PROGRAMME IMPLEMENTATION

Implementation of decisions adopted by the Governing Council at previous sessions

Review of programme and project activities: framework for mid-term reviews of country and intercountry programmes

Report of the Administrator

Addendum

INTRODUCTION

1. The Governing Council, in paragraph 3 of its decision 87/13 of 18 June 1987, requested that the next annual report on programme quality include information on the procedural framework established by the Administrator for mid-term reviews of country and intercountry programmes. The present note describes the framework and the main elements of the process.

I. POLICY FRAMEWORK

2. The country programme is a planning instrument. It is designed to assist Governments to identify the overall needs for technical assistance, and, within this framework, to plan the use of the resources of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and of other bodies of the United Nations system. This process is designed to promote integration of UNDP technical assistance and other relevant assistance into the development efforts of the Government itself. The formulation of a country programme is primarily the responsibility of the Government. It is assisted in the process by UNDP, which makes appropriate call on the resources of the United Nations system to aid the Government. It follows, therefore, that
periodic annual and mid-term reviews and the follow-up of their findings are primarily the responsibility of Governments.

3. The purpose of a review is to ascertain if a programme is proceeding according to plan and also to see if any changes are needed in it because of economic, political or social developments in the country since its formulation, e.g., a major drop in export commodity prices.

4. UNDP fulfils its responsibility to the country programming and review process by:

   (a) Actively assisting in the formulation and review process;

   (b) Making available to the Government technical assistance for the review from other components of the United Nations system as necessary;

   (c) Assessing the availability of resources;

   (d) Reporting on the programming and on the review to the Governing Council.

5. The mid-term review of the country programme is an important undertaking, requiring the planning and careful attention to the work-load implications. The country programme monitoring process gathers the information needed for the review from the beginning of programme implementation; it should be used to spread the work-load involved and to promote learning by monitoring. The results of annual reviews, tripartite project reviews and evaluations should also contribute to this cumulative data gathering and analytic process. However, it might be necessary to supplement the information obtained through the normal monitoring process by special missions which would involve the Government, UNDP and, as necessary, the executing agencies.

Preparations for mid-term reviews

6. Mid-term reviews are required for all programmes over $10 million. Ideally, the review should take place at the mid-point of the programme, towards the end of the second year of the five-year cycle. It should be noted that a full assessment is required towards the end of the fourth year of a five-year programme as an input to the preparation of the next programme. The precise timing of the review process and the involvement of other parties will be decided upon by the Government in consultation with UNDP. The Resident Representative is responsible for transmitting the results of the review to UNDP headquarters.

7. The objectives of the mid-term programme review are to:

   (a) Ascertain whether the country programme, as formulated, is being followed and, if not, to determine the reasons for any variations;

   (b) Assess the usefulness of the country programme as a strategy document for the identification of technical assistance from UNDP, the United Nations system and other sources;
(c) Determine whether the programme under review is still appropriate in the light of current economic, political and social conditions;

(d) Identify any necessary changes to the approved programme consequent to the findings of the review.

8. The mid-term review also requires that the use of the country programme as a programming tool be assessed, to ascertain whether it provides a usable framework for the identification of technical assistance projects (funded by United Nations agencies, bilateral donors, multilateral banks and other sources) not included in the UNDP-assisted country programme. In terms of process, this requires an examination of how the programme and its projects were identified. The mid-term review also determines the consistency of the approach to identifying and developing projects within such a framework. It will identify projects, now approved, which do not lie within such a framework.

9. The major points to be covered, therefore, in all mid-term reviews are:

(a) The progress in programme implementation achieved during the first part of the programme cycle, measured in terms of both activities launched and programme level results achieved;

(b) The extent to which different modalities of execution are used, with comments on their relative performance;

(c) Whether economic and political circumstances have changed significantly and, if so, whether the programme remains valid and relevant;

(d) Any programme adjustments in response to anticipated changes in the political or economic environment;

(e) Actions required to ensure that the programme achieves its original objectives, and where the actual programme has deviated from what was originally planned, the reasons for such deviations and the decisions required to bring the programme into harmony with the changed situations and objectives;

(f) The allocation, approval and disbursement of indicative planning figure (IPF) funds (including those identified as programmed or unprogrammed reserves); whether such allocations for specific projects conform to the programme objectives; and recommendations on the further allocation of reserves to new projects;

(g) Major problems experienced in the implementation of the programme;

(h) Whether the programme was at its outset, and is at the time of the review, consistent with and has clear linkages with the macro-economic framework of the country;

(i) Inconsistencies between the country programme and any subsequently negotiated structural adjustment programmes, or national technical co-operation
assessments and programmes (NaTCAPs) or any other comprehensive plan covering technical assistance:

(j) The issues on which programme managers require further guidance from UNDP headquarters;

(k) Whether the programme review should be followed by an independent, in-depth evaluation, of either the parts or whole of the programme, so as to obtain a more in-depth understanding of impact and sustainability.

II. USE OF MID-TERM PROGRAMME REVIEW RESULTS AND REPORTS

10. The results of the mid-term reviews of country programmes will be communicated to all the parties concerned and used for a variety of purposes at different levels of programme management in the tripartite system. In order to facilitate comparability and synthesis, the standardized report structure outlined in section IV is recommended, recognizing of course, the need in certain cases for it to be modified and adapted to respond to individual country needs.

11. At the country level, the Government and the field office will use the recommendation of the mid-term review to help them address those immediate issues which need to be addressed. At UNDP headquarters, the regional bureaux will review the incoming reports for their quality. They will add as necessary any further relevant information and forward the report to the Programme Review Committee.

12. The Programme Review Committee will examine mid-term programme review reports (prepared on a standardized basis) together with the comments prepared thereon by the regional bureaux, the Bureau for Programme Policy and Evaluation (RPPE) and other concerned UNDP offices such as the Planning and Co-ordination Office or the Division of Finance. All mid-term reviews of programmes of $10 million and above are to be submitted to the Programme Review Committee. In addition, any review reports on programmes of less than $10 million raising special policy questions can be taken up by the Programme Review Committee at its own discretion or at the request of the regional bureau concerned.

13. Deliberations of the Programme Review Committee will focus mainly on the quality and direction of the programme implementation and any changes proposed for the remainder of the programme. The Committee will also reflect on any policy consideration arising from either the review or its findings and recommendations. It will respond to any request for advice by a regional bureau on a particular programme or set of programmes; it will recommend for the consideration of the Action Committee policy issues which require senior management decisions; and it will determine if any programme, in view of the extent of the de facto change from the programme originally approved by the Governing Council, should be resubmitted for the further consideration and approval of the Council. Any recommendations of the Programme Review Committee that do not require Council consideration will be shared promptly with the field office for appropriate follow-up.
14. The Programme Review Committee will also review the annual report of the Administrator on mid-term reviews of country programmes. This report will be prepared by BPPE, in close collaboration with the regional bureaux.

III. PRESENTATION OF MID-TERM PROGRAMME REVIEW RESULTS TO THE GOVERNING COUNCIL

15. The previous sections have identified the issues to be examined during a mid-term review of a country programme. This section identifies the actions required to ensure proper reporting to the Governing Council.

16. In order to ensure comparability and to facilitate the preparation of annual reports to the Governing Council on the outcomes of individual mid-term country programme reviews, a standardized report structure per country is recommended (see annex).

17. The annual report to the Council will provide:

(a) A survey of reviews completed, indicating those programmes that are on track and need no changes;

(b) Country-by-country information on programmes requiring major changes.

18. The review paper will describe whether or not country programmes reviewed are actually being used as a programming tool for non-UNDP technical assistance and how well they are articulated with public investment programmes and policy framework papers. It will identify any major obstacles that appear to hinder the use of programmes as frameworks for the identification of projects not included in the country programme. It will provide lessons learned in the identification of programmes and projects, the problems in implementing programme strategies and will also deal with the process of project identification at the sub-sectoral level.

19. The review will comment on the operational links between the country programme and major macro-economic management processes launched. It will also highlight, in relevant countries, the link between NaTCAPs and the country programme. It will reflect on whether the programme approach is valid and workable and provide summary financial data on commitments against, and expenditures on, IPPs. It will also identify programmes for which evaluations are planned.
Annex

MID-TERM COUNTRY PROGRAMME REVIEW: STANDARDIZED FORMAT

I. FINANCIAL DATA
A. IPF funds committed to new projects during the period under review
B. Uncommitted IPF balances
C. Expenditures against approved projects during the period under review
D. Unexpended balance of funds committed to projects
E. Expenditures of central Project Development Facility funds during the period under review

II. PROGRAMME/PROJECT DATA
A. Comparison of planned project list against actual project approvals
B. Projects not in original country programme
C. Progress in programme implementation: activities and results

III. PROGRAMME ANALYSIS
A. What are the reasons for its deviations from its original goals and targets?
B. Were the new projects in the country programme identified as planned?
C. What were the major problems experienced in the implementation of the programme?
D. Was the country programme a useful tool for United Nations systems and other donors in identifying other technical assistance projects?
E. Continued relevance of original programme objectives
F. Major changes identified in technical assistance needs at the national or sectoral level (e.g., as a result of NaTCPs or similar exercises, or country programme evaluations)
G. Programme adjustments in response to changes in the political or economic environment
H. Consistency of the country programme with World Bank-sponsored structural adjustment programme

I. What technical assistance modalities were planned to be used to complement the country programme and what has been the experience to date?

IV. EVALUATION REQUIREMENTS

Are any evaluations planned for specific aspects or the whole of the programme?

V. RECOMMENDATIONS

A. If programme is on track and its objectives continue to be relevant

B. If programme is broadly on track but changed objectives have been introduced

C. If the programme is not on track, specify the actions needed

-----