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PROGRAMME IMPLEMENTATION

Experience in human resources development since 1970

Report of the Administrator

Summary

The present paper responds to Governing Council decision 86/14 requesting a detailed critical analysis of UNDP experience in human resources development since 1970. On the basis of evaluations of projects dealing with different aspects of human resources development in different sectors, the paper summarizes key findings related to project design, emphasis, affordability and sustainability. Then, mainly from the perspective of follow-up visits to a number of countries, the paper draws broad conclusions regarding the evolving nature of human resources development and technical co-operation needs and the longer-term sustainability and impact of institutions after UNDP support has ended.
INTRODUCTION

1. In 1986 the Governing Council requested the Administrator to submit a detailed critical analysis of UNDP's experience since 1970 in human resources development at its thirty-fifth session. The objective of the analysis is to provide lessons for improving the relevance, delivery and impact of technical co-operation in human resource development. Broadly defined, human resources development relates to the education, training and utilization of human potential for social and economic progress. In this context, virtually all UNDP-supported projects have a human resources dimension.

2. In keeping with the broad definition of human resources development spelled out in document DP/1986/10 upon which the Governing Council debate and decision 86/14 were based, this analysis covers a variety of UNDP project experience, with emphasis inevitably on education and training. Training ranges over such sectors as health, agriculture and industry, highly technical areas such as civil aviation, telecommunications and informatics as well as vocational and management training which is, of course, intersectoral.

3. The analysis was done in two stages. A desk review of over 100 evaluation reports identified factors affecting the success of human resources development. Thematic evaluations relating to agricultural training, industrial training, educational innovation, primary health care and women in development were also consulted. Preliminary conclusions emerging from this desk review were summarized in document DP/1987/15.

4. The second stage involved visits to several countries with different political systems, levels of institutional development and technological sophistication and therefore different human resources issues and priorities. The purpose of the visits was to investigate issues affecting project impact and sustainability which could not be adequately treated on the basis of a desk review alone. The focus in this second stage was on issues external to projects such as policy environment, political commitment and the longer-term outreach and impact of institutions that had been, and in some cases still were supported by UNDP. On the basis of such diverse experience, certain general conclusions emerge regarding the efficacy of past training and institution-building activities and the evolving context within which technical co-operation must operate. Thus, lessons can be drawn for the future.

5. Generally speaking, evaluations concentrate on project weaknesses and often present an overly negative impression. (There was criticism of this in reference to the interim Governing Council report in 1987.) Project evaluations and final reports deal with the specifics of the particular moment and may be overshadowed by a particular event, such as a budget cutback or change in project management. They consequently overlook the more lasting effects of the assistance provided. The conclusions from field visits, on the other hand, while necessarily more impressionistic, present a more positive picture. With the benefit of hindsight the more enduring features of the project that UNDP supported and the longer-term impact of UNDP's involvement become apparent. The Council will find this difference reflected in the tone of the paragraphs that follow.
I. THE NEED FOR A HUMAN RESOURCES STRATEGY AND PLANNING FRAMEWORK

6. Developing countries, by and large, have some sort of human resources strategy. Often implicit, it is rarely articulated in a single, comprehensive document. The strategy that is adopted serves to ensure continuity of policies with respect, for example, to basic educational priorities, need for technological capabilities in certain fields or skills needed to achieve key industrial objectives. The UNDP country programme then links project activities to these broad human resources goals and programmes of the Government.

7. A major portion of UNDP resources is used to help to establish and strengthen national institutions which have training responsibilities of one type or another: management institutes, institutes of technology or entities dealing with agricultural research and extension, vocational and technical training, educational planning, civil aviation, telecommunications or the special needs of particular industries. Besides training, there is the other dimension of human resources development: enhancing the utilization and productivity of trained human capabilities, for example, by developing more relevant curricula, providing extension services to agriculture or consulting services to industry, improving the health conditions of the people and identifying business opportunities and creating jobs.

8. While Governments will sometimes use UNDP resources in a relatively neglected sector, in general the institutions that benefit from UNDP assistance represent a national priority. They are protected more than other entities in times of economic retrenchment, or else World Bank or other support assures that their funding requirements are met. National staff may even enjoy better remuneration and professional opportunities than in other parts of the bureaucracy.

9. The institutions that UNDP deals with are for the most part public sector entities. For example, almost all vocational training and management development centres set up through UNDP-funded projects in Africa are governmental bodies. There are many cases of Governments being unable to meet the recurrent costs because of serious budgetary problems. Recently, a few projects have tried to reduce pressures on government bureaucracies by decentralizing training schemes and relying more on private and voluntary efforts.

10. Evaluations note that, only too frequently, project investments are determined simply on the basis of development priorities while neglecting affordability. When choosing a project strategy only one solution to the problem is examined without comparing the costs and benefits to those of other options. Insufficient attention is given to what the 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 - having initially a separate and privileged status - into national structures in a sustainable form.

11. These problems arise in part because a human resources planning framework is not in place. Overall strategy and priorities are not translated into practical guidelines for programming decisions. Disaggregated data is lacking on skill availabilities and needs, labour force participation rates, wage rates and...
incentives needed to correct labour market imbalances and the comparative
efficiency of different educational and training systems (formal and informal,
public and private, overseas and in-country, institutional and enterprise-based).
In the absence of this information, projects can be initiated which cannot be
sustained over the long run, and training systems produce skills which cannot be
easily absorbed into the economy.

12. Project evaluations point to the need for a national focal point where human
resources information, not usually found in national accounts and other aggregated
data, can be captured and analysed on a continuing basis. Planning ministries
collect certain human resources information for macro-economic purposes and labour
ministries monitor labour markets. Co-ordination between the two may leave much to
be desired. Also, the process does not extend down to provincial and district
levels where labour markets function and their characteristics necessarily differ.
It is rare to find at local levels disaggregated human resources data except those
generated, for example, by particular training institutions in collaboration with
the local industries or agricultural services which employ people they have
trained. Invariably also, the traditional rural economy and the urban informal
sector are left out of the picture altogether, almost by definition.

13. Building on its recent experience with National Technical Co-operation
Assessment Programmes (NaTCAPs), UNDP can help Governments to institutionalize
their capacity to collect and analyse the data needed to implement their human
resources development strategies. This will enable Governments to bring a greater
degree of coherence to the planning and management of national human resources,
expatriate experts and technical assistance flows. Helping in this area would
constitute a strategic use of UNDP's limited resources to address needs that extend
across all sectors and concern all donors.

II. PAST EXPERIENCE WITH REGARD TO PROJECT DESIGN AND LINKAGES

14. Evaluations of project experience conclude that, without labour market and
other information on human resources, project objectives are unrealistic or not
clear enough to guide implementation. Training is carried out on the assumption
that employment will be created automatically. When project functions are confused
with longer-term institutional functions, project outputs are not achieved with the
resources that are available. This confusion results in projects which are
difficult to implement and discouraging to counterparts and result in
semi-developed institutions when UNDP assistance ends.

15. Rigorous adherence to implementation deadlines results in underestimating the
time required to meet project objectives. Generally speaking, human resource
programmes, unlike large capital and physical projects, entail sustained
interaction with people and patient nurturing of indigenous capacities. It takes
at least 10 to 15 years to develop any degree of sustained institutional capacity.
Project designs with a "fast-track" approach not only are out of phase with
developing country realities but virtually assure that decisions will be made by
technicians and bureaucrats with limited involvement of the intended
beneficiaries. Cases are also encountered where heavy commitments of equipment and
tight procurement schedules are incompatible with more gradualist training requirements and lead to subsequent problems of maintenance.

16. Project success is also compromised by poor scheduling of inputs. On the side of the donor, this relates to the arrival of experts, the delivery of equipment and the implementation of fellowships; on the government side, to the provision of physical facilities and, above all, the assigning of national staff to work on the project. Not infrequently, international staff are withdrawn before national staff, recently returned from overseas fellowships, have had time to gain practical experience. UNDP support would have been more effective if expert services had been stretched out so as to give more time for national staff to become fully integrated into the programme.

17. A tendency to stress the development of technical capabilities to the relative neglect of the management needs is also noted in project evaluations. When UNDP assistance is withdrawn there is an unfortunate loss of momentum because the institution is unable fully to engage staff that has been trained. With benefit of hindsight, more attention should have been given to financial planning and budgeting, equipment procurement and maintenance, career development and the setting up of monitoring and feedback mechanisms. Overemphasis on the technical aspects can be attributed in part to government insistence that UNDP resources be used to address technical needs and fill technological gaps and in part to the mandate of specialized agencies and the technical orientation of the experts they employ. (Noting this defect in the design of institution-building projects is not to suggest however that there are not many UNDP-financed projects which expressly address management issues.)

18. Projects are sometimes formulated without examining the recurrent cost implications, such as equipment maintenance and repair costs or giving sufficient attention to more cost-effective alternatives. For example, greater use of enterprise-based training or apprenticeships can create additional training opportunities at lower cost. A different technology can result in savings. Greater advantage can perhaps be taken of private sector willingness to pay for services or share in training responsibilities.

19. Even the best designed projects run into unexpected circumstances that require adjustments and changes in project components. Increasing attention is therefore being given to systematic evaluation and feedback to ensure that project activities are responsive to changing conditions.

20. Timely feedback of trainee utilization allows institutions to adjust programmes according to client needs. In unsuccessful projects, on the other hand, institutions seem to grind along unaware of the market they serve. Programmes tend to get into a rut in that, once established, there is a tendency to repeat the same type of training over a number of budget cycles. Responsiveness is achieved, on the other hand, by industry participation in the governing body of the institution and involvement in setting training priorities and approving the curriculum. Some countries have promoted training workshops to improve communication with the private sector. These exchanges lead to better understanding of skill supplies and demand while also creating opportunities for collaborative training and job creation.
21. In some countries there is a growing feeling that institutionalized training by government bodies cannot really respond to changes in the job market. The Government, it is felt, should get out of training in specific skills altogether and leave the job to the private sector. Much more emphasis should be placed on on-the-job training in the work-place.

22. Two decades of development experience have shown that the sustainability of human resources investments can be significantly improved if local communities have a part in assessing needs, designing the project and in its implementation. Yet project experience still shows a lack of sensitivity in this respect. There is too much emphasis on what the Government can do rather than on what people might do with government support and incentives. Incredibly after many years of experience there is still criticism that agricultural technicians tell farmers what to do without first engaging them in the search for the most acceptable solutions.

23. Some education and training projects are still heavily influenced by foreign criteria. Excessive stress is placed on degree equivalencies and standardized testing or on management principles which are not culturally relevant. For example, training establishments may not be allowed to provide consultancy services to private enterprises because of ministry of education regulations. Formal technical standards can inhibit improvisation in finding solutions that are more in keeping with socio-economic realities. Employers of those trained in professional and artisan programmes complain that the training was too theoretical and lacked a practical side.

III. EVOLVING HUMAN RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT AND TECHNICAL CO-OPERATION NEEDS

24. Early human resources development programmes benefited from the need for trained persons in almost every sector of the economy. The rate of development was such that there was a place for every skill. When industrial expansion does not take place as rapidly as planned and government hiring is reduced, training needs become narrower and more specialized and even in the ranks of professions there can be overproduction. Governments have made efforts to initiate placement services but with only limited results. Subsidized on-the-job placements in industrial enterprises is resented because of the paperwork involved or regarded as interference in the right of management to hire and fire. Unemployment has now become one of the primary domestic concerns of many Governments.

25. Technical co-operation needs obviously depend upon a country's human resources and the extent to which it has moved up the scale of development and technological sophistication. Studying the situation in different developing countries representing different points on the scale shows a shift away from the traditional technical co-operation which was characterized by long-term experts and counterpart training overseas. Increasingly, the need is for short-term consultants whose one- or two-month interventions are reinforced by short training tours for national staff to upgrade their competence in very specific fields. Greater use is also made of national consultants.
26. Under the new format a national director is responsible for the project, doing away with earlier distinctions between the implementing agency and the external technical assistance components. In the view of some government officers, long-term experts or chief technical advisers are no longer really relevant, besides costing too much. Although looking good on paper, their technical and communication skills may subsequently prove not to meet expectations. Other government and UNDP officials feel that the long-term expert still has a role in co-ordinating short-term interventions, as well as in the scheduling of fellowships and procurement of equipment. As institutions develop capacity, these inputs need to be more finely tuned and targeted than was the case in the past. The long-term expert may also serve to expedite action, counteract the bureaucratic conservatism which may otherwise hold up a project or serve to diffuse criticism when a project is bureaucratically threatening.

27. An important qualitative shift is taking place: from the earlier emphasis on training of counterparts in technical fields to the training of trainers and the setting up of indigenous training systems. Emphasis on subject-matter is being superseded by emphasis on pedagogy, educational technologies and modular training techniques. This shift in emphasis has meant a gain in multiplier effect.

28. Thus institutions internalize what technical co-operation did in the past. With a growing network of contacts, national project authorities are able to identify the particular consultants, specialized training and items of equipment they need. Sometimes study tours are included in the project budget to allow national authorities to visit universities and research centres abroad in order to select the best expertise and training available.

29. As government institutions develop, the role of UNDP changes. Less involved in the planning and programming of technical co-operation, UNDP and the specialized agencies serve more as a facilitator in processing consultant recruitment and contracts with private firms, procuring equipment that the Government identifies, arranging study tours and processing fellowships. This restricted role, which recognizes that much development has taken place, has important cost-sharing implications.

30. Also, as national institutions assume greater responsibility for meeting their technical requirements, the need for outside assistance in resolving planning, organizational and management problems becomes more acute. The observation in earlier evaluations that projects are overly concerned with technical issues is no longer valid as UNDP is called upon to support management-oriented training (in planning, budgeting, systems analysis, monitoring, evaluation, etc.) in many countries in which it works. As technical confidence grows, the need shifts to providing staff to manage programmes in agriculture, health, urban development and so forth, to manage research rather than to do it, to run more cost-effective training programmes through the use of advanced modular techniques and to co-ordinate training programmes to meet new employment possibilities.

31. Many Governments have adopted policies to privatize hitherto public functions, to work more closely with the private sector and to improve the policy environment in order to stimulate private investments. This has created new demands for
technical co-operation in these fields. Also, in more than one country UNDP is being asked to support institutes that teach management and business skills and in which private sector interests are represented. It has been noted in some countries that industry is not satisfied with the kind of manager being turned out by the training offered by universities. The curriculum in engineering does not provide sufficient training in management and therefore graduates, while technically skilled, are not able to meet the range of industry's needs. New ways are needed to create a closer partnership between training establishments and the private sector.

32. Inexorably technology evolves, in telecommunications, civil aviation, bioengineering, micro-electronics, informatics and so forth, implying a continuing need for technical co-operation. Governments of developing countries recognize the need for greater research and development capability if they are to adapt modern technologies to local conditions and factor endowments and become internationally competitive and self-reliant. To do research and development requires outside help and equipment that is not manufactured locally. The question then arises as to whether the United Nations development system can respond to these increasingly sophisticated technology needs; which technologies should be given most attention because of their relevance to basic developmental constraints; and whether the United Nations system has the capability to appraise project proposals, suggest options and recommend sources of expertise. Present consulting rates offered by international agencies are not attractive enough to recruit people in certain "high-tech" fields. High-technology projects also face the paradox that the more successful they are the more difficult it becomes to continue them, since they are seen as a potential competitor by the very firms that supply the expertise.

Obviously, technical co-operation among developing countries (TCDC) and Transfer of Knowledge through Expatriate Nationals (TOKTEN) networks in particular fields will take on greater importance in the future because of this "high-tech" emphasis. It may be necessary to formulate a new type of umbrella consulting project which is highly flexible in nature and from which short-term contracts can be negotiated, perhaps directly by the resident representatives, without substantial paperwork and lost time.

IV. SUSTAINABILITY OF INSTITUTIONS AND MEASURES OF IMPACT

33. Training used to be treated as an end in itself. Projects responded to a perceived need but machinery did not exist to determine absorptive capacity and the volume, quality and specifics of the training that was required. Besides, in the absence of co-ordination among different ministries with training activities, there was often duplication and waste in donor-supported fellowship and travel grants.

34. While these problems are still encountered, more attention is now given, quite properly, to building up the capacity of institutions so that they can absorb trained people and ensure their productive employment. Accordingly, the management dimensions, including revenue mobilization and career development, are stressed and, if necessary, the project is extended for a few years to correct the deficiencies.
35. Particularly in the least developed countries, the scarcity of counterpart staff undermines the objectives of human resources programmes from the outset. The problem is so pervasive in Africa that a two-pronged strategy is urged: innovative means to "accelerate the experience" of national staff and, at the same time, more modest and realistic counterpart requirements. Increased use of operational (OPEX) personnel and United Nations Volunteers (UNVs) to fill staffing vacancies may be the best interim solution, provided, of course, that their training responsibilities are given appropriate emphasis. The services of UNVs are highly appreciated. They accept hardship and remuneration more in line with the earnings of national staff, whom they teach and from whom they learn. In short, UNVs can be integrated easily into government organizations where staffing gaps occur.

36. Project evaluations conclude that retention of staff trained with UNDP assistance is critical to the process of institution-building. When staff trained by the project leave for other jobs the institution suffers. The outflow of qualified personnel from the public sector results from better remuneration and career benefits in the private sector. It is exacerbated by incentives and perquisites provided by donors in support of special "project units" outside the normal structure of government.

37. As a multilateral agency with a central co-ordinating role, UNDP is well placed to assist Governments in analysing problems of public service employment and recommending the incentive structures that are necessary in order to retain qualified staff and correct skill shortages. Special Action Programme for Administration and Management in Africa (SAPAM) missions serve this purpose and mobilize other donor support. The more pervasive problems, however, of overstaffing, low salaries and promotion on the basis of seniority or connections rather than on merit can only be dealt with by the Government itself.

38. "Brain drain" represents not only a loss of high quality staff but of leadership capacity, originality of thought and creativity. To discourage it by bonding and other contractual arrangements may not be very effective and may have a negative effect on morale and productivity. In addition to improving civil service conditions and creating professionally satisfying opportunities, special programmes like TOKTEN can serve to counteract brain drain. Greater use of local consulting and contracting firms by donors also helps to encourage repatriation.

39. Evaluation undertaken during or just after UNDP project assistance can draw only tentative conclusions regarding longer-term institutional sustainability. A visit some years later usually presents a more positive picture: qualified and motivated staff proud of being able to function without the help of outside experts; well-established programmes for refresher training and career development; and such former staff who have left occupying influential positions in other government agencies. The more technical the organization the more stability there is in the staff since their specialized skills are not broadly marketable elsewhere. Also, the fact that the stress now is on training of trainers (as opposed to trained workers who market their skills outside) ensures a high degree of utilization of training in the manner which was originally intended.
40. Institutional sustainability depends on an ability to adapt rapidly enough to meet the changing needs of the economy. For example, in one country a UNDP-supported institute which trained civil servants became less attractive to trainees and relevant to the economy as opportunities in government declined. After a full diagnostic study, the school is now being transformed into a training centre for maintenance personnel to meet the expanding needs of the hotel industry.

41. There is other evidence that institutions which UNDP was instrumental in building are alive and well: the relationships that have been established with industry, extension services and other users of their expertise and technology; the demand for their training, product testing, consulting and other specialized services (and the revenue from fees that they bring in); and the quality of research and feasibility studies that are now being undertaken.

42. A continuing commitment on the part of the Government to the original purpose of the project is evidenced in the continuity of policies and sometimes in giving the institution more authority in the government structure, for example, greater autonomy or permitting it to confer higher degrees. Success in mobilizing outside resources including grants from other donors ensures that the programme and services will continue.

43. Professional dedication and satisfaction are important motivations, but the impact of UNDP assistance and the longer-term sustainability of institutions depend to a great extent on the allowances and other inducements needed to retain national staff. The absence of overtime pay, travel allowances or hardship bonuses for working in remote areas has the expected detrimental effect. The institutions which UNDP supports, however, are usually national in scope and enjoy a high level of priority. Because of their privileged status they do not suffer as much from the gross overstaffing, cumbersome procedures, unclear responsibilities and the anomic characteristic of government bureaucracies in general.

44. They are, by and large, nodal points of development. They have links with government line departments, with the important industries which make use of their training capabilities and consultancy services and with model farms and villages where research findings are tested. Beyond that limited range of contact however, United Nations-supported centres at the national level are often weakly coupled to the production and service systems at the provincial and district levels where the needs of peasant farmers, small businesses, overburdened school systems and health facilities and rapidly deteriorating urban environments are dealt with. (Weak links between the science and technology centres and the production system exist partly because of the major investments needed at the lower end. Graphically described in one context as the problem of the "last mile": from anywhere in the world one can get through to the local telephone exchange in a matter of minutes thanks to sophisticated satellite and microwave systems and advanced digital switching technology; the last mile depends upon an antiquated tangle of overhead lines and unprotected connections; so the call does not go through.)

45. Success in bridging this gap is found for instance, in the management-oriented training of technical staff in regional development institutions. Under such conditions, which may depend upon loan-financing from other donors, technical
interventions at the top of structure can, through practical courses and seminars on a decentralized basis, have an impact on the performance of thousands of lower-level supervisory and field staff. By the same token, involving industrial firms directly in training plans and staffing research centres with personnel from industry will assure the close linkage that is necessary between UNDP-supported institutions and the production system. By contrast, when indicative planning figure (IPF) resources are used to fill technological gaps as opposed to broader management and bridging needs, UNDP's involvement tends to be fragmented and its impact on fundamental needs for social and economic development is of a trickle-down and tenuous nature at best.

46. The confidence UNDP enjoys stems from close association with the central planning authorities and identification with national priorities. On the other hand, in many developing countries, it is difficult to work at the rural community level because the machinery of government is concentrated at the centre and in the capital city where services are better staffed and equipped. (There are exceptions of course, notably where UNDP directly finances small, village-level projects in association with bilateral donors.) UNDP interventions tend to be concentrated at the centre, where admittedly UNDP has greatest influence, rather than at the provincial and district levels where much more planning and training needs to be done. Recognizing this, UNDP is making special efforts to work more closely with non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Otherwise, programmes to mobilize the potential of women and other neglected elements of society at the local level will not benefit much from UNDP support.

47. A key ingredient in project impact is the quality of top management. Institutions that have been assisted by UNDP lose relevance and staff if the director lacks imagination, initiative or other qualities of leadership. Poor productivity can just as dramatically be corrected when an energetic and dedicated project director takes charge. In respect of UNDP-assisted projects UNDP must therefore ensure that, apart from the quality of design, implementation, monitoring and feedback, a good project manager is selected.

48. UNDP resources are relatively limited and have to be strategically employed. It is important, however, that IPF funds are not programmed just to fill technological gaps but that longer-term management issues are dealt with both through UNDP assistance and through regular government programmes. There is also pressure not to continue projects beyond one or two phases and to insist that institutions, as soon as possible, stand on their own.

49. This is all well and good. However, premature withdrawal of UNDP project support can be harmful. Evaluations note that institutions seldom become self-sustaining as of the official project termination date. So there is value in a continuing relationship between donor and institution. Periodic visits by consultants and refresher tours for national staff can serve to maintain competence. Equipment that was originally acquired with UNDP funding from a particular country may dictate where follow-up advanced training has to take place or where spare parts should be obtained, posing foreign exchange problems for the institution. Without paid-up subscriptions to key publications in the particular field, professional competence and motivation can languish.
50. To cover modest support of a continuing nature, a country programme sometimes includes separate provision to fund consultancies, training and even incidental equipment in areas not covered by ongoing projects. These funds can also be used to help to prepare an institution to undertake subcontracting and gain practical development experience. Funds strategically used to sustain levels of competence represent a sound expenditure which protects the much larger investments that were made in the past.

51. In some sectors regional projects provide the funds needed for this purpose by covering the foreign exchange costs of specialized training at a regional institution or by supporting "twinning" arrangements that were established when the project was receiving active UNDP assistance. In terms of human resources development such expenditures would appear to constitute a highly cost beneficial use of regional programme funds.

52. Because of prevailing economic pressures, Governments find it necessary to allocate limited technical co-operation resources in an efficient and focused manner, and UNDP is expected to deliver certain quanta of inputs over specific periods of time. The consequent fragmented nature of UNDP project involvement is not in keeping with the enduring and evolving nature of human resources development. In so far as UNDP can become more closely linked to continuing government programme goals as opposed to limited and finite project objectives, the long-term needs of human resources development will be better served.

53. This fragmented nature of UNDP assistance is reflected in the practice of retiring files soon after projects have ended. Where efforts are being made to learn from the past, often the pressure of day-to-day business tends to pre-empt staff time. UNDP recognizes that despite this pressure a greater effort must be made to establish accessible archives and documentation on experience (notably technical papers, evaluations and terminal reports).

54. Maintaining an institutional memory to measure impact in terms of people trained and tracer studies to find out what has become of them since has been difficult to do in the past and will be even more difficult in the future with the shift to short-term inputs. It could also be argued that the number of people trained, services performed or other quantitative measures of impact are not particularly meaningful. Obviously more important is the improved quality and expanding content of courses so that trainees can be more flexibly and productively employed or the high standards of services performed and studies that are undertaken.

55. The key measures of UNDP’s human resources impact are therefore the training, analytical and management capabilities that have been built up with UNDP help, in other words, the systems which are now in place and allow for internalization of technical co-operation. It is at this level that UNDP has greatest influence on the development process. In this respect the record in a number of developing countries is very positive, especially in view of the difficult economic situation prevailing during the past decade. Governments and UNDP can be proud of the institutions and the systems for planning, analysis and training that have been developed. The extent, however, to which these institutions are able to make a
real difference with respect to the improvement of human conditions (e.g., in productivity, incomes, nutrition and health) is harder to determine because of the "bridging" problems noted above and the fact that ultimate impact is a much more complex and long-term process.

56. It would be a mistake to draw narrowly operational conclusions from experience that extends across countries with different cultures, political systems and economic resources and reflects different stages of institutional and technological development. Any universal prescription would have little practical applicability. This analysis, however, does establish the setting within which UNDP must operate in the future. Technical co-operation modalities are changing; technologies are evolving; and new systems are being adopted. UNDP must be able to adjust in terms of these changing modalities and mix of external inputs. Although institutions change, institution-building experience is absorbed. This internalization of technical co-operation takes longer than originally expected. So UNDP must also programme its involvement over a longer-term horizon. A series of short project segments cannot carry the same impact as a broad, comprehensive strategy which takes into account, from the beginning, the full range of constraints which must be addressed. However, UNDP's resources are too limited to meet technical needs over an extended period of time. Hence they must be used to address the critical constraints, for the most part at the national level, by developing systems for policy analysis and more comprehensive human resources planning and by reinforcing training strategies and techniques to respond better to human resource requirements. To do this does not necessarily entail large sums of money. UNDP should also use its limited resources to capture and synthesize technical co-operation experience and thus ensure that future assistance furnished by the United Nations system as well as other donors avoids costly fragmentation of effort and achieves optimum impact.