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OTHER MATTERS

Issues of concern to the Governing Council of the United Nations Development Programme arising from action by the General Assembly at its forty-second session

Modalities for enhancing the implementation of intercountry programmes

Report of the Administrator

SUMMARY

The present report provides information to the Governing Council in response to paragraph 33 of General Assembly resolution 42/196 of 11 December 1987 on operational activities for development.

The report describes the legislative framework, the consultative procedures adopted by UNDP in the preparation of intercountry programmes, and the modalities of implementation for fourth-cycle regional programmes, including the role of the regional commissions.
INTRODUCTION

1. The present report responds to paragraph 33 of General Assembly resolution 42/196 of 11 December 1987 on operational activities for development, which invites the Governing Council to "examine modalities for enhancing the implementation of its intercountry programmes, taking fully into account the technical skills and capabilities existing within the United Nations system and in other appropriate organizations and bodies and also taking into account the different characteristics of each region".

2. This report reviews the legislative framework, the consultative procedures adopted by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) for the development of intercountry programmes, with due account taken of the differences among regions, and some of the modalities of implementation for the fourth cycle regional programmes, including the role of the regional economic commissions.

I. LEGISLATIVE BACKGROUND

3. In response to resolutions of the General Assembly and decisions of the Governing Council, UNDP has taken several steps in recent years to strengthen the intercountry programming process, in particular by ensuring that Governments, the regional commissions and agencies of the United Nations system, appropriate subregional and regional organizations and resident representatives are more closely associated and actively participate in all aspects of the development of intercountry programmes and projects.

4. Provisions of General Assembly resolutions 32/197 of 20 December 1977 and 33/202 of 29 January 1979 on the restructuring of the economic and social sectors of the United Nations system called for close co-operation between UNDP and the regional commissions, including the latter's participation in the preparation of UNDP intercountry programmes and their designation as executing agencies for intersectoral, subregional, regional and interregional projects in areas which do not fall within the purview of the sectoral responsibilities of the specialized agencies and other United Nations bodies. At its twenty-sixth session (1979), the Administrator informed the Governing Council that he would ensure (a) the full involvement of the regional commissions in the identification of priorities for intercountry programmes; and (b) within the framework of these priorities, that the best possible consideration would be given to activities appropriate for execution by the regional commissions.

5. Pursuant to Governing Council decision 79/10 of 27 June 1979 and General Assembly resolution 34/206 of 19 December 1979, the Administrator submitted to the Council at its twenty-seventh session (1980) proposals for a new consultative process to enhance the collective involvement of the countries of each region in the setting of regional priorities for regional programmes, as well as in the identification and initiation of regional projects and activities. The executing agencies, including the Executive Secretaries of the regional commissions, and the Governing Council, in decision 80/9 of 17 June 1980, endorsed the proposals of the Administrator.
II. CONSULTATIVE PROCESS FOLLOWED IN THE PREPARATION OF INTERCOUNTRY PROGRAMMES

6. In pursuance of the foregoing, and as part of the continuous process to improve the design and execution of intercountry programmes so that they accurately reflect regional and subregional priorities and needs for technical co-operation, the following consultative mechanisms and procedures have been adopted by UNDP (and are reflected in the new Programme and Projects Manual (PPM)) for the preparation of regional programmes. These procedures for consultations with all the parties concerned may differ as to detail among the regions and also in the case of the interregional and global programmes. They are outlined below:

(a) By means of a letter and questionnaire, the regional bureau concerned solicits the views of all government development assistance co-ordinators throughout the region, the regional economic commission, all resident representatives in the region, agencies of the United Nations system and appropriate regional and subregional organizations regarding the implementation of the current programme, and invites suggestions on the future direction of the programme, including areas of special interest and project proposals. The agencies are specifically requested to provide sectoral analyses pertaining to the various fields within their competence and special consultations are held with the regional commission to elicit its views on regional priorities for the programme based upon its experience, knowledge and the data available. Such consultations are held periodically throughout the formulation process;

(b) Steps in screening the replies and technical advice received, include matching proposals from the countries with those made by agencies to try to establish priorities;

(c) On the basis of the screening process, a preliminary list of projects, accompanied by a note from the Regional Director of the Bureau providing a substantial overview of development trends and future line of policy action, is transmitted to the Governments, the economic commission concerned, UNDP field offices and the agencies. To further screen the list of projects, Governments and field offices are requested to rank the proposals based upon the development priorities of the respective countries;

(d) Consultations, as appropriate, are held with the economic commission and agencies of the United Nations system to prepare a draft of the regional programme, which is then circulated to Governments, the regional commission and the agencies;

(e) An intergovernmental meeting with government aid co-ordinators in the region is convened by UNDP, in close collaboration with the Executive Secretary of the economic commission, to consider and review the priority areas, strategy and project proposals set out in the draft regional programme. Agencies of the United Nations system are invited to attend. Comments of the special meeting are submitted to the Governing Council when it considers the proposed programme.
7. The above programming methodology, culminating in a meeting of aid co-ordinators, was followed by UNDP in preparing fourth-cycle regional programmes, and is a more elaborate and comprehensive exercise than that utilized for the third cycle. This approach, which represents a distinct improvement over the use of programming missions as a vehicle for intercountry formulation and greatly enhances the involvement of the regional commissions, the agencies and Governments in the formulation of the intercountry programmes, strengthens the UNDP regional programmes by making them more responsive to the needs of each region. It should also be noted that, from the outset, the regional programming process is structured with the full participation and collaboration of the resident representatives concerned, some of whom act as regional representatives, covering several countries in a region in addition to the country to which they are assigned. This arrangement contributes to ensuring that linkages are established between the national and regional programmes. In this regard, assessments are made of ongoing and pipeline UNDP country projects to ascertain their relationship to new intercountry programme proposals.

8. Given the nature of the global and interregional programmes, the consultative process which is followed in the formulation of these programmes is somewhat less formal. However, every effort is made to consult widely and deeply with a large number of interested recipient countries and donors, as well as with other multilateral organizations and individuals concerned with global needs and priorities. In particular, all the members of the Governing Council are afforded an opportunity to comment at various stages in the drafting of the global and interregional programmes document which is ultimately presented to the Governing Council for its approval. In the case of the global and interregional programmes document approved by the Governing Council at its February 1987 session, appropriate linkages were established on both a sectoral and subsectoral basis as well as on a project-by-project basis with the various UNDP regional intercountry programmes.

III. MODALITIES OF IMPLEMENTATION FOR FOURTH CYCLE REGIONAL PROGRAMMES, INCLUDING THE ROLE OF THE REGIONAL ECONOMIC COMMISSIONS

9. The following paragraphs briefly highlight some of the modalities of implementation introduced into the regional programmes which are expected to enhance performance in the fourth cycle. (For details, see documents DP/RAP/1; DP/RAF/3; DP/RLA/3; DP/RAB/2; and DP/REV/2.) The role of the regional economic commissions, both in the intercountry formulation exercise and as executing agencies, is also briefly touched upon.

A. Asia and the Pacific region

10. In order to improve programme and project effectiveness and impact in the fourth cycle, greater efforts will be made to use local talent and existing national institutions in carrying out regional projects. Increased emphasis will also be given to projects which involve collaboration with regional institutions.
A new initiative to improve programme quality will take the form of a special project, undertaken by a regional team, which will carry out periodic surveys and studies of selected development co-operation areas of intercountry interest. As a further means of enhancing programme/project quality, evaluations of specific projects in the new programme will be combined with an assessment of technical co-operation needs and opportunities within the general field of activity in which the project operates. As a means of encouraging strong government participation, it is envisaged that at least seven regional projects will be executed by Governments during the fourth cycle. Towards this end, UNDP is organizing training for government officials – for instance, from the secretariat of the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN) – in the formulation, implementation and monitoring of regional projects.

II. Another programming approach is that of specifically focusing on subregional priorities, as in ASEAN and South Pacific countries. The strengthening of regional and national institutions through the provision of programme support to network projects is being encouraged by UNDP. Efforts are also being made to promote the active involvement of the private sector in the intercountry programme through, inter alia, the organization of meetings in the region between representatives of the public and private sectors.

12. The full collaboration of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) in the programming exercise was evidenced by: (a) seven joint programming and evaluation missions undertaken by ESCAP and UNDP in the preparation of the fourth cycle; (b) the chronology of consultations which took place throughout the entire exercise; and (c) the full congruence between the priorities established by ESCAP for the region and the fourth cycle intercountry programme. ESCAP also functions as the largest executing agency for UNDP-funded projects in the region and during the fourth cycle will execute projects for over $40 million, including 18 ongoing and 17 new projects.

B. Africa region

13. With a view to improving the quality and relevance of the programme in the fourth cycle, measures to be undertaken include the use of highly-skilled, short-term specialists to assist in project negotiations and monitoring, the training of field staff in the orientation of the programme, and the employment of internal consultation systems to improve project performance. Another effort to improve project relevance and performance is the attention being given to involve both international and African non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in the regional programme.

14. The Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) actively participated in the drafting of the UNDP orientation document which set the direction and modalities of the fourth cycle regional programme. An agreement was reached between ECA and the Regional Bureau for Africa for the latter to assist in strengthening the capacity of the Multinational Programming and Operational Centres (MULPOCs), the operational arm of ECA, to carry out specific UNDP-financed projects during the fourth cycle. On the basis of various projects submitted to UNDP, ECA, as an executing agency,
will continue to have responsibility for a predominant share of the UNDP regional programme.

C. Latin America and the Caribbean region

15. In terms of the modalities for execution, emphasis in the fourth cycle is being given to an expanded role for Technical Co-operation among Developing Countries (TCDC) and subregional economic integration. The promotion of networking arrangements will provide the region with a body of qualified expertise in priority sectors.

16. A continuous dialogue was held throughout the programming exercise with the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), which actively participated in the formulation process. A fundamental step in this process was represented by a joint UNDP/ECLAC consultation held in April 1986 to review the proposed strategy of the programme, the mechanisms for co-ordination and the means of implementation. The conclusions and recommendations of the meeting were included in the regional programme.

17. The co-operation between ECLAC and UNDP in the implementation of regional projects during the third cycle was entirely satisfactory and the continued close collaboration with ECLAC should contribute to ensuring that the Governments of the region will play a more active role in the implementation of projects planned for the fourth cycle.

D. Arab region

18. Foremost among the several new modalities of implementation included in the fourth-cycle programme is the execution of selected projects by participating Governments, subcontractual arrangements with established regional Arab institutions, Arab NGOs, or by clearly defined networks of national institutions. This approach, which is expected to be more responsive to regional needs and to enhance co-operation, does not preclude the use, wherever possible, of specialized agencies or institutions of the United Nations system for the execution of projects. Regional programme networks, which form the framework of project activities, will be expanded into the technical field and the use of flexible multi-purpose umbrella projects will be continued so that quick responses can be made to regional needs that emerge as the cycle proceeds.

19. The Economic and Social Commission for West Asia (ESCWA) provided guidance for the conceptual underpinning of the UNDP fourth-cycle intercountry programme for the Arab region.

E. European region

20. Many of the projects to be carried out under the fourth-cycle regional programme will add new dimensions to various networks already established. Most of
the projects offer strong potential for outreach, at least several being possibilities for subsequent global activities or for follow-up investment.

21. The process of preparing the regional programme culminated in a consultation convened jointly by UNDP and the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) to consider a first draft of the regional programme and project proposals received. Subsequently, the programme was finalized on the basis of the outcome of the meeting and the task forces established by the meeting.

22. Five executing agencies of the United Nations system, including ECE, will be responsible for providing 75 per cent of the UNDP-funded inputs in the programme.

F. Global and interregional programmes

23. In the case of the global programme and in recognition of its continuing concentration on basic research on food crops, the implementation of individual global projects is largely entrusted to one or more of the centres which make up the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR). Implementation of the health component of the programme is handled through a close co-operative arrangement between UNDP, the World Health Organization (WHO) and the World Bank under the Special Programme for Research and Training in Tropical Diseases. This particular programme also maintains active outreach relationships with a large number of universities and scientific institutions carrying out basic work on the development of vaccines aimed at eradicating major tropical diseases.

24. In the case of the interregional programme, the modalities of implementation are closer to those utilized in the regional programmes in that greater reliance is placed upon the traditional executing agencies of the United Nations system. However, even though these agencies execute the bulk of the interregional projects, the overall scope and content of the projects tends to be very much a collaborative effort between UNDP and the agency concerned. This is particularly so in the case of such activities as the UNDP/International Labour Organisation (ILO) Special Public Works Programme (SPWP), the UNDP/World Bank Energy Sector Management Assistance Programme (ESMAP) and those being implemented under the auspices of the International Drinking Water Supply and Sanitation Decade (IDWSSD), where the programme has also been used to stimulate close working relations between United Nations agencies and the major bilateral donors dealing with the water and sanitation sector. Finally, mention should be made of the interregional project entitled Promotion of the Role of Women in Water and Environmental Sanitation Services (PROWWESS), which is entirely executed by UNDP as well as an important new initiative in the environment area which will involve execution by an NGO, the World Resources Institute.