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UNITED NATIONS FUND FOR POPULATION ACTIVITIES

Report of the Executive Director

reviewing UNFPA programming procedures

Summary

At its thirtieth session in June 1983, the Governing
Council in decision 83/17, I, paragraph 13, requested
the Executive Director to present to the Council at
its thirty-first session a report reviewing UNFPA
programming procedures, including basic needs
assessment, project formulation, appraisal and
monitoring. This document reviews the evolution
of UNFPA's programming system, programme development,
project formulation, monitoring and evaluation and
efforts at improvement of the programming system.

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INTRODUCTION

1.   At its thirtieth session in June 1983, the Governing Council in decision
83/7, I, paragraph 13 requested the Executive Director to present to the
Governing Council at its thirty-first session a report reviewing UNFPA
programming procedures including basic needs assessment, project formulation,
appraisal and monitoring.

2.   The Fund has continued to evolve, refine and improve the various aspects
of its programming process, reflecting the cumulative experience of
Governments and the United Nations system and the UNFPA in regard to
population programming. Thus, programming is seen as a dynamic process,
constantly changing to meet the needs and challenges of the developing
countries. This report will describe principles and current procedures, but
will also briefly indicate how the Fund evolved to this point and will
suggest foreseeable future trends.

3.   It is divided into five sections. Section I traces the evolution of
UNFPA's basic approaches to programming, illustrating the interactions between
substance and procedure. Section II describes the major components of the
programme development process, especially the needs assessment exercise.
Section III outlines the steps required to formulate, appraise, and approve
projects. In Section IV describes UNFPA's current monitoring and evaluation
system. Section V summarizes new trends in the programming area.

4.   In general, UNFPA programming takes place along two somewhat distinct but
closely parallel lines: programming for country-level programmes and projects,
and programming for intercountry programmes and projects. In sequential
terms, the programming process for both types of programmes and projects is
similar. The following brief summary shows the sequence of events in the
programming process.

5.   First, there is the need to identify the major areas of population
activities that need to be assisted, the time frame for such assistance and
the cost of such assistance. The ultimate criteria are the needs of the
developing countries and the question of how best to meet these needs.

6.   The second step in the programming process is the formulation of the
population programme or projects that meet the major substantive objectives of
the country or intercountry programme. This phase requires a series of steps,
including technical appraisal.

7.   The third stage in the process is the monitoring and evaluating of
programmes and projects as they are being implemented. These are essential
for effective management of programmes and projects and, for providing
necessary feedback to UNFPA for determining whether objectives are being met,
goals and targets achieved, etc. Countries also benefit directly from this
feedback.

8. Underlying the foregoing process are the policy making and planning functions. These functions define the substantive and financial boundaries of UNFPA activity, establish priorities, set goals and create strategies for achieving them. UNFPA programming decisions are guided by these considerations and are tempered by its experience-based assessments of feasibility.

I. EVOLUTION OF UNFPA'S PROGRAMMING SYSTEM

9. During the early years of UNFPA, there was little awareness internationally of population as a development problem, and there were few national or international agencies well equipped to provide intellectual support or technical assistance. For this reason, the UNFPA devoted most of its early resources to supporting intercountry activities, including assistance to the United Nations and specialized agencies and certain non-governmental organizations to build awareness and to enable them to strengthen their ability to inform and assist interested developing countries. Prior to 1974, approximately 60 per cent of UNFPA's programme resources were allocated to such intercountry activities. This creation of international population support infrastructure has assisted the developing countries over the years and continues to do so.

10. Major events in the early years of UNFPA were the World Population Year and World Population Conference held in Bucharest, Romania, in 1974, and the World Population Plan of Action (WPPA), which was the product of the Conference. Prior to these, in 1972, a formal review of the UNFPA was conducted by an external panel undertaken in response to General Assembly resolution 2815 (XXVI) of December 1971.1/ The report of the panel laid the groundwork for numerous changes that took place in UNFPA programming approaches. The WPPA, which is also of importance to the work of UNFPA, emphasizes an integrated development approach to population. The greatest challenge posed by the WPPA has been to determine how population and related activities can be programmed effectively as an integral part of various development programmes. The WPPA also directed attention to meeting the needs of disadvantaged population groups, a monumental task in view of the fact that the majority of the population in most developing countries may be considered as belonging to such groups. These themes - the integrated development approach and focussing on special target populations - strengthened trends already in evidence in UNFPA, many of which had been given expression in the 1972 panel report.

11. A major outcome of the World Population Year and Conference - which was to influence international population assistance - was to heighten awareness among Governments and individuals of the clear links between population factors and the quality of life, while also making it possible for many Governments to intensify or initiate population projects within the context of economic and social development efforts.

12. In response to the foregoing and other early influences, the UNFPA developed new programming policies and procedures designed to deal with the challenges and opportunities which had emerged, and which would be congruent with the aims and purposes of UNFPA as articulated by the United Nations Economic and Social Council in resolution 1763 (LIV) of 18 May 1973.2/

A. The development of the comprehensive, integrated programme approach

13. During its early years, UNFPA, the United Nations Secretariat and United Nations specialized agencies and most countries were not well equipped to go beyond a project-based approach. In the beginning, even the identification and formulation of individual projects was a difficult undertaking. This is evidenced by the fact that as of 1971 three fourths of all UNFPA-funded projects were developed by the agencies, usually one at a time. The UNFPA began to seek development programmes in which population activities could be promoted as an integral part, particularly with organizations in the United Nations system, with bilateral agencies, and with non-governmental organizations.

14. In order to categorize UNFPA project activities for programming purposes, the Fund established a set of Work Plan Categories detailing the range of population sub-sectors which it finances. Known also as the Standard Classification of Population Activities - based on the WPPA and adopted in June 1977 by the United Nations Administrative Committee on Co-ordination Sub-Committee on Population - the Work Plan Categories include basic data collection; population dynamics; formulation and evaluation of population policies; implementation of policies; family planning programmes; communication and education; programmes for special target groups; and multisector activities.

15. The next logical step was to develop a mechanism that would enable the Fund to assist in the identification of the needs of countries with regard to creating a population programme appropriate to their own population policies with the ultimate objective of promoting self-reliance. In order to accomplish this, the Governing Council accepted UNFPA's strategy of undertaking formal assessments of the basic population needs of developing countries.

B. The establishment of a system of programming priorities

16. It is an axiom of good management that priorities are basic to the effective allocation of resources. When demand for these resources exceeds supply, the setting of priorities becomes an urgent necessity. Thus, as the demand for population funds continued to exceed UNFPA's resources, the Fund moved to establish procedures for setting priorities. Initially, this led to the designation of a group of developing countries as priority countries for UNFPA population assistance and to placing a ceiling on support to intercountry activities.

17. The establishment of a system of priority countries. Since there are obvious differences in needs among developing countries, the Governing Council agreed in 1976 with the UNFPA proposal3/ to give priority attention to countries with the most urgent need for population assistance. A set of economic and demographic criteria was used to designate those priority countries to which a target level of two thirds of UNFPA's annual resources available for country programmes would be allocated. As the UNFPA has gained experience with this priority country system, the criteria and, subsequently the list of priority countries, have evolved to better reflect emerging realities.

18. Substantive priorities. By its decision 81/7, the Governing Council at its twenty-eighth session in June 1981, for the first time directed that substantive priorities be established to guide the programming of UNFPA resources. The Council confirmed that the Fund should concentrate on supporting the various population programme areas in the following order of priority: family planning (including delivery of services, training of personnel, strengthening of management, logistics support, encouragement, where appropriate, of local production of contraceptives and research into contraceptive methods); population education, communication, motivation and dissemination of information on family planning; basic data collection; population dynamics; and formulation, implementation and evaluation of population policy.

II. PROGRAMME DEVELOPMENT

19. As conceptualized in the present paper, the programme development process is a complex one involving a number of steps. These steps tend to cluster into the following three distinct components: (1) policy and planning, (2) needs assessments4/ and (3) programme development. The content of this and the following two chapters will be essentially procedural, tracing the steps that take place in a typical programme or project. As before, where there are differences in programme procedures between country and intercountry programmes and projects, these will be explained. The various steps in the programming process depend heavily on the assistance of the UNDP Resident Representative (also UNFPA Representative) and the UNFPA Deputy Representative.

A. Policy and Planning

20. The policy framework. The first step in programming is to establish relevant policy, interpreting the Fund's aims and purposes. The major features of UNFPA policy for programming purposes are the definition of programme areas through the establishment of Work Plan Categories (see paragraph 14 above) and the adoption of certain general principles for the allocation of resources, namely, (a) to promote population activities proposed in international strategies; (b) to meet the needs of developing countries which have the most urgent requirements for population assistance; (c) to respect the sovereignty of countries on matters of population policies;

(d) to build up the developing countries' self-reliance in population; and (e) to support activities of special benefit to disadvantaged population groups. These, together with substantive and geographical priorities, established with the full endorsement of the Council, serve to guide the allocation of resources. These major policies have evolved to meet changing circumstances and to reflect experience at country level. Within these major guidelines are those which establish strategy for carrying out the policies, e.g., those on basic needs assessment and monitoring. Other policies provide guidance for the implementation of these policies, e.g., the emerging series of guidelines on permissible types of support to major sectors of population activity. The origin and updating of these policies may be initiated anywhere in the Fund, including the field offices. The full range of policy guidelines is used as reference to guide programming decisions throughout the Fund at every stage in the programming process.

21. _The planning framework_. As in the case of policy directives, resource planning and utilization data provide reference points for all resource-related programming decisions. In this way, the resource planning function influences substantive planning. Criteria for the selection of a given programme for possible support include probable available resources, urgency of need, how much is required for a given period, and amounts provided in the past. The funds are then allocated in accordance with priority country and substantive criteria, keeping in mind the proportion of overall resources that should go to country (versus intercountry) activities, to priority countries, and to priority work plan categories.

22. Hence, in carrying out the multi-year planning process, consideration is given to programme and project objectives, the managerial-technical capabilities of Governments and executing agencies, the lead time needed for accomplishing tasks, and the flow of resources required during the planning period.

B. Needs assessment

23. When it has been determined, on the basis of policy and planning considerations, that a given country would benefit from a needs assessment mission, such an exercise is undertaken in co-operation with the host Government. The purpose of the needs assessment is to assist a Government in identifying its needs in the broad area of population. Where such an overall government policy or programme does not already exist, the needs assessment exercise can serve to stimulate and assist such a development. On the basis of this assessment, internal and external resources can be deployed for activities most needed within the country's overall population programme. Support to projects does not, however, necessarily have to await the results of a needs assessment exercise. More specifically, the needs assessment exercise: (a) assists Governments in the development or strengthening of a national population programme within the framework of the Government's overall objectives; (b) assist Governments in becoming self-reliant in the formulation

and implementation of population policies and programmes; and (c) assists
Governments, the UNFPA, and other donors in delineating coherent programme
areas for external assistance. Needs assessment missions usually consist of
4-6 experts who participate in the mission in their individual capacities.
The names of candidates are sought from Governments, from United Nations
specialized agencies, and from other experts in the field. Missions typically
require 3-4 weeks in a country to complete their work.

24. Procedures are now highly developed for determining the need and
desirability of a mission, for assessing the type and degree of government
involvement, the composition and timing, and for reviewing its findings and
recommendations. In addition, detailed technical guidelines have been
developed for each substantive area to be covered by the mission so as to
ensure that its report will be substantively complete and sufficiently
analytical.

25. An important aspect of assessing a country's needs in the population area
is to estimate its capacity to carry out the intended activities in terms of
trained manpower, financial, organizational, and physical resources, and
policy support.

26. A needs assessment exercise usually includes:

(a) An analysis of a country's population situation within the context of
national development goals;

(b) An analysis of existing population-related development objectives,
strategies, and programmes;

(c) The development of recommendations on the orientation and scope of
national objectives, strategies, and programmes. These recommendations deal
with strengthening or re-orienting existing objectives, strategies, and
programmes and with establishing new ones, as appropriate; and

(d) The development of recommendations on programme areas in need of
external assistance, within the framework of the recommended national
population programme. These recommendations provide the basis for a coherent
programme for external assistance in support of a country's national
population programme.

27. The basic premise of a population programme is that it serves a country's
development efforts. The needs assessment, therefore, takes as its point of
departure the country's development and population policies and programmes.
Thus, the role of the Government in all phases of the needs assessment is
central. Within the context of a country's development objectives, the needs
assessment covers aspects directly and indirectly affecting population size,
growth, distribution, and structure. It also covers the effect of population
factors on development.

28.   The time span of the recommendations of a needs assessment exercise is
from five to ten years to reflect both long-term efforts to become
self-reliant and the short-term perspective to provide a framework for
external assistance.   The five-year perspective is congruent with the usual
UNFPA country programme cycle and with government planning cycles.

29.   At the conclusion of the needs assessment mission a report with
recommendations on the needs of the overall country programme is submitted to
UNFPA.   At the same time, a draft version of the report is shared with the
host Government for its comments on possible errors of a factual nature.   A
separate set of recommendations specifically for potential UNFPA programming
purposes is prepared by the mission.   This is presented in writing and is
further discussed at a subsequent mission debriefing in New York.   The
foregoing activities set the stage for the programme development steps to
follow.   Needs assessment reports are also shared with other donors involved
or interested in the country, and are available to others on request.

30.   Concerned donor agencies are kept informed about the needs assessment
exercise.   This is essential, as the assessment covers the total area of
population-related activities and is likely to lead to the identification of
needs beyond UNFPA's capacity.   Thus, the needs assessment may, with the
approval of the Government concerned, be useful to other donors in the
development of additional projects.   After consultation with the Government,
UNFPA will decide on the areas of population activities to be assisted by
UNFPA resources, taking other sources of assistance into account.   United
Nations agencies are also consulted during the assessment process,
particularly at the local level, and the needs assessment takes into account
programming exercises undertaken by other donor or United Nations agencies
(e.g., WHO country health programming, UNDP country programme, IBRD
appraisals, etc.).   To the greatest degree possible, the UNFPA has worked
closely with other international agencies to undertake co-ordinated
programming.   One good example of this is in Indonesia, where the UNFPA and
the World Bank developed a co-ordinated, jointly-financed country programme in
the early 1970s.   Over the past year, the Fund has been carrying out a
coordinated programming exercise in Indonesia with UNDP, UNICEF and other
United Nations agencies.

31.   Since country needs normally do not change dramatically in the
short-term, a needs assessment exercise (with its need for high-level
expertise and high cost) is carried out in most countries only once in many
years.   In the intervening period, the Annual Country Review (ACR) process is
often used to update the needs and reframe the country programme.   A
description of the ACR is provided below.

C. Programme development

32. The UNFPA, in consultation with the host government, and considering the recommendations of the needs assessment mission , draws up a tentative outline for a country programme. Increasingly, the government coordinating agencies for UNFPA assistance have been playing a leading role in the actual development of the objectives and content of these complex, multi-year country programmes. This is having important beneficial effects. Since programmes are usually multi-sectoral (and multi-ministry) only the actual involvement of a key government agency can ensure a coordinated and relevant programme. In addition, the greater interest and involvement of nationals in developing the programme greatly improve its chances of successful implementation.

33. Following the needs assessment mission, and prior to the drafting of the country programme description, UNFPA establishes - for planning purposes - a rough costing for the allocations to the country during the programme period. Project-specific financial amounts are not set at this time. The principal criteria used to establish estimated country programme totals are those endorsed by the Governing Council, in 1981 5/. These are the magnitude of the population problems in relation to per capita gross national product; population size and the annual increase in absolute numbers; policies and programmes of the Government; commitment by Governments to stated population policy; absorptive capacity; level of support development assistance per capita from other sources; level of support for population activities from other sources; and the actual and projected implementation rates.

34. Other considerations which are taken into account when establishing a rough costing for a country include the information provided by the Fund's resource planning system, which takes existing commitments into consideration. Another basic factor in this decision-making process has to do with considerations of country and substantive priorities (already partially taken into account in the 1981 list of criteria). To the degree possible, programme size judgements are also influenced by the resource requests and allocations for other countries with programmes of comparable size and complexity. Finally, preference is given to countries which have not previously received UNFPA support. While the foregoing process is largely judgemental, the accumulated experience of the Fund, with its detailed knowledge of the countries, makes this a feasible and effective approach.

35. Using a prescribed format, this draft programme document relates the proposed overall programme of UNFPA assistance to the population-related objectives of the Government and identifies the elements of the total need which the UNFPA will fund and relates these to previous UNFPA support (if any). This document also describes the amount of project activity within each Work Plan category, and proposes the execution, implementation and project formulation arrangements for each project.

36. Following detailed technical needs assessment mission discussion within UNFPA the proposed country programme – agreed to by the host Government and including identification of the various project areas and priorities – is reviewed and the new programme is agreed to, sometimes with modifications. A firm country programme figure by substantive areas – but not individual project amounts – is set at this time. Also discussed and approved at this time are the proposed arrangements for project execution and implementing agencies.

37. Project execution. The question of project execution has been the subject of much discussion. Part of the reason for this is that the pattern of project execution has changed a great deal over the past decade. During the early years of the Fund, virtually all project execution tasks were carried out by the United Nations or the specialized agencies. As Governments began to gain experience and to improve their administrative and technical capacities, they have increasingly taken over the project execution role. As of 1983, about 30 per cent of all UNFPA country projects were Government-executed. In determining the most appropriate executing agency for a given project, the UNFPA considers[6/]:

(a) The host Government's desire and ability to perform all or part of the tasks involved or with regard to another executing agencies;

b If needed, which UN agency would be most appropriate, considering which has the appropriate mandate and access to needed technical skills, and;

(c) Which non-governmental organization would be able to perform the needed tasks.

Before considering the designation of a government department as executing agency, an assessment is done by UNFPA to identify: the available technical experience and know-how within the department or accessible to it and available to the project; the administrative services which would be involved in project implementation including rules for procurement and financial management and formal auditing; and the manner in which the government envisages managerial and administrative supervision and control over the project with a clear identification of the physical and human resources that can be devoted to it.

38. Meetings with potentially interested donors may be held at this stage in the process, in collaboration with the host government. In this way, potentially interested funding sources come to know of a country's needs in the population sector which have been identified by the needs assessment mechanism, but which the UNFPA will not be able to finance.

39. Before project formulation can begin, the host Government reviews and comments on the programme outline approved by the UNFPA. Since the Governments are closely consulted throughout every step of the needs assessment and programme development process, problems of miscommunication are extremely rare.

40. Intercountry programmes. The traditional approach to the programming of intercountry activities has been to rely primarily on the programmes and programming efforts of the United Nations and other agencies. In order to do this, the United Nations agencies have developed their own procedures for ascertaining the needs of the developing countries in the area(s) covered by their own mandates. These are then developed into multi-year programmes composed of a number of projects and submitted to the UNFPA for appraisal and approval. Prior to formulating funding proposals, a discussion takes place between UNFPA and each agency to ensure that such a submission would fit into the policies and workplan of the Fund.

41. While the system has worked reasonably well, the UNFPA has in recent years begun to play a more active role in the intercountry programming process. This need for closer UNFPA involvement has been prompted in part by the need to prioritize and manage intercountry funds more carefully, given the Governing Council's 1979 directive to place a percentage ceiling on such allocations.[7] In order to do this in 1982, the Executive Director proposed guidelines[8] to support of intercountry projects which were endorsed by the Council. Using these guidelines as the basis, the Fund conducted a thorough in-depth analysis of intercountry programmes in each major area of UNFPA activity. This analysis identified areas of intercountry activities which clearly promote technical assistance and backstopping for country activities, recommended activities which should be given priority, and provided guidelines for new programmes and projects.

III. PROJECT FORMULATION

42. Broadly defined, the process of project development involves three major steps: (1) formulation, (2) appraisal and (3) approval.

A. Formulation

43. Country projects. Following approval of the country programme, UNFPA draws up a work plan for project formulation, including a timetable and selection of participants. This work plan is developed in co-operation with the Government and takes into consideration the probable project executing agencies. In cases where specific executing agencies have been designated to execute projects, they are invited to participate in the formulation exercise.

44. Whenever possible, all outside consultants to be used in project formulation are fully briefed by UNFPA technical officers and programme staff. When such briefings are not practicable, the technical officer concerned is responsible for ensuring that the consultant is briefed by the staff of the appropriate United Nations organization, or by a member of a United Nations regional or interregional population team.

45. A manual, entitled "UNFPA Instructions for the Preparation of a Project Document" (UNFPA/19/Revision No. 2 dated 15 October 1978), provides the basic guidelines for all project formulation. A simplified and updated version of this document is being prepared especially to assist governments and others unfamiliar with UNFPA project documents.

46. Intercountry projects. Based on the programme areas, funding and timing agreed to between UNFPA and the concerned agency, that agency undertakes its own project formulation. These follow the same format as country projects.

B. Appraisal and approval

47. Project appraisal is a systematic process which allows a determination to be made on the probable success of a project proposal. In this process, administrative, technical, and operational factors are considered.

48. Following project document completion in the field, the UNFPA Deputy Representative, if any, after ensuring that the document is complete and conforms to the guidelines provided by the approved country programme document, sends it to UNFPA headquarters for review. The foregoing procedure refers to both country and intercountry projects.

49. Country projects are normally also sent to the appropriate United Nations agencies for technical comment. Intercountry projects are normally appraised by UNFPA programme and technical staff, and by all relevant United Nations agencies.

50. It should be emphasized that in the overall process of programme and project appraisal, all available technical and other expertise is inter-linked and is involved to the degree possible, including UNFPA, the United Nations, the specialised agencies, and others who may have specific knowledge needed for complete appraisal.

51. When satisfactory answers have been received to all questions, and all necessary changes have been agreed to and made in the project document, the project is again reviewed. If the project is approved, the necessary funds are allocated to the UNFPA field office and/or the relevant executing agency.

52. There are generally no time limits for the development of individual projects, as they may be designed for submission to UNFPA for funding at any time of the programming cycle. Any proposed UNFPA-sponsored project or programme of more than one million US dollars must be submitted to the UNDP Governing Council for approval of the broad content and the amount of UNFPA assistance.9/

53. For submission to the Governing Council, programme and project appraisal and approval need to be completed by UNFPA not later than the month of February in a particular year. This means that project submission must reach UNFPA headquarters at least a few months earlier. Usually, somewhat more than half of a country programme submitted to the Council will have been formulated into projects and officially submitted by the Government to UNFPA for funding.

IV. MONITORING AND EVALUATION

54. Systematic feedback from the implementation of programmes and projects is essential to ensure that they are implemented in such a way as to maximize the probability of reaching their objectives, permitting mid-course corrections, as necessary. A second purpose of monitoring and evaluating the UNFPA's implementation experience is to discharge the accountability responsibilities of the Fund to the Governing Council for managing resources. A third purpose of monitoring is to build a knowledge base about project implementation that, over time, will improve the quality and relevance of the Fund's policies and procedures, and thus of UNFPA-funded projects.

55. UNFPA monitoring and evaluation policies and procedures have been in effect and developing throughout the Fund's history. Because of UNDP's prior experience, the UNFPA monitoring system has to some degree been modelled on that of the UNDP10/. Over time, however, the Fund has modified these procedures and has developed certain new ones. Earlier monitoring and evaluation policies and procedures emphasized projects, almost to the exclusion of programmes. This orientation reflected the Fund's own earlier emphasis on individual projects rather than programmes. Since this emphasis has now been brought into better balance, UNFPA's policies and procedures have been revised accordingly. The major mechanism developed by the Fund for monitoring country programmes is the Annual Country Review which began in 1978. The principal review mechanisms for country and intercountry projects are basically Project Progress Reports (PPRs) and Tripartite Project Reviews (TPRs); these are known as Project Reviews (PRs) in the case of intercountry projects.

56. The monitoring of programme and project implementation is co-ordinated with complementary evaluation activities. These functions are designed into an overall system which attempts to involve field staff and UNFPA headquarters. It should be noted that the technical capabilities of the UNFPA are currently very modest. This has served to constrain the Fund's ability to perform this function as completely as would be desirable.

A. Project Monitoring

57. Project progress reports. The primary purpose of the PPR is to provide qualitative and quantitative assessment of project progress. PPRs are required from executing agencies for every project on a semi-annual basis. The PPRs are prepared by the executing agency or, in the case of directly-executed projects, by the government implementing agency. The timing of the PPR is related to the timing of the TPR. The PPR done prior to each year's TPR must be completed at least two-and one-half months prior to the TPR. This lead-time allows an opportunity to solicit and consider the views of the UNFPA field office and/or the UNDP Resident Representative, UNFPA headquarters, the government co-operating and implementing agencies, and the headquarters of the executing agency.

58. PPRs contain information on the work done during the reporting period, on delays and other problems encountered, and suggested revisions.

59. Since there has occasionally been a problem with the quality or completeness of PPRs from both executing agencies and governments, the UNFPA Deputy Representatives screen these and often help in the preparation of these documents. In extreme cases, the UNFPA Deputy Representative returns the PPR to the author for rewriting. In the absence of a UNFPA Deputy Representative, the concerned UNDP Resident Representative often assigns the review function to a programme officer, if the work load warrants it.

60. The preparation and distribution of PPRs relating to intercountry projects is somewhat different from those emanating from country projects. A major objective of intercountry monitoring activities is to ensure that sufficiently detailed information is provided by the implementing agency (which prepares these PPRs) so that UNFPA can fully relate the role of each intercountry activity to country programmes and projects. Although the content of intercountry PPRs is similar to that for country reports, additional information is required for certain types of intercountry activities. Also, intercountry projects sometimes combine more than one type of activity. Thus, in preparing intercountry PPRs, special care is needed to ensure that the project is fully described and analyzed.

61. Tripartite project reviews. During this era of greater concern for effective management of scarce resources, questions dealing with the relevance of project inputs receive separate attention, as does the status of project expenditures and the feasibility of utilizing allocated budgets. These annual, country project-specific reviews provide the opportunity to asses the progress of a project and to make decisions about improvements. Thus, the major areas dealt with during a TPR are the status of project in terms of its progress towards objectives, the identification of problems and constraints, and the actions necessary to improve the project's chances for success.

62. The most important feature of the TPR is that the parties responsible for the management and output of the project - the Government, the executing agency, and the funding agency - review the project jointly, and together arrive at recommendations for the decisions that need to be taken, along with the clear identification of the parties responsible for carrying out those decisions.

63. All available information about the project is reviewed at the TPR. This includes the PPRs, the latest expenditure statements and equipment inventories provided by the executing agency, field visit reports, and consultant reports. Participants may take direct decisions within their competence or make recommendations for action by the appropriate authorities.

64. A report is made of the proceedings and decisions or recommendations of each TPR. Normally prepared by the Government, this report is forwarded to the UNFPA Deputy Representative who sends it together with his/her comments to all participants and to UNFPA headquarters. The executing agency and the UNFPA Deputy Representative are expected to monitor the follow-up action decided upon or recommended.

65. Project Reviews (PRs) conducted for intercountry projects are similar in purpose and output to the TPRs conducted for country projects. The major difference is in the organizing responsibility, participants and venue. For regional projects, responsibility for organizing the PR is given to the UNFPA Resident Representative resident in, or responsible for, the country in which the project is located. This country is also the venue for the PR. For interregional projects, responsibility for organizing the PR is given to the UNFPA headquarters. These PRs are held at the headquarters of the implementing agency. Although the participation in PRs is normally limited to the implementing agency and to the involved UNFPA Resident Representative and/or UNFPA headquarters, the comments from other UNFPA Resident Representatives and UNFPA Deputy Representatives are also reviewed. To the extent feasible, representatives of countries involved in a particular intercountry project may also be invited to attend a PR.

66. Financial monitoring. While the quality of a project is of primary importance, attention is also given to quantitative implementation rates. This information, when aggregated, is needed for overall UNFPA financial planning and resource allocation. At the beginning of each quarter, the project implementing or executing agency accounts for the funds provided for that quarter in terms of expenditures, obligations, and the balance remaining. This information is provided to UNFPA headquarters where it, together with other transactions for the period, is added to the computerized financial record for each project. These data are compared in the field and at headquarters with the expenditure pattern anticipated in the approved workplan and budget. As noted, project corrections may result from recommendations made at a TPR. At the end of each calendar year each

project's expenditures are calculated and added to the record and an
independent audit is conducted to verify the accuracy of these figures. It is
difficult to maintain fully complete and up-to-date financial information
about each project simultaneously at the country level, at UNFPA Headquarters,
and in the executing agency (if different). This problem results from the
number of persons and agencies involved, the complexity of many project
budgets, the problem of gathering timely information on client-level financial
transactions, and the difficulty of international communications. In order to
strengthen its financial monitoring of projects, the UNFPA has introduced
procedures to obtain more detailed information from the field on the
expenditure and budgetary requirements of projects[11]/.

B. Programme Monitoring

67. Annual country review (ACR). The development of country activities based
on integrated, long-term programmes required the development of a special
monitoring procedure[11]/. The objective of the ACR is to review the
UNFPA-assisted country programme in its entirety, particularly in regard to
the status of implementation, future programme directions, and possible new
dimensions for UNFPA-sponsored activities. Although the purposes of the ACR,
and the major areas dealt with during the ACR, are essentially the same as the
TPR, there are some important differences. These differences derive from the
fact that a programme has larger, longer-term multisectoral goals related to a
country's own national development goals. Therefore, when conducting the ACR,
the participants examine the progress of the UNFPA-sponsored programme as a
whole and examine the contribution of these activities to the country's
overall population and development programme. Changes in national priorities
or economic circumstances may require adjustments to the current or
foreseeable UNFPA-sponsored programme. The ACR also provides a forum for
discussing new programme and project proposals.

68. The organization, depth and method of conduct of the ACR are determined
by the size, complexity, phase of implementation and other factors regarding
the UNFPA-sponsored programme. The ACR may be a combination of plenary
meetings, small working groups and informal discussions.

69. The ACR is not intended to be a compilation of individual mini-TPRs nor
is it normally an in-depth technical review. Rather, the ACR is oriented
towards the whole programme and its place within the framework of a
government's policies and objectives. ACR discussions are geared to major
themes and objectives of the government's population and/or development plan.
Thus, the ACR provides the parties involved an opportunity to review the
activities sponsored by UNFPA, either by themselves or in conjunction with
complementary activities funded by other donors and in relation to the
country's population and development programming, and to discuss the gaps in
the programme, particularly as perceived by the Government, as well as the
availability of resources to cover these gaps, including multi-bilateral funds.

70. One important function of the ACR is to update information on a country's needs, as originally derived from a needs assessment mission. Since needs do not normally change dramatically in the short-run a follow-up needs assessment exercise requiring high-level expertise and costs would normally be carried out in a given country only after some years, or perhaps not at all. In the intervening period, the ACR process is utilized to update the needs and to reformulate country programmes.

71. The ACRs for this purpose are classified as "programming ACRs". In addition to normal monitoring of the country programme, this type of ACR will also conduct an in-depth scrutiny of the country's needs, thereby updating the country's population profile, and will suggest areas for updating the country programme. To prepare and conduct this more complex exercise, the UNFPA, in collaboration with the host Government, United Nations executing agencies, and others, will mobilize the needed technical expertise. The report of these experts will be considered in the ACR and will help to form the basis for any further country reprogramming.

72. In practice, it has been most important to emphasize to Governments and to executing agencies alike that programming is a continuous activity, and is not confined to any particular phase of the implementation of a UNFPA country programme, but must instead be related to a government's needs, objectives and policies on the one hand, and UNFPA priorities and policies and availability of UNFPA resources, including multi/bilateral resources, on the other. With regard to the monitoring of implementation, this should also be seen as a continuous concern during all phases of the programme. Thus, every ACR should focus on both programming and the monitoring of implementation with adjustment in mid-course, as necessary. The same is true of project monitoring and the TPR procedure.

C. Evaluation

73. Evaluation is the final step in the programme and project sequence, assessing the experience gained in implementation and feeding this back into the policy and programming process. Basically, there are two types of evalution relevant to population activities, built-in evaluation and independent, in-depth evaluation.

Built-in evaluation refers to evaluation as a standard element of the design and implementation of a project. It is an extension of project monitoring focussing primarily on the accomplishment of project objectives and on project effects in general.

The main purposes of built-in evaluation are to improve current project activities and future planning, programming and decision-making for the project primarily, and to document systematically the progress made in implementing activities and in achieving the project objectives. Built-in evaluation and monitoring are complementary processes that are dealt with together, as much as possible, throughout the programme cycle.

Although increasing attention is being paid to built-in self-evaluation in new project proposals, this is a relatively new developjment in the United Nations, and training in this area for all concerned personnel is not yet fully developed nor have procedures been developed for follow-up. This is a priority activity of the UNFPA, however, and some progress is being made.

74. Independent, in-depth evaluations are undertaken for selected projects/programmes only. The main purposes of these evaluations in addition to project improvement are to provide information for decision-making within UNFPA, particularly at the policy level, and to provide one of the inputs that enables the Executive Director to meet the requirements of accountability to the Governing Council. These evaluations are undertaken through missions composed of persons who have not previously been involved with the projects/programmes under evaluation.

75. It is important to note that both types of evaluations described above are applied to country and intercountry programmes and projects. For a more detailed description and analysis of UNFPA evaluation activities, see the Executive Director's report on UNFPA evaluation activities also provided to this session of the Council (DP/1984/33).

V. IMPROVING THE PROGRAMMING AND MONITORING PROCESS

A. The Climate for Change

76. Virtually every aspect of UNFPA's programming and monitoring process has been subjected to formal review over the past 2-3 years. The Fund's management continues to place high priority on efforts to evaluate, adapt and change these procedures as needed. While it is true that such reviews are not new, efforts at improvement are given even higher priority during the present period than heretofore, and this helps to account for the active dialogue under way at the UNFPA.

77. The present period is especially productive in terms of "state of the art" programming/monitoring review efforts for UNFPA because of the dynamic nature of population programmes and changing aspects of the development climate. These factors include:

    (a) The need to achieve maximum efficiency in the allocation of increasingly scarce resources;

    (b) The shift in UNFPA programming priorities towards integrated, field-based service delivery projects which are more difficult to programme and monitor;

    (c) The changing levels of sophistication and needs of national population programmes;

(d)   The continuing increase in the complexity of technology required to operate well-developed population programmes (for example, a full range of the following are likely to be encountered: computer and other electronic data processing equipment; audio-visual equipment; preventive medical equipment; office machines; transportation; contraceptives and medicines; and

(e)   The need for the United Nations system to evolve its interagency relationships in order to keep abreast with these changing requirements.

78.   Although a number of the issues discussed in this paper are still under review within UNFPA, some of the developments already underway or likely to emerge from current thinking can be summarized at this time.

B.   Summary of trends and developments

Policy and planning

79.   (a) Prioritization of substantive areas (e.g., family planning and education) and of countries will continue to be required, primarily as the best means to cope with the continuing high demand for UNFPA resources relative to available income.

(b)   Policy and technical guidelines will continue to be developed and updated to cover all key areas included in the UNFPA mandate. A great effort is being made to ensure that UNFPA staff, host Governments, and participating agencies understand and utilize these effectively.

(c)   Financial aspects of programming for future years will rely on the more conservative but more reliable use of country "floors", and the country "ceiling" approach will be used only for the current year. (See UNFPA report on programming planning DP/1984/34).

Programming

80.   Country programmes

(a)   The process of identification and development of country programmes has been modified to formalize and enhance the role of the needs assessment mission (or "programming ACR") and UNFPA field offices. The procedures are also being made more systematic and better documented. This will permit early and better informed consideration of proposed programming by UNFPA headquarters and host Governments.

(b)   Now that virtually all UNFPA priority countries have been subjected to a needs assessment mission, in future such missions will be conducted on a far more limited basis. Periodic updating of a country's needs and developing possible new programme outlines will be accomplished primarily by adapting the ACR procedure to perform these functions.

81. Intercountry programmes and projects. The quality and relevance of these has become increasingly better in recent years. This is due in part to a greater and more systematic effort to the agencies themselves to develop and apply improved country-based programming approaches. This trend has been strongly encouraged and supported by UNFPA. Perhaps a more basic reason for the improvement is the greatly improved dialogue and co-operation now taking place between UNFPA (headquarters and field) staff and the staff of these agencies on programme and project content, balance, phasing and cost. This co-operative dialogue has now begun to take place at all stages in the programming and monitoring process. One of the key features of this co-operation is that much of it takes place directly between comparable technical staff of UNFPA and the other agencies.

82. Monitoring and evaluation. Although UNFPA's monitoring system is not inferior to that of other leading development assistance agencies, the Fund's management decided in 1983 to take a fresh look at the subject. Some of the problems which continue to inhibit further improvement in UNFPA monitoring efforts are the difficulty in generating substantive reports of adequate quality from project implementing agencies, difficulty in eliciting timely implementation reports from executing agencies, and the problem of maintaining adequate storage and retrieval at UNFPA headquarters for the very large volume of project monitoring and evaluation information. A thorough and systematic review is currently underway which is expected to lead to improvements that will ensure that the information which staff actually need for adequate monitoring is collected and made available, and will improve the utilization of the information that is collected in order to improve UNFPA-funded programmes and projects.

83. These objectives will be accomplished through: improved and simplified guidelines on preparing implementation reports, periodic workshops and briefings for UNFPA and executing agency staff on improving the monitoring process, streamlining and better targetting of incoming information about implementation, and transitioning over time to improved storage and retrieval technology and procedures.

84. Although the foregoing exercise is not required or expected to result in any dramatic changes in UNFPA's monitoring practices, there is room for improvement and this should be directly observable in terms of project quality and implementation.

85. UNFPA's recently-effected procedures for monitoring intercountry projects are the culmination of much thought and of much discussion between the UNFPA and the agencies concerned. As UNFPA and these agencies gain experience with these procedures, they are likely to be refined and improved, as has been the case with country project monitoring procedures. In any case, all parties see

in these an opportunity to improve project relevance and impact through the kind of structural, documented inter-change permitted by formal monitoring arrangements. Improved documentation and monitoring is also expected to provide beneficial feedback into the programming, formulation, appraisal and approval sequence.

Notes

1/ "Report to the Secretary General of the United Nations from the Review Committee of the United Nations Fund for Population Activities," New York, October 1972. General Assembly Resolution 2815, 14 December 1971.

2/ These were: (a) to build upon an international base of knowledge and capacity to respond to needs in the population field and to promote co-ordination in planning and programming; (b) to promote awareness internationally of the implications of population problems, and of possible strategies to deal with them; (c) to extend assistance to developing countries to help them deal with their population problems; and (d) to play a leading role in the U.N. system in promoting population programmes.

3/ DP/186, 21 May 1976.

4/ For historical background on the concept of needs assessment, please refer to DP/186, "Priorities in Future Allocations of UNFPA Resources", June, 1976; DP/232, "Application of Criteria for Establishing Priorities", January,1977; and DP/267, "Implementation of UNFPA Projects", June, 1977. These papers contain principles and criteria for establishing priorities in the allocation of resources. These principles and criteria, which were approved by the UNDP Governing Council and endorsed by the Economic and Social Council and the United Nations General Assembly, were prepared because of the increasing disparity between requests for external assistance and available resources.

5/ Governing Council decision 81/7, I, paragraph 8.

6/ This is in keeping with ECOSOC Decision 1763 (LIV), 1858th plenary meeting, 18 May 1973 which reads "Decides that the United Nations Fund for Population Activities should invite countries to utilize the most appropriate implementing agents for their programmes, recognizing that the primary responsibility for implementing rests with the countries concerned".

7/ Governing Council decision 79/28, I, paragraph 4, which reads "Takes note of the report of the Executive Director on UNFPA support of intercountry activities (DP/406), and approves the recommendations made in the report about the priority areas of future UNFPA support of intercountry activities within the level of approximately 25 per cent of total programme resources".

8/ DP/1982/29 and DP/1982/29/Add.1, para. 7-14.

9/ Projects of more than one million US dollars which are part of a
UNFPA-sponsored programme approved by the Governing Council do not need to be
presented separately to the Council. In countries where there is no Governing
Council-approved programme, projects of more than one million US dollars must
be submitted to the Governing Council for approval.

10/ The monitoring of UNFPA country projects is done in accordance with the
revised "UNFPA Instructions on an Integrated System for Monitoring the
Implementation of Country Programmes and Country Projects." UNFPA/PA/78/15,
Revision 1, dated 15 September, 1978. This has been modified by the
supplement to Revision 1, dated 1 April, 1982. The monitoring of intercountry
activities is done in accordance with "UNFPA Instructions to Implementing
Agencies for the Monitoring of UNFPA-funded Intercountry Activities".
UNFPA/PA/83/5, dated 15 May, 1983.

11/ UNFPA/PA/78/15, "Strengthening the Monitoring System", Supplement to
Revision No. 1, 1 April 1982.

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