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United Nations Development Programme co-operation with  
non-governmental organizations and grass-roots  
organizations

Report of the Administrator

SUMMARY

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) mounted new efforts in 1989 to promote community-based participatory development by working with non-governmental organizations (NGOs), grass-roots organizations and specialized agencies of the United Nations development system. These included efforts: (a) to promote communications and co-operation among Governments of developing countries, local NGOs, and multilateral and bilateral aid agencies; (b) to strengthen the developmental capacities of indigenous NGOs, NGO associations and grass-roots groups; and (c) to promote and support the informal sector. The principal activities promoting UNDP/government/NGO co-operation in 1989 included the Partner in Development Programme, which enabled UNDP field offices in 62 countries to provide direct support for NGO activities; RAF/87/001, the Regional Project to Strengthen Collaboration between NGOs, Governments and UNDP in Africa and RAS/86/151, Programme Support to the Asian and Pacific Development Centre; support for the establishment by more than 40 field offices of national computerized data bases on NGOs, and national government/NGO consultations in Mauritania, the Philippines and Tunisia. New activities to strengthen NGOs included the Africa 2000 Network, a regional project to promote ecologically sustainable development;

two African regional workshops of practitioners in participatory development, organized by the International Labour Organisation (ILO); RAF/87/001 and the Partners in Development; other regional activities funded from the indicative planning figures (IPFs), and the United Nations Volunteers Domestic Development Service, which extended its operations to 26 countries. Efforts were also mounted to promote and support the informal sector, increase participatory elements in IPF projects, and make greater use of NGO services in carrying out UNDP-sponsored projects.

CONTENTS

	<u>Paragraphs</u>	<u>Page</u>
INTRODUCTION .....	1 - 2	4
I. ACTIVITIES PROMOTING COMMUNICATION AND CO-OPERATION AMONG GOVERNMENTS, NGOS and DONOR AGENCIES .....	3 - 20	4
II. ACTIVITIES TO STRENGTHEN THE DEVELOPMENT CAPACITIES OF INDIGENOUS NGOS .....	21 - 29	8
III. ACTIVITIES TO PROMOTE AND SUPPORT THE INFORMAL SECTOR .....	30 - 31	10
IV. ACTIVITIES INVOLVING GRASS-ROOTS APPROACHES TO DEVELOPMENT AND/OR CO-OPERATION WITH NGOS AND GRASS-ROOTS ORGANIZATIONS	32 - 43	10

## INTRODUCTION

1. In accordance with Governing Council resolutions 86/14 of 27 June 1986, 87/10 of 1 July 1987 and 88/27 of 30 June 1988, UNDP has mounted new efforts to promote community-based participatory development by working with NGOs, grass-roots organizations and like-minded specialized agencies of the United Nations development system. Through these activities, UNDP is increasing its outreach to the most disadvantaged segments of the population, encouraging and supporting people's efforts to help themselves, and effectively promoting sustainable development. New UNDP initiatives in this area are at the leading edge of a broad movement within the United Nations development system towards human-centred development.

2. In 1989, UNDP drew on its network of field offices and relationships with indigenous NGOs in the South and their NGO partners in the North to carry out activities aimed at: (a) promoting communication and co-operation among Governments of developing countries, local NGOs and multilateral and bilateral aid agencies; (b) strengthening the developmental capacities of indigenous NGOs, NGO associations and community-based people's organizations; and (c) promoting and supporting the informal sector.

### I. ACTIVITIES PROMOTING COMMUNICATION AND CO-OPERATION AMONG GOVERNMENTS, NGOS AND DONOR AGENCIES

#### Regional Project to Strengthen Collaboration between NGOs, Governments and UNDP in Africa (RAF/87/001)

3. UNDP has launched a major regional project in Africa to strengthen collaboration among NGOs, Governments and UNDP. This project provides assistance to Governments, NGO associations and UNDP field offices interested in working together to promote development efforts at the grass-roots level. Assistance is provided in the form of consultancy services, financial support and/or information services.

4. The co-ordinator of the project, who is based in Lomé, Togo, has already undertaken missions to Benin, Cameroon, Congo, Ghana, Guinea, and Togo to help plan special strategies for government/NGO/UNDP co-operation.

5. In Cameroon, the Government and UNDP organized the first national conference ever to be held with NGOs and grass-roots organizations. The conference, which was held in Yaoundé in September, focused on the roles of NGOs in protecting vulnerable populations from the adverse effects of structural adjustment programmes. More than 250 persons attended. The meeting is expected to result in the formation of a national NGO association aimed at facilitating future NGO/government/UNDP communications and co-operation. In the Congo, a government/UNDP/NGO working session was organized in October to consider the establishment of a national NGO association which could represent the NGO community in negotiations with the Government. A general assembly of NGOs was held in November. Plans were also made

for a symposium of NGOs to be held in February 1990 on North-South NGO relations and on how the Government, UNDP and NGOs should work together. In Ghana, a government/UNDP/NGO workshop in August focused on practical aspects of government-NGO co-operation, including the simplification of government procedures for registering NGOs and the clarification of NGO relations with various ministries.

6. Steps have also been taken under RAF/87/001 to help Governments establish special units for communication and co-operation with NGOs. Countries assisted in this way to date include Cameroon and Congo.

Other NGO-government consultations at national, regional and interregional levels

7. An important workshop on the promotion of government/NGO/donor development partnerships in the Philippines was organized by UNDP, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the Asian Coalition of Non-Governmental Organizations for Agricultural Reform and Rural Development in Tagaytay City, the Philippines, in March 1989. Participants represented NGOs and the relevant government agencies, as well as some donor agencies. Materials developed for the workshop included papers by NGOs on potential areas for government-NGO co-operation and a strategic assessment of non-governmental organizations in the Philippines, prepared by the Coalition. FAO and the World Bank have expressed interest in supporting follow-up activities.

8. In Mauritania, the field office supported a government-NGO seminar on grass-roots approaches to development organized by the fund for assistance to small projects in October. The three-day workshop focused on community needs in rural areas and on the role of NGOs in promoting self-reliance through income-generating activities or micro-enterprises. In Tunisia, the Resident Representative continued innovative efforts to promote government-NGO co-operation through one-day meetings at the provincial level; two consultations were held, in the Governates of Kef and Siliana; a third was also planned for Tozeur in the southern part of the country.

9. Other major conferences supported by UNDP in 1989 included the first pan-Arab conference of NGOs held in Cairo from 31 October to 2 November. The conference, which was co-sponsored by the Arab Gulf Programme for United Nations Development Organizations (AGFUND), UNDP, the Arab Fund for Economic and Social Development, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), and the International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF), focused on the roles of NGOs in promoting social welfare and development and on how to strengthen the capacities of Arab States' NGOs.

10. NGOs also contributed significantly to the International Conference on Central American Refugees held in Guatemala City from 29 to 31 May and are expected to participate in regional follow-up activities; including the Development Programme for the Displaced, Refugee and Returnee Population, to be carried out by UNDP in association with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), ILO and the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO). A consultation on uprooted people, organized by the International Council of Voluntary Agencies (ICVA) at Les Diablerets, Switzerland, in June, brought together experts from UNDP, other United Nations agencies, bilateral aid agencies, NGOs and other institutions

for discussion of a development approach to refugees, returnees, and externally and internally displaced persons.

11. Studies of the roles played by NGOs in development were initiated in seven Asian countries (Bangladesh, India, Malaysia, Pakistan, Philippines, Sri Lanka and Thailand) in 1989 as part of RAS/86/151, Programme Support to the Asian and Pacific Development Centre, an Asian regional project to develop recommendations on ways to strengthen NGO-government co-operation in addressing the problems of the rural poor. The studies are being carried out for UNDP under a sub-contract with the Asian Coalition. It is expected that the UNDP field offices in the participating countries will help organize workshops of representatives from Governments and the NGO community to discuss study findings.

12. Participants in the mid-term review of the fourth country programme for Guinea agreed that more resources should be invested in human resource development and the social sector and that greater use should be made in the future of NGO resources to carry out projects in the country programme. With support from the Division for Non-Governmental Organizations, UNDP/Conakry is developing a specific plan for government-NGO co-operation in 1990.

13. As 1989 drew to a close, the Division was participating actively in preparations for several major United Nations conferences, focusing largely or in part on the development role of NGOs. These include the International Conference on Popular Participation in Africa, to be held in Arusha, Tanzania, in February 1990; the March 1990 World Conference on Education for All, to be held in Bangkok, Thailand; and the Second United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries, to be held in Paris in September 1990.

#### Partners in Development Programme

14. The promotion of increased communication and co-operation among Governments, UNDP field offices and NGOs has been an important goal of the Partners in Development Programme, offered in 62 countries in 1989. This programme, which permits UNDP Resident Representatives to allocate up to \$25,000 per country in direct support of NGO activities, has brought Governments and NGOs together through its selection processes and other phases of programme implementation. It has effectively demonstrated to Governments and donor agencies the value of small-scale, community-based participatory development activities and of the contributions made by NGOs and grass-roots organizations to community-based development.

15. Many of the NGO activities supported to date under the Partners in Development Programme have been designed specifically to further NGO/government/United Nations co-operation, including commissioned studies of Philippine NGO activities in six development-related sectors; a project to promote co-operation between Solomon Islands NGOs; the pioneering national conference on the role of NGOs in addressing problems resulting from structural adjustment in Cameroon mentioned above; and various activities in Tunisia at national and provincial levels.

16. Of all awards made by the Partners in Development Programme to date, almost 80 per cent have supported development activities by NGOs and grass-roots organizations, including, most frequently, income-generating activities and micro-enterprises, skills-training projects for the least privileged sectors of the population, and rural development activities. Women and youth are the beneficiaries of many projects funded by the Programme.

17. Participating field offices and Governments have responded enthusiastically to the Partners in Development Programme. Several offices which were slow starting in 1988 have mounted major efforts in 1989; even new participants report strong NGO interest and demand. A large number of field offices and Governments have asked that the country allocation be increased, and a number of offices which do not yet participate have asked to join the Programme. Although the Programme is assured of funding from Special Programme Resources (SPR) and the Special Measures Fund for the Least Developed Countries (SMF/LDC) at the current level through 1990, additional resources are being sought to continue it in 1991 and beyond and, if possible, to increase the size of the country allocations and/or to extend the programme to new countries.

#### NGO data-gathering activities

18. Government-NGO communications and co-operation have also been supported by UNDP field office efforts to gather data on development NGOs operating in their countries. More than 40 field offices have requested the questionnaire and software developed by the Division for non-governmental organizations for use in establishing national computerized data bases on NGOs; many other offices are supporting country-level data-gathering efforts. In Benin and Swaziland, NGO data-gathering activities are being funded under RAF/87/001, the African regional project to promote government-NGO co-operation cited above.

19. At headquarters, the Information Referral Service (INRES-South) of the Special Unit for Technical Co-operation among Developing Countries (TCDC), has expanded its capacity to provide information about development resources in developing countries; of the 4,000 developing country institutions included in the INRES-South data base, 1,000 are NGOs or private sector institutions. The Division for Non-Governmental Organizations at headquarters is also developing its data base on grass-roots projects supported by UNDP and on international and Southern NGOs with which UNDP co-operates or might co-operate.

#### Environmental NGOs

20. The crucial role played by NGOs and grass-roots organizations in environmental management is widely recognized. A major new UNDP initiative, the Africa 2000 Network, provides financial and technical support for grass-roots and NGO activities related to the environment in Africa. Latin American NGOs have been involved in regional follow-up activities from the workshop on environmental management and sustainable development held in Belem do Para, Brazil, in December 1988. In Pakistan, NGOs will be represented on the steering committee for an Asian Development Bank/FAO project to prepare a master plan for the forestry sector. Asian environmental NGOs are also slated to participate in the regional

ministerial meeting on the environment to be held in Kuala Lumpur in May 1990. As UNDP expands its programmes relating to the management of the environment and/or extends them to new geographic areas, NGOs will be increasingly involved.

## II. ACTIVITIES TO STRENGTHEN THE DEVELOPMENT CAPACITIES OF INDIGENOUS NGOS

### Regional Project to Strengthen Collaboration between NGOs, Governments and UNDP in Africa (RAF/87/001)

21. Efforts to strengthen NGO associations, partly as a means of helping Governments and donors to relate effectively to the NGO community, are an important component of the UNDP regional project to promote government/UNDP/NGO co-operation in Africa. National NGO associations in Burkina Faso, Gambia, Ghana, Senegal, Togo and Zambia are receiving support under RAF/87/001. Two Kenya-based regional NGO associations are also being aided: the African Association for Literacy and Adult Education and the Africa Women's Development and Communications Network (FEMNET). Support provided under RAF/87/001 is mainly in the form of needs assessments and staff training.

### Partners in Development Programme

22. Almost 20 per cent of the projects funded to date under the Partners in Development Programme involve capacity-building among NGOs and NGO associations. In 1989, for example, Programme awards were used to help the new national Confederation of Colombian NGOs to establish a computerized data base; to support an NGO seminar on project evaluation in Haiti; to develop an operational manual for consumer organizations belonging to the Federation of Malaysian Consumer Associations; to provide training for the leaders of grass-roots people's organizations in the Philippines; to support research on NGO contributions to development and on maximizing their participation in development in Suriname; to train monks, teachers and researchers active in participatory development in Thailand; to strengthen NGOs and NGO consortia supporting micro-enterprises in Thailand; to strengthen the operational capacities of NGOs in north-western Tunisia; and to provide computer capacity for the Western Samoa National Youth Council.

### Africa 2000 Network

23. A major purpose of the new UNDP regional project in Africa, the Africa 2000 Network, is to support efforts by local grass-roots groups, NGOs, NGO associations and technical institutes to strengthen themselves in areas that are relevant to the Network, i.e., to build the capacities they need to help to preserve the environment or to promote ecologically sustainable development. Other project goals include supporting participatory approaches to environmental management, providing financial and technical assistance in response to community initiatives, and spreading knowledge about successful environmental practices, mainly through NGO networks.



24. By late 1989, steps had been taken to establish Network facilitators, co-ordinators and national project selection committees in Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Ghana, Kenya, Rwanda, Senegal and Zimbabwe. Preparatory missions had also been mounted to Benin, Mali and Mauritania and were planned to Lesotho, Mozambique, Swaziland, Uganda, the United Republic of Tanzania and Zambia.

25. The importance of tapping Network resources to support and strengthen indigenous groups was emphasized at the inaugural meeting of the Africa 2000 Network Advisory Group, held at United Nations Headquarters in September 1989. Advisory Group members include specialists on environmental matters and representatives from African environmental NGOs, NGO associations, and training institutions in Africa and Asia.

26. The Governments of Canada, Denmark, Japan and Norway have provided funding for the Network programme.

#### ILO regional workshops

27. Two regional workshops of practitioners responsible for guiding work on participatory development in African countries were organized by ILO for UNDP in Burkina Faso in July, in conjunction with the Centre for Economic and Social Studies in West Africa, and in Zimbabwe in August, with a local NGO. The workshops allowed participants to share experiences and views regarding rural development facilitation and the training of rural development facilitators. Reports from the workshops are expected to stimulate new approaches to rural development work and participatory development.

#### United Nations Volunteers Domestic Development Service

28. This programme strengthens community-based self-help groups and indigenous NGOs by providing Domestic Development Service field workers at the village level and by involving group leaders in participatory training workshops. In 1989, this programme was significantly extended beyond Asia into Africa and the South Pacific. By year's end, 250 Domestic Development Service workers were engaged in 26 countries and 200 group leaders had taken part in workshops. Experience gained from this field work is a valuable resource for trickle-up development strategies aimed at helping disadvantaged sectors of the population, especially women and youth, to help themselves.

#### Interregional, regional and IPF projects

29. A number of other UNDP-sponsored programmes directly or indirectly support capacity-building activities among indigenous NGOs and grass-roots organizations. Under RAF/87/151, Regional Project to Strengthen Collaboration between NGOs, Governments and UNDP in Africa, arrangements have been made with Opportunities Industrialization Centers International, Inc. (OIC International), an NGO based in the United States, to upgrade the micro-enterprise trainers of five African NGOs that operate training institutions in Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea, Lesotho and Sierra Leone. Approximately 34 NGO trainers will be upgraded annually in the two-year pilot phase of the project; they will in turn train 2,100 target

beneficiaries over two years. Among the IPF projects approved in 1989, especially relevant was a project in Bangladesh, BGD/88/020, Training of Mosque Society Leaders in Tree Planting, Silviculture and Agriculture.

### III. ACTIVITIES TO PROMOTE AND SUPPORT THE INFORMAL SECTOR

30. The Division for Non-Governmental Organizations has co-operated closely with ILO on the preparation of a programme advisory note on the informal sector, increasingly recognized as a principal source of production, employment and income for the urban poor in developing countries. The note will deal with the importance of the informal sector, features and issues characterizing the sector, current forms of assistance to the sector, and guidelines for technical co-operation covering the ways in which UNDP and United Nations agencies can relate to the informal sector.

31. UNDP has also co-operated with ACCION International, an international NGO based in Cambridge, Massachusetts, on the organization of an international conference on relations among the public, private and informal sectors; this was held in Quito, Ecuador, in November 1989.

### IV. ACTIVITIES INVOLVING GRASS-ROOTS APPROACHES TO DEVELOPMENT AND/OR CO-OPERATION WITH NGOS AND GRASS-ROOTS ORGANIZATIONS

#### Participatory development

32. Staff participating in Project Appraisal Committee (PAC) and Action Committee meetings have worked closely with staff of the Regional Bureaux to incorporate participatory elements in projects proposed for UNDP support. An example is MAG/88/007, a project in Madagascar involving pilot efforts at community level to conserve natural ecosystems. The introduction of a component for sensitizing populations also provided opportunities for more active NGO roles.

#### Micro-enterprise support

33. UNDP continued in 1989 to support an African regional credit support project, and national grass-roots initiatives support funds in eight African countries. The credit support project, RAF/87/130, provides guarantees for commercial loans to African NGOs and grass-roots groups seeking to establish small businesses. Although criteria for implementing the support funds vary from country to country, they are basically designed to provide grants or loans for community-based microprojects.

34. In Peru, the Institute for the Development of the Informal Sector is carrying out a major UNDP-sponsored project to provide credit and training for informal sector micro-entrepreneurs and their associations.

### Government staff training

35. The Experiment in International Living, an NGO based in the United States, has continued to provide training services for the Department of Community Development in Cameroon, including, in 1989, five seminars and workshops for training school staff and provincial government staff. In the Lao People's Democratic Republic, arrangements have been made with CUSO, a Canadian NGO, to provide English-language training for officials of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and other ministries.

### Integrated rural development resources

36. The Guinean Union of Development Volunteers, an indigenous NGO, is helping to implement a rural development project in the Fouta Djallon region of Guinea under a sub-contract with FAO. UNDP and FAO are seeking other NGOs to provide services for four related projects. Together, the five projects are utilizing 44 per cent of the Guinea IPF.

### Emergency reconstruction activities

37. In Nepal, NGOs are expected to participate actively in a project to rebuild houses, public buildings and infrastructure destroyed by the 1988 earthquake. The Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee and Proshika, Bangladesh NGOs, will help reconstruct rural housing destroyed by floods in 1988. A hospital assistance project in the Lao People's Democratic Republic is utilizing the services of the Swiss Red Cross. NGOs have also participated in UNDP needs assessments missions for Kampuchea and Namibia.

### United Nations Capital Development Fund

38. The United Nations Capital Development Fund (UNCDF) expanded its support for community-based participatory development activities in 1989, approving nine new projects in Benin, Bhutan, Central African Republic, Haiti, Kiribati, Malawi and Sudan, which involve villagers - the project beneficiaries - in planning, managing and/or implementing the activities funded.

39. A Swiss NGO, Helvetas, is implementing the Bhutan project involving the construction of suspension bridges. Other United Nations CDF-funded activities involving NGOs in project implementation include a motor pumps maintenance and repair project in Mali, the national AIDS programme in Rwanda, and a water supply and sanitation project in Togo.

### Technical Co-operation among Developing Countries

40. The UNDP Special Unit for Technical Co-operation among Developing Countries also co-operates with NGOs. It worked closely in 1989 with the International Co-operative Alliance to develop a TCDC programme among Asian co-operatives.

The United Nations Development Fund for Women

41. The United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) continued its close collaboration with NGOs in planning and carrying out projects designed to benefit women. New UNIFEM activities have included a major effort by OIC-International in Togo to provide agricultural training for young rural women and a study by the Zimbabwe Energy Research Organization of rural industrial and institutional energy needs that is expected to increase the viability of women's fuel-intensive enterprises, preserve natural resources and improve women's living conditions. A new project in the Philippines will enable women in San Miguel to undertake the household-based production of stuffed toys. In Jordan, the General Federation of Jordanian Women has received UNIFEM support for a food-production micro-enterprise. Latin American activities newly funded by UNIFEM include a project to produce videotapes on women's health in Colombia and efforts by five Peruvian NGOs to make appropriate food-processing technologies available to peasant women.

The United Nations Sudano-Sahelian Office

42. Assuring people's participation in development activities and co-operation with NGOs are also goals of the United Nations Sudano-Sahelian Office (UNSO). Among recent UNSO initiatives are a five-year semi-arid land-management project in Niger, being implemented by the Co-operative for American Relief Everywhere (CARE), a tree-planting workshop jointly sponsored by UNSO and the Uganda National Council of Women, an environmental song festival in Nairobi carried out with the African NGOs Environment Network (ANEN) and an improved cooking stoves project in Mali.

43. UNSO also assumed responsibility in 1989 for the Sahel Information System, a network of NGO data bases operating in Burkina Faso, Mali, Niger and Senegal. Partial funding for the system has been supplied by the United States Agency for International Development.

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