are various, the most common being: (a) the ratio of new projects identified in the country programme document; (b) changing priorities; (c) new needs identified or arising from ongoing projects; (d) tardiness in project preparation leading to postponement and/or substitution; (e) unrealistic proposals, i.e., project not feasible; (f) continuation of projects beyond their scheduled termination.

A. Project Identification

75. The recommendations contained in document DP/116 (and referred to in paragraph 42 above) that country programme documents should identify technical co-operation requirements in terms of objectives and activities and be project-specific only in terms of ongoing activities and firm proposals for the first two to three years, have not been consistently implemented.

76. A large number of country programme documents prepared in recent years show almost all programmable resources tied up in newly identified projects for the duration of the programme, leaving only a modest, or sometimes token, reserve to meet unexpected needs. Additionally, projects identified in such programmes are not always realistically costed, calling for considerable increases in the allocation of resources to meet the rising cost of project inputs as the programme is being implemented. The examination of country programming experience has shown that new activities included in a country programme document, but not yet implemented, tend to be sacrificed when new needs are identified or arise from ongoing projects or from project extensions not previously envisaged, especially if reserves are not adequate to meet such changes. Sometimes governments are prepared to meet the additional cost through cost sharing, thus preserving the integrity of the original programme.

77. It is therefore evident that the allocation of all or most of programme resources to individual projects at the time of programme formulation inevitably calls for adjustments in the course of programme implementation in order to meet

27/ In financial terms implementation is frequently reported as 100 per cent. The figure reflects attainment of annual expenditure targets and does not imply a similar rate of achievement in terms of project objectives.

the changing requirements of a dynamic development process. Moreover, because it is seldom possible to determine accurately the design and costs of newly identified projects far in advance, the adjustments required can be considerable. While - in pursuance of the flexibility criterion (paragraph 44 above) - current policy allows the inclusion, revision, termination and extension of projects during the process of programme implementation, it is also clear that the criterion, which was conceived in the context of continuous programming, should be judiciously applied.

78. UNDP usually responds readily to changes in the ongoing programme and new requests from governments. If resources have been fully programmed this is accomplished by dropping projects or parts of projects and substituting them for new activities. If a programme has been designed according to the new approach and is objective-oriented rather than project specific, governments propose and UNDP approves projects or uses resources in areas which do not conform with the priorities listed in the country programme. This flexible approach in programme implementation, while responsive to the needs of the moment, can also more easily be taken advantage of for the promotion of sectoral interests.

79. In sum, therefore, it appears that it is not uncommon for country programmes to be subject to sometimes considerable changes in content. This lends further strength to the premise that detailed project identification too far in advance is undesirable, and it raises the question whether UNDP should not pursue more actively the conceptual approach outlined in 1975, particularly in light of the findings that that approach has been found to be still relevant to the needs of the recipient countries, and particularly responsive to the planning and programming methods developed by them (paragraph 43 above).

B. Project Preparation

80. Delays in project preparation may lead to a series of repercussions in programme implementation: (a) funds originally tied up for the project will have to be spent on other activities in order to meet annual expenditure targets; (b) this increases the pressure to create new commitments for purposes of "balancing expenditure", which in turn affects implementation of ongoing projects; and (c) to fill gaps, hasty and as a result qualitatively poor preparation of new projects may be resorted to. Several country programmes included in this study give ample evidence that tardiness in project preparation has a cumulative effect, causing a back-log in the later part of the programme, increased demand for resources to finance new activities and spill-over into the next programme. The phenomenon is generally recognized, and consequently field offices are under continuous pressure to expedite the development of new projects. Staff resources are often inadequate to meet this kind of demand, which adds further to delays in programme implementation, or results in poor quality of project design due to haste.

81. An important objective of the progressive delegation of approval authority to the Resident Representative was, inter alia, to speed the formulation and approval process, and thus improve programme implementation and raise global programme expenditure to the desired level. Another measure taken in support of the same objective was to allow Resident Representatives to authorize Agencies to commit and spend UNDP resources before project formulation has been completed and project

documents have been signed. While the examination of country programming experience has confirmed that these measures have helped to improve the over-all picture of resources utilization, it has also been found that the concomitant increased dependence on UNDP field offices for effective programme implementation makes such heavy demands on the capacity of individual field offices that over-all quality often suffers.

C. Country Programme Reviews

82. Most UNDP field offices in the countries whose country programmes were included in the study regularly review programme implementation and adjust the programme to changed requirements. However, the periodic country programme reviews which in the context of continuous programming were meant to "increasingly serve the purpose of developing new projects, eliminating or rephrasing ongoing projects and generally making the country programme responsive to changing situations" ^{28/} have remained a rare feature in country programming experience. Such reviews as have been carried out have been treated largely as a means of assessing performance rather than of forward programming. Many Resident Representative expressed the view that regular programme discussions with the government render this type of exercise superfluous, especially if the IPF has been fully programmed and broken down into individual projects, leaving little or no room for adaptation as discussed above. In those cases, programme management has tended to become an exercise in supervising programme expenditure, leaving little scope for an appraisal of future needs. The view has also been expressed that programme reviews are superfluous in the case of programmes which are "on target", and further that if priorities remain unchanged country programme reviews are unnecessary, effective tripartite reviews of projects being sufficient to maintain the quality of the programme.

83. Governments which have fully programmed their IPF resources and those which have sizeable programmes have expressed reluctance to get involved in time and energy-consuming annual programme reviews. They preferred to adjust the country programme in accordance with the needs of the moment, using slippage in implementation (i.e., failure to get projects started) to meet the cost of projects not previously planned.

84. In light of these constraints, the Agency role in periodic country programme reviews, if they are held at all, is understandably limited. While Agencies represented at the country level may be involved in programme reviews through their project or office staff, Agency headquarters are not usually invited to participate in such reviews.

85. Despite continuing concern to maintain a large measure of flexibility in conducting periodic country programme reviews, the fact remains that the effectiveness of continuous programming as envisaged in DP/116 and the 1975 instructions greatly depends on such reviews, appropriately planned and timed, to examine the state of the programme and plan further activities. In this

^{28/} DP/116, Review of Country Programming Experience, paragraph 33.

review process, tripartite project reviews 29/, systematically carried out for all major projects, together with a concomitant assessment of changing development priorities and technical co-operation needs at the sectoral and intersectoral levels, should provide the major inputs. It is essential that governments be fully involved in such reviews, preferably initiating and leading them. In addition to this function of country programme reviews as a means of continuous programming, such reviews are also a useful means of informing participants of ongoing and planned activities which may help to forge links between activities and thus enhance their effectiveness.

D. The Role of Governments in Programme Implementation

86. The examination of country programme experience has shown that, with the strengthening of countries' planning structures, the involvement of central authorities in project implementation tends to increase. This also appears to be the case where country programming is based upon a permanent dialogue between UNDP and central and sectoral government authorities. Additionally, the financial crisis has induced some central government authorities to play a more active role in monitoring programme implementation and in determining priorities if changes in the programme are required. As a rule however, central government authorities are not greatly involved in implementation, relying on the sectoral ministries to attend to matters of operational concern.

E. The Role of Agencies and UNDP in the Implementation of Programmes

87. Co-operation at the field level between staff of organizations of the United Nations system and of UNDP field offices has been found to be most positive. Considerable assistance is rendered to both governments and these field offices in practically all countries by in-country international experts for the review of projects, the formulation of project extensions or changes, and for developing new activities.

88. There is, however, noticeable concern among Resident Representatives in the countries included in the study about the quality of project backstopping, once a project has been approved. Agency headquarters are not always able to meet backstopping requirements of the projects executed by them and too easily inclined, once a project has been launched, to let it take its course with the help of the international project staff. Agency participation in tripartite reviews is often delegated to project staff, who thereby evaluate their own achievements. In this connexion, questions regarding the cost of project backstopping are currently being reviewed in the context of the study on support costs, undertaken by independent consultants. 30/

29/ Tripartite reviews of projects which should be conducted at least annually and jointly by the government, the Executing Agency and UNDP, are a device for the monitoring of project implementation required for all major projects.

30/ Governing Council decision 79/40.

/...

89. Most Resident Representatives in the countries included in the study have made special efforts to establish a dialogue between the government, UNDP field office and Agency personnel, and to maintain it throughout the programme's implementation. Such efforts include periodic meetings of representatives of Agencies at the country level, improved contact between the field office and the sectoral ministries, the creation of interagency working groups and co-ordination committees in selected sectors, and, in at least one case, the introduction of interdepartmental co-ordination mechanisms for individual projects.

90. It appears, therefore, that communication at the country level on matters affecting programme and project implementation between government, UNDP field staff and Agency personnel varies; at its best it is constructive and stimulating. Nevertheless, there remains scope for a more structured and sustained dialogue which requires further efforts toward harmony on the part of Agencies and UNDP alike.

VI. FUTURE COUNTRY PROGRAMMING

91. The new approach to country programming adopted in 1975 envisaged a shift in emphasis from programming of inputs to programming of objectives. This approach, which has been referred to in preceding paragraphs as continuous programming, can best be characterized by its emphasis on maintaining relevance of UNDP technical co-operation to national objectives, needs and priorities as they evolve. It envisages a dynamic country programme, the broad outlines of which are set forth in the country programme document, which is synchronized with the national plan, and which is meant to evolve in response, over time, to the government's articulation of its own development programme and activities.

92. This approach is considered conceptually sound by most governments and Resident Representatives. However, the results of the examination of country programming experience discussed in the preceding paragraphs lead to the conclusion that this approach is not yet consistently applied on a programme-wide basis. In view of the fact that the effective introduction of continuous programming was interrupted by the liquidity crisis of 1975, a full assessment of its merits cannot be made at this time; given its generally favourable reception, however, it appears desirable to continue to pursue its systematic application. In future country programming the emphasis should therefore be on the identification of technical co-operation requirements in terms of objectives and activities. The identification of projects in the course of programme implementation should be as consistent as changing demands will allow with the over-all direction, objectives and activities of the programme as originally conceived.

93. In sum, therefore, in order to derive the greatest benefit from continuous programming, particular attention should be paid to:

(a) Obtaining clarity in the country programme document and specificity in objectives to be served by UNDP assistance, thus affording a basis for programme monitoring;

(b) Continuing review (using existing monitoring devices) of the implementation of ongoing activities and of progress in the initiation of planned activities;

(c) Continuing assessment of newly arising technical co-operation needs in light of identified programme objectives, changing national priorities, and resources availability;

(d) Periodic over-all review of ongoing and planned activities and confirmation of the programme for the subsequent one-to-two year period.

94. Aside from this more structured approach, another essential condition for the increased effectiveness of country programming is the achievement of a common understanding within the United Nations system of the respective roles of the parties in what should be a tripartite approach to technical co-operation. It was observed in paragraph 51 that government central planning authorities and those responsible for the co-ordination of external assistance do not always perceive an urgent need for the direct involvement of Agencies in the country programming exercise. It was their view that this exercise, to be conducted by the government in consultation with the Resident Representative, should be the product of a continuing dialogue both at the operational level between the United Nations system and the sectoral ministries and with the central planning and co-ordinating authorities. Such a dialogue may well facilitate the likelihood of government authorities seeking the advice or assistance of an organization of the United Nations system in the course of a country programming exercise.

95. The Resident Representative's role in the dialogue referred to above has been amply defined in the Consensus, which requires the Resident Representative to exercise leadership on behalf of the United Nations system in activities undertaken with the government for the programming of UNDP resources. It has been observed that, while most Resident Representatives have made efforts to establish a dialogue between the government and the United Nations system, there remains scope for improvement (paragraph 90).

96. Of critical importance for effective continuous programming is the establishment of a better articulated, more sustained role for organizations of the United Nations system in country programming, based upon their association with sectoral activities and their knowledge of sectoral capabilities and needs in each country. The Administrator considers the following factors to be essential elements of an effective operational relationship between UNDP, the Agencies and governments throughout the process of UNDP country programming. These factors should, therefore, serve as a basis for further developing a meaningful process of continuous programming:

(a) The continuing dialogue between organizations of the United Nations system and their national counterparts are of great value in maintaining substantive/technical contact between the system and governments at the sectoral ministry level and for promoting understanding of development issues of global and regional concern;

(b) This dialogue should be supportive of national planning for sectoral development, of intersectoral initiatives by the government and should strengthen national development planning in general;

(c) It is essential that in these endeavours United Nations organizations remain constantly mindful of the functions and responsibilities of national authorities at the central as well as the sectoral levels and lend their active support to enhancing the effectiveness of national planning as conceived by the government when they participate in programming activities;

(d) Active support and participation of organizations of the United Nations system in the sectoral identification of technical assistance requirements by sectoral authorities should afford those authorities access to the knowledge and experience of the Agencies, and provide the latter with insight in and an understanding of sectoral and over-all development potentials, constraints and needs in the country. In this connexion, collaboration should be actively pursued with the government's central co-ordinating and planning authorities in co-operation with the Resident Representative;

(e) UNDP should continue to help strengthen this relationship. Provided the government requests assistance in preparing sectoral studies and/or in identifying technical co-operation needs for purposes of national planning or for programming the use of United Nations system resources, assistance from UNDP should be provided as appropriate;

(f) Organizations of the United Nations system should conversely strengthen their support to the Resident Representative in the discharge of his/her over-all responsibility for the programming of UNDP assistance and for: (i) bringing together for a constant dialogue with central government authorities the Agencies represented in the field or by the Resident Representative's office; and (ii) pursuing the most effective communication between his/her office, sectoral authorities and the relevant organizations of the United Nations system;

(g) The continuing dialogue between the United Nations system and the relevant sectoral and central authorities should provide the required framework for a continuing review of the implementation of ongoing activities, the initiation of planned activities, the assessment of new needs, and for over-all programme reviews;

(h) Organizations of the United Nations system should make appropriate arrangements which should enable them to participate more effectively in the country programming process as required by the government;

(i) Resident Representatives should actively pursue, with the consent of the government concerned, the creation of more structured and lasting consultative and co-ordinating mechanisms within the United Nations system in the country, bearing in mind the provisions of General Assembly resolution 34/213 on the implementation of Section V of the Annex to resolution 32/197;

(j) In negotiating UNDP assistance, the Resident Representative should take into account existing relationships between national sectoral authorities and the respective Agencies and maximize this relationship in the interest of improved

programming; he/she should, as considered appropriate by the government, provide for Agency participation in his/her programming consultations with central authorities responsible for the co-ordination of external assistance and for planning

97. In further developing the principle of continuous programming, every effort must be made to keep bureaucratic requirements at a minimum. Administrative procedures should be effective but simple, consultations carefully planned but limited to the absolutely necessary, and paper work kept to manageable proportions in terms of what governments, and also UNDP field offices, can reasonably be expected to cope with. In particular, continuous programming should not result in a series of elaborate annual programming exercises as these inevitably become a burden to both the governments and the United Nations system.

98. Bearing in mind the above stated considerations, the Administrator considers it important that country programming for the third cycle assume the following broad distinctive features:

(a) UNDP country programmes should be planned for a specific period of time, in accordance with national requirements of planning and plan implementation of the government concerned; presumably, the duration of country programmes will vary from three to five years, with a few exceptions in the case of longer national planning cycles or where such cycles are interrupted or bridged by interim plans for reasons of national concern;

(b) The criteria set forth in the Consensus for the formulation of country programmes (see paragraph 35 above) should continue to apply, it being understood, however, that technical co-operation requirements to be met by the Programme be identified primarily in terms of objectives and activities and that country programme documents should not contain detailed project information, nor be required to specify projects other than those already under implementation or in a sufficiently advanced stage of preparation;

(c) Programme formulation should remain the responsibility of governments. The organizations of the United Nations system should contribute to such formulation in accord with the need as expressed by the government in each case. The Resident Representative should ensure that appropriate government authorities are fully apprised of the inputs available from the United Nations system and should assist the government in the co-ordination of these inputs. Conversely, in the formulation of country programmes, governments should bear in mind the multilateral character of UNDP technical co-operation and the access provided through the United Nations system to global resources of knowledge and experience within and without the system;

(d) The contribution of the organizations of the United Nations system to the formulation of individual country programmes need not and should not consist of a one-time all-out effort; Agency participation in country programming should be continuous and should proceed from the relationships established by each of them with governmental and non-governmental entities in-country, from their operational involvement in national development activities, from their legitimate concern at the global level with developmental issues in their competence and, as appropriate, from the specific role assigned to them by governments in sectoral and multisectoral planning for development;

(e) The identification, formulation and implementation of new projects should take place concurrently as programme implementation moves forward. In order to sustain the programme's relevance to changing development needs, a continuing dialogue among government authorities at all levels, the UNDP field office and Agencies should be maintained, together with collaboration in the monitoring of ongoing activities in the identification of further needs and in additional programming of resources to meet such needs;

(f) Monitoring and programming devices, including tripartite project reviews, periodic programme reviews conducted jointly by the government and UNDP with the collaboration of Agencies, sectoral studies and assessment of technical co-operation needs should be strengthened and consistently applied; they should be forward looking and supportive of government initiatives regarding plan implementation and additional planning;

(g) The results of these reviews, the studies and various insights in a country's development characteristics and needs accumulated at both the central and sectoral cycle, by the United Nations system throughout the programme cycle, should equip UNDP and Agencies for the supportive role required of them in country programming. The Resident Representative should be responsible, in consultation with the government, for the mobilization of resources which the United Nations system can bring to bear.

99. Continuous programming should help not only to ensure continuity between successive programmes. More importantly, it should accomplish three related objectives: to provide governments with the means of increasing the relevance of UNDP technical co-operation to changing development needs; to facilitate more effective planning of other available resources - particularly those of the United Nations system; and to both identify additional technical co-operation requirements and help generate the resources to meet them.

100. In the opinion of the Administrator, the approach to continuous country programming set forth in the preceding paragraphs creates a basis for a more effective collaboration among all those concerned with technical co-operation activities at the country level. This approach, and especially the periodic country programme review which figures prominently therein, constitutes an essential step towards facilitating the use of the UNDP country programming process as a frame of reference for operational activities of the United Nations system at the country level.

101. With proper management, continuous country programming can become a very useful mechanism of review and synthesis, capable of generating on a regular and systematic basis, clearly defined development activities for which the United Nations system can assist governments in mobilizing additional resources. It is hoped, therefore, that the preparation of country programmes could, in future, address not only the utilization of United Nations system resources but also, in a complementary fashion and through such ad hoc mechanisms as "round table" and donors meetings, attempt to marshall additional resources from all donors interested in supporting national development efforts.

102. The above considerations are steps towards a definition of a more effective mechanism for the co-ordination of the assistance provided by the United Nations system at the country level, in accordance with the policies set forth in the Consensus and General Assembly resolutions 32/197 and 34/213. While the specific modus operandi of the Resident Co-ordinator still has to be worked out in terms of the operational realities of the field situation, it is believed that the proposals contained in this paper will help set the stage towards making his mandate an effective one and thus contribute to further strengthening the country programming process.

VII. DRAFT DECISION

103. The Governing Council, following consideration of this report and having reviewed the recommendation put forward by the Administrator, may wish to adopt the following decision:

The Governing Council,

1. Takes note of the report of the Administrator on the examination of country programming experience (DP/454) and endorses the proposals made by the Administrator for country programming during the third programme cycle;
2. Requests the Administrator to establish, in consultation with the Participating and Executing Agencies, procedures for future country programming based upon the criteria and considerations set forth in chapter VII of the report, in particular paragraphs 100 through 105;
3. Invites the Administrator to report to the Council in 1981 on progress made in the implementation of the proposals for improved country programming during the third cycle.

- - - - -