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SUPPORT

PROGRAMME IMPLEMENTATION

Annual report of the Administrator for 1983

Evaluation

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Summary

In March 1983, the Joint Inspection Unit (JIU) issued a report entitled "Evaluation System of the United Nations Development Programme" (JIU/REP/83/5). The principal conclusions of the report are that the UNDP tripartite evaluation system is a very influential one in the United Nations system. Further, while UNDP has long engaged in an extensive range of evaluation activities, the overall system has not operated as productively and coherently as it should and new system management arrangements are needed to strengthen the evaluation system on an integrated basis.

The comments of the Secretary-General are, in part, based on the views solicited from the organizations of the United Nations system. The Secretary-General accepts the report of the JIU as an extremely useful and relevant document. He also recognizes that there is wide support among the organizations for the recommendations of the JIU. The recommendation to re-establish a Central Evaluation Office was particularly welcomed and the Secretary-General is pleased to note that action in this regard was undertaken by the Administrator on 1 October 1983. Collaborative action with the agencies has begun, policy guidelines are being revised and the programme of thematic evaluation is under review. The Secretary-General strongly supports the emphasis given to the important leadership role that the report recognizes for UNDP in the area of evaluation.

Comments of the Secretary-General

I. GENERAL COMMENTS

1. These comments are, in part, based on the views solicited from the organizations of the United Nations system.
2. The report of the Joint Inspection Unit (JIU), Evaluation System of the United Nations Development Programme (JIU/REP/83/5), prepared by Inspector Earl D. Sohm, is a constructive and useful contribution by the JIU and a welcome complement to its initial report in 1977, Evaluation in the United Nations System (JIU/REP/77/1). It will be recalled that the general assessment of the JIU in its initial report was that while little real evaluation was being carried out, the interest in evaluation, which had varied in intensity since the 1950s, appeared to be at a "take-off" point.
3. The present report examines closely the evaluation system of UNDP and concludes that UNDP should establish new management arrangements to strengthen the evaluation system on an integrated basis. In the context of its decentralized operations and the tripartite nature of its approach, UNDP recognizes the complexity of the task. It fully accepts the need to ensure that future terms of reference and guidance for the evaluation system clearly define its purpose, function and role as an essential element within UNDP operations which focuses management attention on results obtained in the light of objectives and on a continuous process of learning and improvement. The report of the JIU is consistent with the general thrust and with many of the specific proposals contained in the note by the Administrator on arrangements for the evaluation of the results and the effectiveness of the Programme (DP/1983/ICW/6), which was considered by the Intersessional Committee of the Whole of the UNDP Governing Council in February 1983 and by the Council at its thirtieth session in June 1983. While progress has already been made in strengthening evaluation procedures and defining more clearly the role of all participants in the tripartite system, the JIU feels that further concentrated efforts are needed if evaluation is to realize its full potential to enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of the Programme.
4. UNDP has already taken action to re-establish a Central Evaluation Office in UNDP headquarter, with responsibility to lead, co-ordinate, support and oversee a network of clear evaluation responsibilities and activities in the tripartite system. There are two very important aspects of that network. First is the evaluation network within UNDP that links the Central Evaluation Office with the evaluation systems of the regional bureaux. In support of this the Inspector has recommended that each regional bureau designate a full-time evaluation officer to maintain and overview monitoring, design and evaluation work in the region, oversee its quality, provide advice and support to operational and field staff, organize bureau activities in this area, serve a liaison function and provide reporting and feedback. The second network is the one linking UNDP's evaluation system with the evaluation systems of the executing agencies and the Governments. The Central Evaluation Office's responsibilities will also include efforts to combine result-oriented tripartite reviews, more disciplined project evaluation, an evaluative component in country programming and a tighter programme of thematic evaluations into a well-organized structure to determine effectiveness and improve operations.

5. UNDP fully acknowledges the need to strengthen key evaluation linkages with new project design process, with Governments through increased support to their evaluation efforts, and with executing agencies through a renewed interagency working group on evaluation. The Administrator is prepared to take action to ensure effective system operations and improvement through revised responsibilities and processes, particularly in the Central Evaluation Office, for evaluation planning and oversight, evaluation guidelines and training, and systematic analysis of evaluation information and its orderly feedback into operations.

6. The agencies indicated strong support for the thesis articulated in the report and noted that it offers an excellent basis for further development of evaluation within the United Nations system. Recognizing the diversity of methodological and organizational arrangements which exist in the area of evaluation, the JIU report should prove valuable as a guide to United Nations system organizations in developing their collective efforts and in progressing towards harmonizing their evaluation systems over the coming years. Some concern was expressed that the report would have benefited from a fuller analysis of methodologies for co-ordinating evaluation, including therein the measurement of impact and the timing and nature of ex-post facto evaluation.

7. The Secretary-General understands that there is wide support among organizations for the **recommendations** of the JIU, particularly concerning the re-establishment of a Central Evaluation Office within UNDP. There were qualifications to the effect that the Office should take care not to overlap or duplicate the evaluation responsibilities and duties of the executing agencies. One agency recommended **that a thorough review of the current thematic evaluation programme be undertaken before a new series is begun. Several** agencies pointed out the need for system-wide training in evaluation. Organizations also stressed the necessity of guidelines for project evaluation which could, inter alia, make adequate provision for the involvement of Governments at all stages of evaluation and which would also specify the respective responsibilities of Governments, field offices, executing agencies and UNDP headquarters. There was general support for the establishment of an interagency working group on evaluation, composed of evaluation officers, though one agency suggested a role for the Inter-Agency Task Force in this respect.

8. The Secretary-General accepts the report of the JIU as an extremely useful and relevant document. As mentioned in paragraph 3, the report is supportive of UNDP's own proposals in this regard. UNDP has noted the support expressed for the thematic evaluation programme and has already initiated a review of the current thematic evaluations. A preliminary report on this subject was submitted to the thirtieth session of the Governing Council (DP/1983/16) .

9. On 1 October 1983, the Administrator took action to re-establish the Central Evaluation Office that seeks to provide the leadership called for in the JIU report. It seeks complementarity with the evaluation activities of the other partners in the tripartite system. UNDP is planning for the first meeting of the interagency working group on evaluation, and will consult with the Inter-Agency Task Force at UNDP headquarters on all relevant matters.

II. COMMENTS ON SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS

10. The report recognizes that UNDP has an important leadership role and therefore calls for new system management arrangements. Recommendation 1 calls for the Administrator to ensure an effective tripartite evaluation system with an emphasis on evaluation as an essential element within an integrated management system. The Secretary-General strongly supports this recommendation and also the need to clarify and then activate UNDP's responsibilities for evaluation.

11. Recommendations 2 and 3 are the means by which recommendation 1 is to be implemented. Recommendation 2 calls for the re-establishment of a Central Evaluation Office whose work could be supplemented by such other independent evaluations and reporting activities as the Governing Council and the Administrator may decide. Establishment of the Office has been formally accomplished and the terms of reference prepared. Recommendation 3 describes, in some detail, the responsibilities of the Central Evaluation Office. The comprehensive nature of these two recommendations is also fully supported and will provide proper focus for UNDP evaluation efforts in the future. In particular, the various issues addressed in recommendation 3, notably the question of project design and complementary issues of linkages in the project cycle, reporting requirements and evaluation planning, the issue of training and the harmonization of various evaluation policies and procedures will be taken up at an early meeting of the interagency working group on evaluation. The Administrator will report on specific progress at the thirty-first session of the Governing Council.

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