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POLICY

PROGRAMME IMPLEMENTATION

IMPLEMENTATION OF DECISIONS ADOPTED BY THE GOVERNING COUNCIL
AT PREVIOUS SESSIONS

Review of special programme themes and modalities

Report of the Administrator

Summary

This report is submitted in response to the Governing Council's request for progress reports on programme themes and modalities of special interest, namely:

- Women in development (decisions 86/19 and 86/20)

- Human resources development (decision 86/14)

- Co-ordination of technical assistance (decisions 85/3 and 86/15)

With regard to the role of women in development, the report reviews progress in the implementation of strategies identified in DP/1986/14. No specific recommendations are presented.

With regard to human resources development, the report summarizes the findings of a preliminary desk review of UNDP experience and outlines the remaining stages of the study.

The report also provides, in Addendum 1, an overview of progress in improving co-ordination of technical co-operation.

CONTENTS

I.   STRATEGIES TO PROMOTE THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN DEVELOPMENT (WID)

Background

1.   At its thirty-third session, the Governing Council, in decision 86/19, took
note of the strategies and plan of action proposed by the Administrator in response
to decision 85/7 with a view to strengthening the capacity of the Programme to deal
with the issues affecting the role of women in the development process. The
Council also requested the Administrator to report to the thirty-fourth session on
progress made in implementing the action plan. This report has been prepared in
response to that request.

2.   The strategies envisaged in the Administrator's previous report (DP/1986/14)
identified the interrelationships between four basic areas of action:
(a) mechanisms for the integration of women's participation in development into the
UNDP planning and implementation system; (b) support mechanisms; (c) areas of
special concern; and (d) resources. The plan of action calls for the creation of a
series of mechanisms designed to ensure that the various issues affecting women are
considered ab initio in the preparation, assessment and implementation of the
programmes and projects financed by UNDP and the operational funds and programmes
under the authority of the Administrator.

A.   Programme level

3.   At the programme level, action has been taken to ensure that WID issues are
considered at the outset of the programming exercise and in the subsequent review
process. The revised programming guidelines highlight the importance of drawing
the attention of the Government concerned to General Assembly resolutions and
decisions of the Governing Council with regard to the role of women in the
development process. The Note transmitted by the Resident Representative to the
host Government is an important mechanism in this regard since it is through the
Note that UNDP conveys its views regarding the scope and orientation of a new
country programme. These Notes are prepared initially by the Resident
Representatives, in close consultation with the Regional Bureau concerned which
reviews and clears the final version for presentation to the host Government.

4.   Subsequently, when the draft programme documents are submitted to UNDP
headquarters, the review process includes scrutiny of the extent to which WID
issues have been considered. Programmes whose resources are over $10 million are
reviewed in draft by the Programme Review Committee (PRC). More detailed
information on the PRC is provided in DP/1987/16.

5.   It may also be noted that UNIFEM is increasingly becoming involved in
programming exercises, as well as in the NATCAPs and preparations for round-table
meetings. Resident Representatives in all regions have been informed of the
availability of UNIFEM support for programming and for project identification and
formulation. The Administrator's report on UNIFEM (DP/1987/52) describes recent
UNIFEM activities in greater detail.

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B. Project level

6.   Two project review mechanisms provide for systematic monitoring of the
application of UNDP policies and procedures which, inter alia, reflect directives
from the United Nations General Assembly and the UNDP Governing Council. Thus, WID
issues are considered by the Project Appraisal Committees (PACs) established in
1986 in all regional bureaux and other operational units. Further screening of
project proposals takes place in the Action Committee (AC) which is chaired by the
Administrator and composed of senior management officials. More detailed
information on the functions of these two committees is given in DP/1987/16.

7.   A checklist, developed for use at the project formulation and appraisal
stages, includes specific references to WID issues. At the project implementation
stage, revised instructions now being prepared call for project progress reports to
include information on the gender of all national and international personnel, as
well as trainees. This procedure will ensure the systematic compilation and
analysis of information on the participation of women in projects financed by UNDP
and on the extent to which women benefit from project training programmes.

8.   Project evaluation procedures also call for scrutiny of the extent to which
WID issues have been taken into account at each stage of the project cycle. In
this connection, some recent project evaluation reports were reviewed in order to
ascertain that these procedures are in fact being followed. The outcome and
proposed follow-up to this pilot review are outlined in document DP/1987/21.

C. Administrative level

9.   In order to underpin the foregoing review mechanisms, and also to highlight
the importance attached by UNDP to the role of women in the development process,
the Administrator has recently established a Division for Women's Programmes in the
Bureau for Programme Policy and Evaluation. This Division will work closely with
all operational and administrative units in stepping up efforts to ensure that
women are provided equal opportunity to participate in and benefit from programmes
and projects financed by UNDP from its core resources, as well as those financed by
funds and programmes administered by UNDP. In this connection, particularly close
working relations will be maintained between the Division and UNIFEM.

10. Through its participation in the Review and Monitoring Committee which
monitors implementation of UNDP's personnel policies, the Division will also make
recommendations to the Administrator regarding steps that should be taken to
achieve not only an increase in the proportion of women in UNDP's employment, but
also that they occupy an increased proportion of senior posts.

11. Another important function of the Division will be to design and conduct a
staff training programme in collaboration with the Training Division. Initially,
as indicated in DP/1986/14, this programme will take the form of case-study
seminars and will use training concepts and material developed by the World Bank
and the Harvard Institute of International Development. This format has been used
in staff training programmes within the World Bank and in several bilateral
development agencies.

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12. During the preliminary phase of the training programme, case studies based on actual projects were to be prepared and tested in pilot training courses. In decision 86/20, the Governing Council authorized the use of savings, supplemented by special programme resources if necessary, for this preliminary phase. Thereafter, WID-related training will be included in the regular UNDP budget for staff training.

13. Six projects were selected for these case studies, covering all geographical regions. Five of the projects selected make no special reference to or provision for women's participation and are in fields where women's participation is not ab initio obvious. These projects will provide material to show how women's participation could have been included. Four of the projects are funded from UNDP's core resources, one is financed by UNCDF and one by UNIFEM. Case material on these projects has been prepared on the basis of desk reviews and field visits. A training co-ordinator will be appointed shortly to conduct the initial series of training courses using this material.

14. A top management seminar on women and development, organized within the context of the Joint Consultative Group on Policy, was held in December 1986 and attended by the executive heads and senior staff of the four JCGP organizations (UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF and WFP). The objective of the seminar was to highlight the importance attached to WID issues by senior management and to initiate consultations on future collaboration in promoting WID-related programmes, and in improving the WID data base in developing countries.

15. The Administrator is pleased to inform the Council that the Director of the Division for Women's Programmes is expected to take up her assignment in April 1987.

II. TECHNICAL CO-OPERATION FOR HUMAN RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT (HRD)

Background

16. In its decision 86/14, the Governing Council requested the Administrator to undertake a critical review of UNDP experience since 1970 in providing assistance for human resources development, and to submit an interim report thereon to the thirty-fourth session. A more definitive report was requested for submission to the Council at its thirty-fifth session in June 1988.

17. It will be readily understood that an undertaking of this nature necessarily involves a major research effort in compiling, sifting and analyzing programme and project information over a period of nearly two decades. It is therefore planned to conduct the study in three stages, culminating in definition of strategies and policies to guide UNDP assistance in human resources development.

A. Stage 1 - UNDP experience to date

18. The first stage of the study has been completed. It involved such basic preparatory work as defining the overall scope of the study, selection criteria, and expected output, etc., followed by desk reviews of selected programmes/projects approved during the first three programme cycles (1972-1976, 1977-1981 and 1982-1986), as well as review of several thematic evaluations conducted by UNDP during the same period. Over 100 projects and project evaluation studies were reviewed. In keeping with the broad definition of HRD in DP/1986/10, the desk review covered a wide range of projects in the sectors of education, health, agriculture and industry, as well as in such technically specialized areas as civil aviation, telecommunications and maritime development. The main focus, however, was on the education sector and on manpower planning. A summary of review findings is presented below.

Programme level

19. The review indicated a general lack of specific HRD strategies and goals in country programme documents. Programme objectives tended to cover a very broad spectrum of sectoral priorities and the activities identified for UNDP assistance also covered a wide range of fields within the various sectors. Few of the CPs selected for review included HRD as a major programme objective, although most had significant institution-building and training components. Third-cycle programmes tended to reflect an increased awareness of the importance of HRD. However, where CP objectives did include HRD or significant institution-building and training components, lack of quantitative targets, or other benchmark data, made it difficult to assess results. It was also difficult to determine the extent to which operational experience in HRD and/or institution building was drawn upon when formulating the next country programme.

20. HRD programmes have a better chance of succeeding in countries having a human resources strategy which reflects national needs and priorities. Evaluation reports show, however, that such strategies often do not exist because there is no machinery to identify the volume, quality or specifications of training requirements. Sector statistical units can be found but their links are weak as is their grasp on labour market data and the skill needs of the informal rural and urban sector.

21. Evaluations stress the need for a focal point in government where HRD information, which is not usually found in national accounts and other aggregated analyses, can be captured, processed and analysed. The HRD strategy which evolves can then provide consistent direction to government agencies as well as donors on such issues as priorities among HRD projects, the use of expatriate experts and the need for overseas training.

Project level

22. When choosing a project strategy to achieve HRD objectives, evaluation reports note that project designers usually examine just one solution to the problem

without comparing its costs and benefits to those of other options. A typology of UNDP assistance is needed which spells out the implications and consequences of various project interventions in terms of human resources, time requirements and costs.

23. Institution-building projects tend to focus on strengthening government bodies as the only means of improving HRD capabilities. Recently, some projects have tried to reduce the pressures on government bureaucracies by decentralizing training schemes and relying more on private and voluntary efforts. A notable gap in HRD, however, has been the inability to devise appropriate training and credit schemes to accelerate growth possibilities in the informal sector.

24. Evaluators note that, too frequently, project strategies stress development needs while neglecting project affordability. Insufficient attention is given to what the host Government can realistically be expected to achieve, how much it can handle technically and financially, and the extent to which it can integrate the project into its socio-economic structures in a sustainable form. A UNDP/UNESCO study suggests an association between the number of immediate objectives and project success: the fewer the immediate objectives of a project, the greater likelihood they will be achieved.

25. Project design tends to underestimate the timeframe required to meet project requirements. Unrealistic scheduling of project components leads to costly project revisions and overruns. At least 10-15 years are needed to develop any sustainable institutional capacity. Instead of initiating HRD activities piecemeal, donors should help Governments devise coherent, longer-term strategies and reflect their commitment by multi-year financing.

26. Technical aspects are usually stressed in project design to the neglect of essential organizational structures, management capabilities and effective feedback mechanisms. When UNDP assistance is withdrawn, there is an unfortunate loss of momentum.

27. Cost effectiveness issues need more attention during design as donor financial support dwindles. Less costly ways of training should be considered, such as enterprise-based training and use of model-farmer schemes. Cost recovery measures should also be featured, such as student loans and decentralization to encourage community support.

28. Projects sometimes fail to establish links between training and the world of work. Institutions tend to operate in isolation, unaware of their "market" and lacking flexibility to cope with changing needs and conditions. Information systems and timely feedback on trainee utilization are needed to improve performance by allowing schools and centres to adjust programmes according to client needs.

29. Two decades of development experience show that the impact and sustainability of HRD investments can be significantly improved if local communities play an active part in needs assessment, project design and implementation. However, project evaluations still point to a lack of sensitivity in this respect. Training

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programmes place undue stress on degree equivalencies and management principles
that are culturally irrelevant. New categories of skills, embodying new functions,
are needed such as selection criteria for field agents and trainers based on
commitment to work in the community rather than literary skills or schooling.

30. More attention should be focused on local capacity for improvising solutions
to technical problems which often entails finding indirect solutions instead of
attacking the problem along conventional lines. A closer relationship between
government HRD programmes, the private sector and indigenous grass-roots
organizations can result in opportunities for collaborative training and job
creation.

31. Thematic evaluations suggest that there is a heightened sensitivity, on the
part of Governments to the role of women in development. In the project
evaluations reviewed, however, only perfunctory or general references were made,
for example, to "the need to pay special attention to the status of women".
Project design seldom contained a strategy for securing women's participation or
even recognizing the pivotal role women can play in helping projects attain their
objectives.

Sustainability

32. There is increasing concern, particularly in Africa, that HRD institutions
established with project assistance lack the capacity to generate benefits after
the project has ended. Evidently, more attention has been given to technical
functions than to such elements of management as planning, information and
feedback, revenue mobilization and career development. In too many instances, the
preoccupation of project managers with implementation concerns has worked at
cross-purposes with sustainability by not allowing indigenous capability to
evolve. Expatriate advisors have compounded the problem by focusing on the
efficiency of operations to the exclusion of counterpart training.

33. Loss of trained staff is undoubtedly the greatest obstacle to programme
sustainability. Better salaries and benefits in the private sector, the attraction
of donor-supported "special units", as well as overseas opportunities result in an
outflow of talented staff from the public sector. Evaluations indicate that poorer
Governments stand little chance of reversing this trend without help from the
international community in improving conditions of public service and even loans to
help retain essential staff.

34. Continuity of government policy is essential to the longer term planning and
execution of HRD programmes. Where there has been a change of Government, the
retention of senior civil servants has been critical. Obviously, the strength of
the ministry charged with a project can influence its success as can the level of
placement of the project in the ministry's organizational structure.

35. Government commitment to a project is manifested by the timely provision of
national staff, equipment and facilities. Evaluators point to a shortage of
counterpart staff, particularly in Africa, which slows project implementation and
necessitates extensions. Some argue, however, that "counterpart scarcity" is the

wrong label for a problem whose real nature lies in inadequate pre-project analysis and failure to adjust project strategy to the country's particular conditions and constraints.

36. Evaluations consistently stress the need for improved donor co-ordination at the project level. The adverse effect of disparate donor practices with regard to counterpart salary supplements is a prime example of the consequences of poor co-ordination. The key to better co-ordination, of course, is a Government's ability to set and enforce priorities regarding which HRD projects are to be implemented and by whom. Where Governments are not equipped to meet this requirement, donors are faced with the responsibility of co-ordinating project selection and design more closely among themselves. Multilateral agencies need to provide a servicing and supporting role for this co-ordination process.

37. Institutions seldom become self-sustaining by the time the project terminates. The need for a continuing relationship between donor and institution during the early days of "graduation" needs to be recognized. In the interest of reinforcing sustainability, donors might consider financing a portion of operating costs, in-service refresher courses and short-term advisors for a limited period after project closing.

B. Stage 2 - Country case studies

38. The second stage of the HRD study will have a narrower focus and will involve comparative analyses of HRD plans and strategies in several countries, as reflected in national development plans and in the corresponding fourth cycle country programmes. The experience of the Programme Review Committee (PRC) will be a useful input in selecting the countries to be studied. In this connection, it may be noted that a significantly higher proportion of country programmes emphasized HRD than was the case in the third programming cycle.

C. Stage 3 - Final report

39. Based on the findings of the first and second stages, a final report and recommendations will be submitted to the Governing Council at its thirty-fifth session in June 1988.