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S U P P O R T

UNITED NATIONS FUND FOR POPULATION ACTIVITIES

Implementation experience relating to allocations
and expenditures with the different agencies

Report of the Executive Director

SUMMARY

This document has been prepared in response to Governing Council decision 85/19 I, paragraph 13, requesting the Executive Director to report on UNFPA implementation experience. The report focuses on substantive aspects of implementation and argues for the need to pay less attention to implementation rates, which are a financial tool for UNFPA resource management and not a measure of project performance. The document focuses on country-level activities, but most of the lessons drawn and issues discussed are applicable at the intercountry level. At the request of the Council, some financial data are presented on the past four years of the UNFPA programme. Main factors affecting implementation are examined (project design, technical backstopping, monitoring and evaluation, national policy, commitment and absorptive capacity, role of funding, executing and implementing agencies and management and finance) and, within each, common obstacles are discussed. The strategies UNFPA pursues to improve qualitative implementation are reviewed, emphasizing most of all various measures to strengthen technical backstopping, project design, monitoring and evaluation, and training. To improve the effectiveness of the UNFPA programme significantly, streamlining of activities in these areas and identification of additional resources to implement the strategies are required.

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INTRODUCTION

1. This document has been prepared in response to Governing Council decision 85/19 I, paragraph 7, which requested the Executive Director to report on the Fund's implementation experience relating to allocations and expenditures with the different executing agencies.
2. Information utilized in this document was obtained from various sources, including a special questionnaire addressed to all UNFPA Deputy Representatives and Senior Advisers on Population (DRSAPs), the Fund's headquarters staff and executing agencies. An analysis was also undertaken of pertinent financial data and of monitoring and evaluation reports.

I. DEFINING "IMPLEMENTATION"

3. Implementation can be defined as the process of carrying out the activities required to achieve a project's goals and objectives, from the time of approval of the project to its completion and final evaluation. Many consider that the primary measure of success in the implementation of a project is the expenditure of the funds allocated to the project by the agencies responsible for executing it. If such were the case, then any projects, the allocated funds for which have been expended, could be considered successful. However, such is not the case.
4. Many factors other than simply whether allocated funds are expended must be considered in defining the success or failure of a project. These factors include the adequacy and reliability of project design, technical backstopping, monitoring and evaluation, absorptive capacity, national policy and commitment, reporting, etc. These are, of course, qualitative factors and cannot be measured statistically. They require judgement, analysis, examination, study, deliberation, review and decision-making. Yet they are as important, if not more so, than simply the expenditure of funds, for, in the final analysis, it is the quality of the final product - the project - that determines its success or failure.

II. UNFPA AND THE SPECIAL NATURE OF POPULATION ASSISTANCE

5. Population assistance, like other substantive areas of development co-operation, suffers from the usual problems of implementation. Moreover, the population sector, because of its multidisciplinary nature, has its own unique problems which make implementation even more difficult. For example, while agriculture, education, health, etc., all have sectoral ministries through which assistance can be funnelled, population assistance is usually not attached to one single ministry. In some cases, there is a national counterpart population agency that can receive or co-ordinate assistance. The existence of such co-ordinating bodies (e.g., population commissions) may help, but often these units are relatively weak compared to the sectoral ministries. A related problem is that not all national sectors assign the same high priority to population matters.

6. The multidisciplinary nature of the population sector has a strong bearing on the selection of executing agencies and on co-ordination of inputs. Often, there is no single source of technical expertise for a population project. Instead, several sources must be drawn upon for certain types of projects. For example projects designed to increase the participation of women in population activities and information, education and communication (IEC) programmes require a special substantive co-ordinating role on the part of UNFPA, in order to make informed choices on the various sources of expertise and to assemble a balanced overall programme with these different inputs. For instance, in Nepal, different sources of technical backstopping were needed for a project which required expertise on women's concerns, production aspects for cottage industries and population issues.

7. Population assistance is, perhaps even more so than other development assistance, a long-term undertaking. Often aimed at changing the attitudes, beliefs and behaviour of people, population assistance touches the most personal and sensitive area of human activity and thus it tends to be a controversial issue for some groups. For these and other reasons, commitment by Governments and by executing agencies to population programmes may change unexpectedly.

8. For purposes of financial accountability, UNFPA, like other agencies within the United Nations system, utilizes the overall implementation rate as one measure of resource management (the ratio of total project expenditures reported by executing agencies to the total project budgets allocated by UNFPA, at year end, after rephasing). However, it is not a measure nor an indicator of project performance. It is only one of several measures utilized by UNFPA for resource management, in its effort, as instructed by the Governing Council, to expend funds in a given year.

9. Tables 1 to 3 provide, for the period 1982-1985, annual expenditures by executing agency and region, implementation rates by agency, region and work-plan category and implementation rates in countries where a DRSAP is stationed.

10. An examination of the overall UNFPA implementation rate over the past few years shows that it has consistently remained above 85 per cent, varying only slightly from year to year. This is an indication of sound resource management but, as noted above, the rates are not a meaningful measure of project performance. There appears to be a trend towards higher implementation rates for programmes in countries in which a DRSAP is stationed (see table 3), thus corroborating qualitative assessments which indicate that the presence of a DRSAP generally has a strong positive effect on project implementation.

11. As can be seen from table 1, the largest part of the UNFPA programme is executed by the United Nations and the specialized agencies, followed, in order of magnitude, by Governments, UNFPA and non-governmental organizations. Over time, there is no consistent pattern. Execution by the United Nations and the specialized agencies decreased from 1982 until 1984 but increased in 1985, whereas Government execution increased up to 1984 but decreased in 1985. UNFPA execution increased slightly from 1983 to 1984 but decreased in 1985.

III. UNFPA EXPERIENCE IN REGARD TO FACTORS AFFECTING QUALITATIVE IMPLEMENTATION OF POPULATION PROJECTS

12. In analysing the factors affecting the qualitative implementation of population projects, one must take into account the following, each of which affects the ongoing and final quality of the project.

A. Project design

13. Projects must be technically well designed, conceptually sound and realistically conceived. The project's objectives and work plan, in addition to being clearly spelled out and detailed, must also be feasible, taking into account local needs and conditions and possible constraints as well as the implementing capacities of all parties concerned. For example, in Mali, a project on family life education for members of co-operatives suffered from implementation problems owing to, inter alia, weaknesses in the project formulation process including a poorly defined institutional framework and target population and lack of a feasibility analysis which would have helped to identify the mechanisms necessary for implementation (e.g. operation of co-operatives in rural areas and logistics problems created by the size of the regions).

14. The close involvement of national authorities, and specifically those responsible for implementing a project, in the formulation and design of a project needs to be expanded. Too often consultants from executing agencies or UNFPA rather than government officials undertake the formulation which sometimes creates confusion regarding responsibility for implementation and makes it appear as if the Government lacks commitment.

15. Past UNFPA experience shows that obstacles to effective implementation, because project design was not carefully thought out in advance, often include problems with the identification and qualifications of project staff, as well as delays and inadequacies in the implementation of training programmes and in the procurement of equipment and supplies. These problems are in many cases traceable to vague descriptions and equipment specifications, lack of attention to training needs and the poor timing of activities at the project formulation stage. For example, in Zambia, a census project was delayed because the computer equipment arrived one year after the data processing adviser, whose work was, therefore, seriously hampered.

B. Technical backstopping

16. Technical backstopping is one of the most significant determinants of successful implementation. It includes the substantive and managerial inputs a project receives from the executing and funding agencies that are not part of the project itself but come to it through regional advisers and from the local, regional and headquarters offices of the agencies and UNFPA. For example, in Honduras and Paraguay, in-school population education projects were successfully implemented largely because of the key role played by two UNFPA-funded regional

advisers from the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). Experience has shown that the unavailability of appropriate technical backstopping is often a serious constraint to the effective implementation of the UNFPA programme. Many organizations, including UNFPA, do not have the technical staff necessary at headquarters or in the region to backstop project activities adequately. The limited number of regional advisers funded by UNFPA are too few given the large number of projects to be backstopped and the other needs to be met (participation in needs assessment and project formulation missions, participation in project appraisal, etc.). The existing technical staff generally suffers from an overburdened work programme and travel schedule and, when sudden implementation problems occur, they cannot readily be addressed. Technical backstopping further suffers when the agency and/or its staff are not strongly committed to population.

17. The lack of technical support has become an even more serious problem as full-time international advisers can usually no longer be financed within UNFPA country-level projects and, as countries move towards government execution, particularly in the sub-Saharan Africa region, projects tend to be too small to warrant full-time advisers and the number of regional technical advisers is insufficient for the job that needs to be done. For lack of locally available staff, it is often difficult for the executing agencies to provide necessary attention to a project. Instead the local UNFPA office, although also insufficiently staffed for the task, is called upon to respond to these needs and because of demands on its time and resources cannot devote the attention necessary to them.

C. Monitoring and evaluation

18. Monitoring and evaluation are central to implementation since their major purpose is to identify implementation problems so that they can be addressed as early as possible in order that the project can meet its objectives. To be effective, monitoring must be carried out on a regular and continual basis, covering administrative, financial, technical and substantive aspects. Built-in evaluation is needed to assess project achievements as the project proceeds in order to assist in determining the continued relevance of the project design and strategy.

19. Responsibility for monitoring and evaluation should be shared by the Government and executing and funding agencies. While each has a strong role to play in this process, those closest to the project have a greater share of the responsibility since they have first-hand knowledge of the project and are called upon as questions arise. Thus, the central role of the national implementing agency, other national authorities and the UNFPA field office in overseeing monitoring closely must be underscored. Even for agency-executed projects, the day-to-day monitoring is largely done by the UNFPA field office. However, agencies must be able to make regular site visits and be present at project reviews.

20. Past experience and UNFPA in-depth evaluations point out, however, that in many cases the monitoring system and those responsible for overseeing it do not pay sufficient attention to substantive issues nor trigger the necessary corrective

action. There is insufficient analysis and follow-up of monitoring findings by Governments and executing and funding agencies. There is a common problem with delays in the submission of reports and sometimes key technical and administrative staff are absent from monitoring reviews. For example, the training component of a maternal and child health (MCH)/child-spacing project in Ethiopia was seriously delayed owing to unsatisfactory reporting by the executing agency.

D. National policy and commitment and absorptive capacity

21. Effective project performance is strongly affected by national policy, national and local commitment to the project and absorptive capacity. Policy and commitment need to be reflected in a clear and coherent government population policy, close collaboration between and among departments and ministries and non-governmental groups in the planning and implementation of project activities, the provision of the necessary national inputs, particularly national personnel, and priority given to the project by those closely associated with it. Absorptive capacity, reflected in national infrastructure, trained personnel, financial resources, management, etc., has an equally decisive impact on project implementation. For instance in Sri Lanka, a population programme management project remained unimplemented for almost three years mainly because the concerned national agency lacked the basic infrastructure to implement the project.

22. Often weaknesses are found in all the above-mentioned areas. The most common and serious ones include the high turnover of national staff, attrition among middle-level and field personnel and the general scarcity of qualified and committed staff. These problems are often due to government personnel policies which do not provide for career advancement and consequently result in low staff morale and to low salary scales. Similar obstacles affect training, which have their origins in the shortage of available trainers and training space and in the difficulty in nominating and/or obtaining the release of individuals for training programmes.

23. Furthermore, unforeseen political and other national developments may alter government commitment or the ability of a Government to put this commitment into action. For example in the Sudan, a population and housing census project was delayed because the Government did not issue the required census decree for two years after the planned start of the project owing to unforeseen internal political developments. This affected the hiring of staff, organizing and equipping of the necessary office space and cartographic training. As a consequence, the planned pilot census and post-enumeration survey could not take place and there were deficiencies in questionnaire testing.

E. Role of funding, executing and implementing agencies

24. The selection of appropriate executing and implementing agencies, based on a realistic assessment of their capacity to backstop and carry out project activities, is a prerequisite for successful implementation. This applies to all agencies involved in project execution. Information indicates that often the

choice of an executing or implementing agency has been based on insufficient assessment of the agency's past performance and its capacity to deliver specific activities and inputs and to implement project activities. Rather the selection may have been made simply because there were no other alternatives.

25. Funding agency. The role of UNFPA as funding agency includes programme and project development, appraisal of new project proposals, monitoring and evaluation of ongoing activities and financial planning and monitoring. All of these are necessary to enable the Fund to manage its programme properly. To carry out its functions successfully, UNFPA programme management and staff, in terms of both numbers and qualifications, are of crucial importance at the field and headquarters levels.

26. UNFPA has a special responsibility to ensure that project design and formulation are properly carried out before funds are allocated. This is not always easy, because there is often considerable pressure from recipient Governments as well as executing agencies for the earliest possible approval and allocation of funds. For this, UNFPA needs stronger substantive capacity than it now has among its own staff in the field and at headquarters because, even though executing agencies and others participate in project design and appraisal, in final analysis this responsibility rests with UNFPA.

27. Monitoring and evaluation is another area requiring substantial and time-consuming technical and administrative inputs from UNFPA. The role of the UNFPA field office in this respect is of utmost importance. The Fund has a representative on the spot while executing agencies often do not have staff in the country. Thus the local UNFPA office is the one with day-to-day contact with project personnel and with close access to national authorities. Monitoring by the UNFPA field office becomes even more important as fewer and fewer full-time international experts are attached to projects and as government execution becomes more common place. However, at present the UNFPA field structure is insufficiently equipped to carry out these functions adequately.

28. Executing agency. The executing agency has a key role to play through technical backstopping and follow-up. The executing agency is an entity to which UNFPA's Executive Director has entrusted the implementation of UNFPA assistance to a project and can include the recipient Government, organizations of the United Nations system, UNFPA itself or non-governmental organizations. Evaluations and other evidence have shown that often strong aspects of projects relate to the high quality of technical assistance provided by the executing agency, through staff and other inputs and timely and regular oversight.

29. Whether executing agencies can effectively exercise the key role entrusted to them depends largely on the commitment of the agency to population issues, the competence of its personnel, the work-load and availability of staff to follow up the project closely and its efficiency in ensuring delivery of all project inputs. Field presence is a key determinant in backstopping and monitoring capacity. For the executing agency, this is a function of its own field staff and whether full-time and well qualified international experts are assigned to a project. For example, in Somalia, a UNESCO-executed population education project was well

implemented largely because of the quality and commitment of the chief technical adviser.

30. Agencies contribute to implementation through access to their staff and resources (e.g. research results; training materials), which although they are not specifically assigned to a particular project still contribute specialized skills, knowledge and/or materials in support of that project. Also, regional and interregional advisers available within certain executing agencies, most of whom are funded by UNFPA, particularly within the United Nations specialized agencies, contribute to projects either through direct advisory support or indirectly through, for example, research and materials development.

31. The UNFPA experience with different executing agencies and an analysis of their performance shows that no agency is significantly or consistently better or worse than the others. This is partly a result of differences between regions and types of projects and also because effectiveness depends to a great extent on the government implementing agency - that is, the competence and commitment of local staff - and on particular individuals within executing agencies. For example, a highly qualified and committed technical adviser can make all the difference in implementation as has been the case in a civil registration project in Kenya, executed by the United Nations Department of Technical Co-operation for Development, and in a population and family life education project in the agricultural sector in Thailand, executed by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), for instance.

32. One major criticism in the implementation of UNFPA-funded projects by executing agencies of the United Nations system, as reported by UNFPA staff and Governments, is that agency execution often appears to be more cumbersome, time-consuming and slower than that of non-governmental organizations, the Government or UNFPA by itself. While these differences are strongly felt, it is important to note that they may be due, at least in part, to the characteristics of the projects rather than to the executing agency, namely projects executed by agencies tend to be rather complex and have several components whereas those executed by non-governmental organizations, UNFPA and Governments themselves appear to be simpler. For example, UNFPA executes mainly procurement components only and government execution is mainly for local costs. Also, while agency-executed projects may be faced with many delays, such delays may not necessarily hamper the long-range effectiveness of the project's activities or quality of the final results or the strengthening of longer-term self-reliance.

33. Weaknesses found with agency execution include insufficient technical backstopping; the lack of agency representatives stationed in the country concerned; delays and errors of judgement in the selection of international project staff, in the placement of fellows and in the delivery of equipment; difficulties in obtaining authorization for local disbursement of project funds; and delays and inaccuracies in financial recording as well as in communication.

34. Serious problems continue in regard to the recruitment of international personnel by executing agencies, at both the country and the regional levels. In the case of a MCH/FP project in Burkina Faso, executed by the World Health

Organization (WHO), for instance, the international technical adviser was not qualified for the job and unable to communicate in the language of the country. In addition to common problems with language and technical qualifications, experts are often unable to transfer skills to nationals because of their lack of training experience. These problems are compounded when an agency, such as the WHO Regional Office for Africa for example, has to follow a quota system in recruitment of personnel. At the regional level, since UNFPA is not systematically consulted on the selection of the regional advisers it funds through agencies, these advisers often have been unable to respond adequately to needs in the population sector because their credentials for dealing with population matters have not been properly assessed.

35. Some shortcomings in regard to agency execution may be due to the fact that often agencies have too few staff assigned to UNFPA matters and to insufficient knowledge of UNFPA policies and procedures. Issues of highest priority to UNFPA sometimes receive lower priority within agencies which have a different and wider mandate and where there might be a somewhat limited commitment to the population field as a whole.

36. Problems encountered in the past with certain United Nations agencies regarding an apparent lack of commitment to population assistance on their part are generally not found with the non-governmental organizations utilized by UNFPA as executing agencies since they are usually organizations specializing in the population field. Such organizations tend to be relatively small, organizationally less complex and managerially more flexible than United Nations agencies. They tend to perform well because they are committed to, and specialize in, population issues and operate in a highly competitive setting. However, they are often too specialized and small to execute complex large-scale projects.

37. Government execution has been found to be effective provided that adequate infrastructure and commitment within the country exist. Problems have been encountered in regard to insufficient technical backstopping.

38. Execution by UNFPA itself has tended to provide for faster delivery of inputs, better financial monitoring, easier communication and clearer roles and responsibilities. However, this is not always the case and even at present it is difficult for UNFPA to provide all the substantive inputs required given the Fund's resource and staffing situation at headquarters and in the field.

39. Implementing agency. In the final analysis, implementation rests on the ability, motivation and commitment of the national implementing agency. The implementing agency is the unit of the Government or another national agency which has the responsibility for discharging the role and responsibilities of the Government in the preparation, implementation and follow-up of a project. The support it receives from government co-operating organizations at the country level is also very important. There needs to be adequate counterpart resources, competent local staff and high-level support if the project is to be well implemented. Limited capacity of the national implementing agency very often seriously hinders project implementation. For example in Kenya, in the past the UNFPA programme suffered inter alia from the inability of the Ministry of Health to

carry out its implementation responsibilities because it was severely overburdened by most donors channelling their assistance through the same Ministry.

F. Management and financial accountability

40. Weaknesses sometimes found in the organizational structure and management approaches of Governments, executing agencies and UNFPA as well as unclear roles and responsibilities and poor knowledge of rules and procedures complicate and hinder project implementation. The local UNFPA office, on whose shoulders rests much of the administrative burden for most projects, tends to be insufficiently equipped for this task. Financial management and accountability are often a problem because procedures are complex and because different rules and regulations are followed by Governments, executing agencies and UNFPA. Payment of local costs invariably poses problems because government officials are not adequately informed by the executing agencies or by UNFPA as to how to fill out forms for advances or reimbursement.

41. Executing agencies find that delays occur in UNFPA approval of reprogramming and rephasing of funds, which not only holds up implementation, but also creates a lack of security among project staff, in turn affecting the quality of activities. Delays also occur in the disbursement of funds by executing agencies. For instance, funds for the organization of local training or other local costs, when channelled through the WHO Regional Office for Africa, have tended to be delayed because of complicated and time-consuming procedures coupled with the communication difficulties inherent to the region. At present, this problem has been solved by transferring responsibility for disbursing all local costs to the local UNDP/UNFPA office or directly to the Government.

42. Other delays in financial matters can be caused when a number of national and local agencies are involved in a particular project. For example, the flow of funds from a ministry of finance to the department implementing the project, and further down to the provincial government and/or other administrative units actually carrying out activities, may be seriously delayed.

43. Inadequate communication between and among the parties concerned throughout the project cycle is another obstacle to implementation. This problem is especially serious in the area of financial reporting. Because of such delays and since project budgets may be expended by two or three parties simultaneously (i.e., by UNFPA for any execution responsibility it may have, by the executing agencies for most international components and by the Government for some local costs), at any given point in time none of the parties concerned may have full and accurate information on the status of project expenditures. In many cases, executing agencies are lax in reporting project expenditures to UNFPA headquarters. Under these circumstances, it is difficult to implement a project without delays.

IV. UNFPA STRATEGY TO IMPROVE QUALITATIVE IMPLEMENTATION
OF POPULATION PROJECTS

44. In its efforts to ensure a more quality-oriented approach to implementation in order to improve project effectiveness and at the same time not neglect the financial implementation of UNFPA-funded projects, UNFPA plans to pursue the following strategy.

A. Technical backstopping

45. In view of the fact that limited and inadequate technical backstopping is often one of the most serious constraints to the implementation of the UNFPA programme, the most important strategy to improve implementation is through the strengthening of this component. The Fund proposes to improve technical backstopping through multiple means, such as:

(a) UNFPA will continue to intensify efforts to ensure that backstopping by United Nations agencies and non-governmental organizations used for project execution better meets the needs of the UNFPA programme, including more in-depth and systematic consultations with agencies and follow-up of agreements reached and more careful assessment of agency capacity to ensure better selection of executing agencies;

(b) As technical backstopping by agencies is largely dependent on the quality and number of regional and interregional advisers available to respond to UNFPA's needs, steps will be taken to strengthen and streamline the existing network of regional and interregional agency advisers, including more careful selection of advisers as well as ensuring consultation with UNFPA on the qualifications of such advisers and the selection process and ensuring that the work of such advisers is more carefully planned and co-ordinated in close and regular consultation between and among agencies and UNFPA;

(c) While UNFPA will continue to utilize technical backstopping by agencies and non-governmental organizations to their fullest, because these cannot meet all present or future needs, it will seek alternative means to complement the usual sources of technical expertise. This has to include, first and foremost, increased technical resources at the regional level, particularly in Africa but also in other regions, and the strengthening of UNFPA's substantive capacity at headquarters, and even more so in the field, as well as exploring means such as, for example, the use of national advisers and the concept of technical co-operation among developing countries;

(d) In improving technical backstopping, UNFPA will seek to strengthen the role of the DRSAPs and their offices, supported by headquarters and, in this connection, the Fund will further decentralize implementation responsibilities from headquarters to the field.

B. Project design

46. It is clear that many of the obstacles hindering implementation can be prevented at the project design phase. Therefore, one of the main UNFPA strategies to strengthen implementation will be through continued improvement of the project formulation process. This will require that more effort and time be devoted to project design by Governments and executing and funding agencies and that projects are not approved before they have been adequately prepared and appraised. Project documents will need to follow more closely established UNFPA policy and formulation guidelines and to outline objectives and a work plan that are more realistic and clearer than in the past. UNFPA will also continue to improve project design by utilizing such practices as:

(a) Pre-project activities. UNFPA will attempt to make more frequent use of pre-project activities and of the first project phase to carry out an in-depth project formulation exercise and to establish the conditions required for successful implementation (e.g., training programmes for key personnel, strengthening of infrastructure and setting up of management and financial reporting systems). One example of a UNFPA initiative in this area took place in Togo, where a training workshop for female extension workers, focusing on imparting skills in project formulation, planning and management, was successfully held as a pre-project activity;

(b) Project phasing. UNFPA will initiate new approaches to project duration and phasing so that, where necessary, projects can be designed in a number of stages and so that each stage can be carefully reviewed and each subsequent stage started only after all activities of the previous one have been effectively implemented. While each stage may need to be relatively short to sustain the momentum and allow for close follow-up, the overall duration of the combined stages may need to be significantly longer than has been thought necessary in the past. A longer overall duration is vital if the building up of institutional capacity and the strengthening of human resources necessary for self-sustaining development are project objectives;

(c) Participation in project formulation. In connection with pre-project activities and through other means, UNFPA will seek to ensure closer involvement of all parties concerned at the national level and executing agencies, together with the Fund, in the formulation process. One specific way to achieve this is with national level project formulation workshops, a strategy UNFPA has effectively carried out, for example, in Thailand and the United Republic of Tanzania;

(d) Role of DRSAPs. The substantive functions played in project formulation and appraisal by UNFPA field staff should be strengthened and, to this end, further decentralization of these responsibilities to the field is required. Because of their location in the field and knowledge of the local situation, DRSAPs are in a better position to assume greater responsibility for these functions;

(e) Training. Training of UNFPA and agency staff and national counterparts in the principles of project design and formulation is an essential requirement for improving these components.

C. Monitoring and evaluation

47. In addition to better project formulation and design, project implementation can be improved with greater focus on monitoring and follow-up in order to make the appropriate adjustments as changes occur during the life of a project. UNFPA will seek to strengthen the monitoring and evaluation of its programme. The revised UNFPA monitoring and evaluation guidelines (November 1986) and the emphasis placed in the Fund's training efforts on monitoring and evaluation should contribute to this. However, there is a need for all parties (UNFPA, executing agencies and the Government) to ensure better follow-up of decisions taken as a result of evaluation and monitoring, to implement the necessary corrective actions and in general to focus more on the substantive aspects of implementation.

48. Given that close monitoring and follow-up can be most effectively done by those at the field level, the DRSAP has to be better equipped for this task. This will require greater decentralization of the monitoring responsibility to the field, strengthening of UNFPA field offices and improved backstopping by UNFPA headquarters and executing agencies.

D. Delivery of project inputs

49. To facilitate the timely appointment of project personnel and to help to ensure that suitably qualified personnel are selected as well as to alleviate common problems with local and overseas training and with equipment, these components need to be discussed in detail during project formulation and reflected in the project document. Full understanding and agreement must be sought, before approval of a project, among the Government and the executing and funding agencies as to what kind of staff, training and/or equipment are needed, for exactly which purposes and for what duration.

50. The selection and designation of national project staff should, in fact, be done prior to project initiation and be a pre-condition for approval of funds. To this end, UNFPA will promote pre-projects activities during which key national staff can be identified and trained before the start of other activities. To improve the timely recruitment and quality of international project personnel, executing agencies should streamline recruitment procedures, ease quota systems where they are applied and systematically consult with UNFPA on the selection process. In selecting international personnel, it is important not only that technical criteria be evaluated but also that the training ability and managerial skills of candidates be examined. Briefing of consultants and advisers prior to assignment also requires improvement on the part of both executing agencies and UNFPA.

51. In order to improve delivery of equipment to projects, UNFPA has set up its own procurement unit and delegated increased authority to the field for the local purchase of equipment and supplies. United Nations auditors have recommended further expansion of UNFPA procurement since it leads to faster delivery and is more economical. While the Fund continues to improve its own procurement, by means of clearer procurement guidelines and briefing for UNFPA field offices by UNFPA's

procurement officers, the Fund's procurement capacity is limited. Significantly increasing UNFPA procurement would require additional resources in terms of both staff and expertise.

E. Management and financial accountability

52. As is the case for other implementation problems, managerial obstacles can be avoided if the roles and responsibilities of each party involved in a project are clarified at the outset before a project starts. All participants must know the procedures to be followed, what actions are due, when, who is responsible, with what resources and how. The work plan and bar chart included in the project document, if done properly, provide a guide for implementation.

53. Several noteworthy measures have already been taken to improve project management. UNFPA has continued to hold consultations with executing agencies at headquarters and at the regional and national levels. Also, UNFPA field offices have held workshops and developed manuals/guidelines on project management. In the future, these initiatives need to be further strengthened and more systematically followed up.

54. Although financial reporting is not correlated with project performance, it is imperative that the quality and timeliness of financial reporting for UNFPA projects be improved. As has been discussed above, at present none of the parties involved ever have complete up-to-date information on the financial status of a project. Governments, agencies and UNFPA will have to seek ways and means of streamlining financial procedures. Ideally, UNFPA policies and procedures should apply in so far as the disposition of UNFPA resources by executing agencies is concerned.

55. Measures already taken to improve the financial aspects include the use of Government or UNFPA execution for local expenditures and briefing and training sessions provided for agency and national staff. For example, in 1986, UNFPA headquarters staff gave a three-day workshop on UNFPA financial procedures in Pakistan for participants from the Government, UNDP and UNFPA; and similar training was provided to project administrative personnel in Benin.

F. Training

56. As has been indicated there is a continuing need for staff training, particularly at the national level, but equally within UNFPA both at headquarters and in the field and in the various executing agencies.

57. Several efforts have already been made by UNFPA and United Nations agencies, mainly in the form of briefing sessions, workshops and seminars organized at both field and headquarters levels. For example, in September 1986, in the United Republic of Tanzania, UNFPA headquarters staff provided a special briefing session for national project staff on managerial and monitoring aspects of implementation, and in June 1986 the UNFPA office in Morocco organized a workshop on project design

and evaluation for national project staff in collaboration with the International Labour Organisation (ILO) Programme Evaluation Unit. Also in 1986, in order to strengthen training efforts, the Fund set up an internal training committee. As a first step, the committee planned and carried out a course for new UNFPA national programme officers in 1986 in New York. In 1987, the committee plans to focus on training of UNFPA headquarters staff in project formulation, appraisal, monitoring and evaluation, on improving the orientation provided to UNFPA representatives and on implementing a second course for local national officers. In these, as with all training efforts, UNFPA will collaborate and co-ordinate, wherever feasible, with executing agencies and other United Nations funding organizations, particularly UNDP and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). However, all UNFPA training is seriously constrained by insufficient resources, in terms of both staff and other inputs.

V. SUMMARY

58. To improve implementation of the UNFPA programme and to ensure a greater focus on substantive aspects of project performance, the Fund in the future will focus on the following:

(a) Strengthening technical backstopping of projects, which will require a more concerted effort to address and follow up problems with existing arrangements for technical backstopping, strengthening of UNFPA's substantive capacity and identification by the Fund of additional sources for technical backstopping to complement existing ones. Increased resources for backstopping are particularly needed at the regional and subregional levels;

(b) Improving technical expertise, including that available from UNFPA, for those sectors of UNFPA assistance which require a particularly complex set of multidisciplinary inputs, such as, for example, many IEC projects; programmes in the area of women, population and development; and training;

(c) Improving the quality of overall programming by the Government and executing and funding agencies through the various steps outlined in section III above;

(d) Strengthening UNFPA's capacity for programme development, appraisal and substantive monitoring and evaluation both in the field and at headquarters in order to ensure better co-ordination and more effective population assistance;

(e) Strengthening the Fund's field offices and further decentralizing activities to the field so that these offices can adequately carry out their responsibilities in the entire programming process;

(f) Reviewing and streamlining programming and related financial rules and procedures and seeking to harmonize those of agencies and UNFPA. For the Fund to be able to monitor financial aspects of projects properly and thus to manage its programme in an adequate fashion, it should examine whether it would be possible for the agencies to apply UNFPA regulations for resources received from UNFPA and focus the financial management of these resources within the Fund;

(g) Initiating a vigorous staff training programme and seeking additional resources for this purpose.

59. To pursue the above steps successfully, close co-operation between Governments, executing agencies and UNFPA is essential. Special efforts are needed to strengthen collaboration at the field level between and among agencies and UNFPA offices.

Annex

TABLE 1

UNFPA PROGRAMME OF ASSISTANCE BY EXECUTING AGENCY: EXPENDITURES, PERCENTAGE
DISTRIBUTION AND IMPLEMENTATION RATE a/

1982-1985

(Thousands of United States dollars unless otherwise indicated)

	<u>1982</u>			<u>1983</u>			<u>1984</u>			<u>1985</u>			<u>Total (1982-1985)</u>		
	\$	%	Rate	\$	%	Rate									
Regional Commissions	6 060	5.95	98.66	6 437	6.36	94.12	6 652	5.76	95.42	6 585	5.30	86.02	25 733	23.39	93.21
UNOFS <u>b/</u>	3 632	3.57	94.02	2 576	2.54	110.96	1 467	1.27	83.87	1 388	1.12	90.42	9 063	2.13	94.82
UNTCO	19 361	19.03	93.20	11 405	11.28	84.76	11 453	9.93	87.75	13 750	11.10	87.18	55 968	12.84	88.22
UNESCO	4 049	3.98	84.68	4 892	4.84	83.54	5 151	4.46	82.32	5 986	4.83	82.17	20 078	4.53	83.18
UNICEF	3 151	3.10	89.06	1 922	1.90	110.66	1 608	1.39	88.99	2 229	1.80	97.27	8 914	2.10	89.75
ILO	5 041	4.95	81.61	5 126	5.07	77.66	4 409	3.82	69.14	5 236	4.22	72.44	19 812	4.52	75.21
FAO	1 866	1.83	108.73	741	0.73	78.29	1 637	1.42	91.77	1 982	1.60	88.97	6 226	1.40	91.94
WHO	16 846	16.56	87.00	19 500	19.04	87.74	17 589	15.26	89.21	25 394	20.50	88.29	79 079	17.84	88.06
OPE	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	586	0.47	99.48	586	0.47	99.48
UNFPA	10 822	10.64	88.92	10 833	10.71	80.87	18 175	15.76	76.58	16 753	13.52	82.72	56 583	12.66	82.27
GOVT	21 381	21.02	78.97	29 521	29.20	85.00	37 893	32.87	92.51	29 926	24.16	90.59	118 720	26.81	86.77
NGO	9 491	9.33	99.18	8 360	8.27	103.73	9 224	8.00	100.49	14 016	11.31	97.38	41 091	9.23	100.20
GRAND TOTAL	<u>101 702</u>	<u>100.00</u>	<u>88.30</u>	<u>101 064</u>	<u>100.00</u>	<u>87.21</u>	<u>115 258</u>	<u>100.00</u>	<u>87.59</u>	<u>123 830</u>	<u>100.00</u>	<u>87.81</u>	<u>441 853</u>	<u>100.00</u>	<u>87.73</u>

a/ Implementation rate is the ratio of total project expenditures reported by executing agencies to the total project budgets allocated by UNFPA, at year end, after rephasing. In a few cases the rate exceeds 100, reflecting an expenditure slightly higher than an allocation.

b/ United Nations Office of Financial Services for projects funded through the Department of Technical Co-operation for Development and the Department of International Economic and Social Affairs.

TABLE 2

UNFPA PROGRAMME OF ASSISTANCE BY REGION, AND GLOBAL/INTERREGIONAL: EXPENDITURES
AND IMPLEMENTATION RATE ^{a/}

1982-1985

(Thousands of United States dollars unless otherwise indicated)

	<u>1982</u>		<u>1983</u>		<u>1984</u>		<u>1985</u>		<u>Total</u>	
	<u>\$</u>	<u>Rate</u>								
<u>Africa</u>										
Country	11 530	82.24	12 189	77.90	16 047	81.66	17 572	79.67	57 338	80.37
Intercountry	<u>4 422</u>	<u>99.19</u>	<u>4 695</u>	<u>91.51</u>	<u>4 685</u>	<u>90.54</u>	<u>4 646</u>	<u>80.17</u>	<u>18 449</u>	<u>90.35</u>
Total	<u>15 952</u>	<u>86.33</u>	<u>16 885</u>	<u>81.26</u>	<u>20 732</u>	<u>83.51</u>	<u>22 218</u>	<u>79.77</u>	<u>75 787</u>	<u>82.72</u>
<u>Asia</u>										
Country	37 430	84.87	38 760	85.85	46 912	84.06	48 977	89.89	172 086	86.17
Intercountry	<u>4 859</u>	<u>84.71</u>	<u>4 854</u>	<u>98.67</u>	<u>4 708</u>	<u>98.03</u>	<u>5 473</u>	<u>88.85</u>	<u>19 894</u>	<u>92.56</u>
Total	<u>42 289</u>	<u>84.85</u>	<u>43 614</u>	<u>87.11</u>	<u>51 627</u>	<u>85.17</u>	<u>54 450</u>	<u>89.79</u>	<u>191 980</u>	<u>86.73</u>
<u>Latin America and the Caribbean</u>										
Country	10 313	93.34	10 052	88.34	12 453	94.91	14 005	90.07	46 823	91.66
Intercountry	<u>3 690</u>	<u>99.67</u>	<u>3 291</u>	<u>95.58</u>	<u>2 871</u>	<u>90.97</u>	<u>3 177</u>	<u>91.37</u>	<u>13 029</u>	<u>94.40</u>
Total	<u>14 003</u>	<u>94.93</u>	<u>13 343</u>	<u>90.02</u>	<u>15 324</u>	<u>94.15</u>	<u>17 182</u>	<u>90.30</u>	<u>59 852</u>	<u>92.35</u>
<u>Middle East and the Mediterranean</u>										
Country	8 544	87.49	7 613	83.44	7 278	85.03	8 354	82.33	31 789	84.57
Intercountry	<u>151</u>	<u>74.65</u>	<u>1 092</u>	<u>91.04</u>	<u>1 563</u>	<u>86.35</u>	<u>1 716</u>	<u>85.29</u>	<u>5 522</u>	<u>85.08</u>
Total	<u>9 695</u>	<u>85.74</u>	<u>8 705</u>	<u>84.32</u>	<u>8 841</u>	<u>85.26</u>	<u>10 070</u>	<u>82.82</u>	<u>37 312</u>	<u>84.35</u>
<u>Europe</u>										
Country	428	87.87	489	99.18	844	97.46	1 304	92.44	3 064	94.24
Intercountry	<u>634</u>	<u>93.52</u>	<u>471</u>	<u>83.66</u>	<u>501</u>	<u>94.02</u>	<u>420</u>	<u>79.32</u>	<u>2 026</u>	<u>87.63</u>
Total	<u>1 062</u>	<u>91.16</u>	<u>960</u>	<u>90.91</u>	<u>1 345</u>	<u>96.15</u>	<u>1 724</u>	<u>88.86</u>	<u>5 090</u>	<u>91.77</u>
<u>Interregional/global</u>	<u>18 701</u>	<u>95.26</u>	<u>17 557</u>	<u>93.24</u>	<u>17 389</u>	<u>96.01</u>	<u>18 185</u>	<u>93.74</u>	<u>71 832</u>	<u>94.58</u>
GRAND TOTAL	<u>101 702</u>	<u>88.30</u>	<u>101 064</u>	<u>87.21</u>	<u>115 258</u>	<u>87.59</u>	<u>123 829</u>	<u>87.81</u>	<u>441 853</u>	<u>87.73</u>

^{a/} Implementation rate is the ratio of total project expenditures reported by executing agencies to the total project budgets allocated by UNFPA, at year end, after rephasing.

TABLE 3

IMPLEMENTATION RATES a/ BY WORK-PLAN CATEGORY
 AND BY PRESENCE OF DRSAP

		1982-1985				
I.	<u>Work-plan category</u>	<u>1982</u>	<u>1983</u>	<u>1984</u>	<u>1985</u>	<u>Total</u>
	Basic data collection and analysis	92.10	94.78	92.54	82.64	90.50
	Population dynamics	93.61	86.43	88.52	88.76	89.33
	Formulation and evaluation of population policies	90.34	80.70	86.97	82.52	85.13
	Implementation of policies	78.01	89.25	79.88	86.42	83.39
	Family planning programmes	86.82	85.80	87.07	89.44	87.27
	Communication and education	81.60	90.60	86.15	86.24	86.15
	Special programmes	86.75	82.00	83.70	83.16	83.90
	Multisector activities	91.41	87.08	90.26	89.92	89.67
II.	<u>Presence of DRSAP b/</u>					
	DRSAP <u>c/</u>	86.00	86.12	87.30	88.32	86.98
	NO DRSAP <u>d/</u>	83.83	80.90	77.73	83.20	81.42

a/ Implementation rate is the ratio of total project expenditures reported by executing agencies, to the total project budgets allocated by UNFPA at year end, after rephasing.

b/ Figures exclude intercountry programme.

c/ Implementation rate for programmes where a DRSAP is stationed in the country.

d/ Implementation rate for programmes where a DRSAP is not stationed in the country.
