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SUPPORT

PROGRAMME PLANNING

COUNTRY, INTERCOUNTRY AND GLOBAL PROGRAMMES

Reports on mid-term reviews of country, intercountry and
global programmes

Mid-term review of the fourth country programme for Ghana

Report of the Administrator

I. SUMMARY OF THE COUNTRY PROGRAMME

1. The fourth country programme for Ghana (DP/CP/GHA/4) focuses on human resource development in support of (a) economic recovery and structural adjustment and (b) participatory rural development. Three major objectives and subprogrammes were identified under this theme. These are:

(a) Strengthening the capacity of the Government for planning and economic management;

(b) Promoting grass-roots participation in rural development;

(c) Strengthening Ghanaian institutions providing training and consultancy services.

2. As at 1 October 1989, a total of 52 projects were under implementation with another 19 in the pipeline at various stages of formulation and approval. While most projects had been identified for subprogrammes 1 and 2 during implementation of the country programme, only three projects had been identified for subprogramme 3.

3. With the exception of the slow progress in implementation of the third sub-programme, the Government expressed general satisfaction with the overall content and progress of the country programme. It was hoped that the current national technical co-operation assessment and programmes (NATCAP) exercise would identify additional projects for subprogramme 3, which the Government still considered important and desirable.
4. In general, the fourth country programme has been able to promote a more comprehensive approach to resource planning and has created a better sense of partnership between UNDP and the Government. Most of the United Nations agencies involved in the implementation of the programme considered the country programme to be a useful framework for co-ordinating United Nations technical assistance to Ghana.
5. Many of the United Nations agencies noted, however, that the potential offered by the country programme for consultation and co-ordination among the agencies had not been sufficiently realized. Constraints that hindered uniform application of the country programme include the lack of harmonization of agency planning cycles with Ghana's own national planning cycle; lack of common formats and procedures for implementation and evaluation. Some agencies also expressed scepticism about the NATCAP approach to assisting the Government in establishing sectoral priorities for technical assistance.

II. PREPARATORY ACTIVITIES FOR THE MID-TERM REVIEW

6. Preparatory activities undertaken by the Government and UNDP for the mid-term review included the following:
 - (a) Detailed analysis by a joint working group of the status and implementation of the fourth country programme, including a financial review of the programme;
 - (b) Studies by national consultants on specific aspects of the operations and performance of the country programme, including: aid co-ordination; co-ordination of UNDP planning support activities; joint programming within the United Nations system agencies in Ghana; donor support for local-level planning; modalities for project execution; use of national project professional personnel; and an analysis of the environmental impact of UNDP-assisted projects in Ghana;
 - (c) A seminar to review and synthesize the consultants' reports, which was attended by senior officials of the Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning, UNDP programming staff, the Field Economist unit, and the consultants;
 - (d) Collation of contributions by government implementing agencies and concerned United Nations executing agencies on issues related to programme delivery, including views on the relevance of the country programme as a tool for the improved co-ordination of United Nations technical assistance to Ghana;

(e) Preparation of a comprehensive background document that summarized the results of the preparatory work to form a basic reference for the mid-term review sessions.

7. The mid-term review sessions were held on 11-12 October 1989. In order to ensure comprehensive coverage of the issues and to permit full representation of all parties involved in the programming of UNDP assistance in Ghana, over 120 people were invited by the Government to attend the review sessions. These included staff of the Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning and senior officials from sectoral ministries and other agencies of the Government; technical assistance personnel and government personnel assigned to UNDP-financed projects; field and Headquarters representatives of United Nations executing and funding agencies and the World Bank; and the programming staff of the UNDP field office in Accra. An official from UNDP headquarters in New York was also present at the mid-term review meeting.

III. MAJOR FINDINGS OF THE REVIEW

A. Resource picture

8. Available resources and their allocations are presented in the annexes. The review took into account only resources under the indicative planning figure (IPF) and cost-sharing funds.

9. A marked improvement occurred in the delivery of country programme resources during the first three years (1987-1989) of the current cycle. Delivery almost doubled to approximately \$8.5 million in 1989 from \$4.6 million in 1987 and \$3.4 million in 1986.

10. However, the delivery rate, which is currently about 68 per cent, is still low compared with other African countries. This is attributable to such factors as delays in providing the various inputs, in particular personnel; inadequate rephrasing of budgets; overcosting of personnel; and the lack of detailed specification of equipment and training programmes.

11. A delivery rate target of at least 70 per cent has been established for each of the remaining two years of the fourth cycle.

12. There has been a marked discrepancy between the proposed and actual distribution of expenditure of funds in the implementation of the country programme so far. Subprogrammes 2 and 3 have been undercommitted as a result of slow progress in project identification, formulation and approval. The agreed pipeline of projects will result in subprogrammes 1 and 2 being overcommitted and subprogramme 3 being on target by the end of the cycle.

13. The review revalidated the original allocation of funds to the three subprogrammes, but also endorsed the high commitment to the planning objective during the first half of the cycle. It was also agreed that assistance towards strengthening the Government's planning and economic management capacity should

continue in accordance with the agreed pipeline of projects, even if it would imply a certain revision of resource allocation.

14. Project formulation and approval should be expedited and aimed at additional spending under subprogrammes 2 and 3 during 1990 and 1991.

B. National technical co-operation assessment programmes

15. As formulated and approved in 1987, additional projects for the country programme, especially for objective 3, were to be identified through the NATCAP exercise. Furthermore, the NATCAP exercise was expected to influence the Government's approaches to technical co-operation, both by expenditure of the amount of the reserve allocated to it, as well as by its general influence on the approach to design, execution and implementation of projects.

16. However, the NATCAP started late, and because of other internal problems has yet to generate projects for implementation or have a significant impact in any other area.

17. The NATCAP project has not advanced as envisaged for two reasons:

(a) Delay on the part of the Government in the final consideration and approval of the draft policy framework paper on the NATCAP; and

(b) Slow response from headquarters on requests specifically related to this exercise.

18. There is clearly, therefore, a need for wider and more vigorous dissemination of NATCAP principles and objectives. While recognizing the lead role Government is to play in the implementation of the NATCAP, it is expected that UNDP will be a major actor in the medium term while the existing and proposed national structures for economic management and planning are being developed and strengthened.

C. Co-ordination of UNDP planning support activities

19. The absence of a coherent structure in the subprogramme for strengthening government capacity for planning and economic management, which militates against the effective co-ordination of planning projects, clearly illustrates the difficulties arising from failure to apply NATCAP principles.

20. The problem of co-ordinating UNDP-support planning projects, numbering 22 at the time of the mid-term review, is aggravated by the wide variation in executing agencies. Overall, the way the subprogramme of planning projects is designed, administered and implemented, does not reflect government's aims to create an integrated, comprehensive, and decentralized system of development planning in Ghana.

21. Recommendations for strengthening the planning subprogramme included the following:

(a) UNDP assistance should be obtained to appoint a planning programme co-ordinator, to be located in the Ministry, with the objective of strengthening the co-ordination of UNDP planning assistance to Ghana;

(b) In-country training workshops and seminars should be held to train national planning staff in such areas as the design and appraisal of development projects, the monitoring of project implementation and on the monitoring of the performance of the economy.

D. Execution modalities

22. The majority (82 per cent) of the projects are executed by United Nations agencies or the Office of Project Services (OPS). However, since the start of the fourth country programme in 1987, government execution of projects has been on the increase, and currently accounts for 18 per cent of all projects, and 10 per cent of IPF expenditure.

23. The percentage of projects directly executed by OPS has remained constant at 24 per cent during the period, whereas the share of the specialized agencies has fallen from 65 per cent in 1987 to 58 per cent.

24. The various execution modalities use different input mixes. Significantly, under government execution, proportionately more resources are allocated to training and equipment than under the other two execution modalities. Whereas government execution does not involve subcontracts and agency execution allocates only 12 per cent to subcontracting, OPS-execution relies heavily on subcontracting and allocates 41 per cent of its resources to this modality.

25. Experience with subcontracting as a means of cost-effective delivery of technical co-operation has not been convincing in Ghana to date. Long delays have been encountered in the awarding of contracts and in the fielding of personnel. Furthermore, subcontracting has militated against South-South co-operation since most subcontractors are based in Western Europe and North America. Also, the level of remuneration under subcontracting may be two or three times higher than standard United Nations rates. The major success so far has been a case in which the Government itself identified the subcontractor.

26. Most problems associated with project execution are generally the same, regardless of execution modality. They include problems of input delivery, inadequate co-ordination, and delays in the approval process. Under agency and OPS execution, the awarding of subcontracts and the fielding of experts have been the main delaying factors in project start-up.

27. Delays have been experienced in the awarding and implementation of several subcontracts for OPS projects. On the other hand, the heavy concentration on

in-country training and equipment in government-executed projects results in minimal start-up delays following project approval.

28. While increased use of government execution is welcomed by the Government as a way to increase self-reliance, it is recognized at the same time that existing circumstances, such as inadequate institutional capability, do not always allow for this modality.

29. The increased use of government- and OPS-executed projects have added to the work-load of field office staff, as project staff on these projects are not familiar with existing procedures, rules and regulations for project administration and management, especially financial monitoring.

30. Major recommendations on execution modalities include the following:

(a) All projects need to be formulated based on a careful assessment of the Government's managerial, administrative and technical capabilities for executing the project. An appraisal has to be made of the institution's method and scope of work, its manpower capacity, and institutional affiliation and funding;

(b) There is a need for a backstopping agency for government-executed projects and a more vigorous supervision by the field office. Monitoring arrangements should be specified in the project document as well as arrangements for co-ordination between executing and co-operating agencies;

(c) Consideration should be given to the use of add-on funds to strengthen the capacity of the Government and of the field office to meet additional demands from government execution;

(d) International subcontracting under agency execution should be discouraged until agencies have improved their capacity in this field;

(e) OPS should be urged to invite consulting firms from areas other than North America and Europe to make bids as this might prove to be less expensive and open up new areas of expertise.

E. Use of national professional project personnel

31. In order to enhance its own capacity for technical assistance and also to reduce reliance on foreign expertise, the Government has expressed its intention to promote the optimal use of nationals in technical co-operation projects. UNDP efforts in this direction lie in the use of national professional project personnel in the implementation of technical co-operation projects. Additionally, UNDP assistance is being provided for the implementation of a project to help develop the local consulting industry. This collaborative effort between the Government and UNDP will result in the preparation of action plans and draft policy directives and guidelines which will assist in the formulation of legal guidelines on the local consulting industry.

32. The utilization of national professional project personnel in programme implementation has increased under the fourth country programme from virtually zero to about 50 per cent total man-months of professional expertise recruited for 1987 and 1988. Overall, the performance of national professional project personnel has been encouraging and their use is more cost-effective than that of international professional project personnel.

33. These initiatives notwithstanding, the use of national experts has revealed certain problems calling for:

(a) A comprehensive set of policy guidelines on the roles that nationals should play in the implementation of technical co-operation projects;

(b) The utilization of junior national professionals on technical co-operation projects as a means for helping them acquire experience in technical co-operation activities;

(c) Preference to nationals as project managers;

(d) Consideration of payment of allowances to counterpart project personnel to enhance the capacity of the Government to recruit or retain key staff required for the implementation of UNDP-assisted projects.

F. Concerns of United Nations executing agencies
and government implementing agencies

34. Widespread concern was expressed about the project identification, design and formulation process. National implementing agencies, in particular, complained of their minimal involvement in these processes. Both implementing and executing agencies expressed the view that projects are often overambitious and unrealistic in objectives and required outputs. Also, budgetary provisions and time required to complete project activities were considered to be frequently underestimated. In addition, concern was expressed about the sustainability of projects after UNDP assistance is terminated.

35. Executing agencies observed that implementing agencies generally have weak institutional and administrative capabilities which reduce their capacity to absorb technical co-operation and lead to low delivery rates. A related problem is delays in the release of Government counterpart funds and procurement of equipment. Additionally, there is often overlap and duplication of technical co-operation projects as a result of the Government's weak capacity overall to manage and co-ordinate technical co-operation programmes. This particular problem is compounded by fragmentation of sectoral responsibilities and functions among Government ministries and departments.

36. Problems of counterpart staffing also give cause for concern. These problems include: delays in the identification or recruitment of suitably qualified nationals; frequent transfers and high rates of staff turnover in the civil service; and low rates of retention of project-trained nationals. Frequently, the

lack of suitably qualified counterparts cause experts to work with less qualified national staff who lack the experience and understanding to derive full benefit from the expertise provided.

37. On the other hand, implementing agencies criticized the tendency of project training to focus on high-level personnel to the neglect of middle-level staff. This emphasis on high-level training ignores the overall training needs of implementing agencies. It was proposed that technical co-operation programmes should have large training components and less dependence on foreign experts. Foreign expertise should be utilized only in instances where local expertise is not available.

38. As a measure for overcoming some of the expressed concerns and also the complexity of application procedures and policy changes concerning the project formulation approval and implementation process, the UNDP field office has increased and strengthened its staff, and improved communication links with the Government and project management. In addition, executing agencies have been requested to respond early on issues related to project implementation.

39. In order to improve co-ordination and programme delivery, communication between ministries as well as between the Government and UNDP is being strengthened. In particular, sectoral ministries are to ensure that they have in-depth consultation on new project ideas with International Economic Relations Department of the Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning. It is expected that all agencies will review the different components of the project cycle so that a positive impact can be made on project delivery. Finally, donor activities are to be harmonized to reduce duplication and to reduce the project monitoring and evaluation work-load of an already over-burdened and constrained Government co-ordinating agency.

G. Aid co-ordination

40. The Government has several mechanisms for aid co-ordination. These include the International Economic Relations Division of the Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning, which is the official UNDP contact point with the Government of Ghana. Despite recent efforts - some with UNDP assistance - to strengthen the Division, it is still too weak, largely as a result of the lack of staff, to perform its aid co-ordination and management tasks effectively. Equally important, substantial weaknesses and inconsistencies exist in the overall system for aid co-ordination and management. In particular, the multiplicity of Government institutions that have responsibility for aid management has weakened the Government's ability to direct the operations of various agencies. Some United Nations agencies, the World Health Organization (WHO) for example, relate directly to sectoral ministries, thus bypassing the division and further compounding the problems of aid co-ordination.

41. Donor support and co-operation is required for the establishment of a strong and cohesive machinery for the co-ordination of technical co-operation. On the Government side, there is commitment to strengthening and improving co-ordination and consultation between and within ministries. Further, it is envisaged that the

establishment of the proposed National Development Planning Commission will lead to further measures for ensuring better co-ordination of technical co-operation.

42. The various schemes put in place by the United Nations system, under the supervision of the United Nations Resident Co-ordinator, have considerably improved government efforts to establish an effective system for aid administration and management. At the sectoral level, the United Nations agencies have effectively collaborated and formulated joint programmes. Examples of these are the joint programmes by UNDP/WHO in the fight against AIDS; the UNDP/United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)/WHO collaborative effort in the fight against tropical diseases; the joint implementation of the International Drinking Water Supply and Sanitation Decade (IDWSSD).

43. These positive developments notwithstanding, the present nature of the institutional structures guiding the operations of the various United Nations agencies - including for example, the autonomy of the Governing Councils of the specialized agencies, and their different operational directives and programming cycles - inherently limit the extent and scope of collaboration and co-ordination among these organizations. The successful integration of programmes will therefore require fundamental restructuring of the management, programming and operational framework for technical co-operation provided by the United Nations system.

H. Issues for special consideration

44. Issues for special consideration that were reviewed were: women in development (WID); environmental issues, impact of United Nations-assisted projects; and the role of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in the delivery of technical co-operation.

45. Although much progress has been made, a survey of WID issues in all UNDP-assisted projects indicated that participation of women has not been completely operationalized in the objectives, outputs or activities of mainstream development projects under the country programme. Problems associated with including WID issues in project design were attributed to:

(a) The lack of clear guidelines and instructions on how to incorporate WID issues in the formulation, monitoring and evaluation of projects; and

(b) The inadequacy of the WID review form as a formulation tool.

46. With regard to project implementation, an increasing number of women serve as project personnel. Overseas training and fellowship programmes have been biased towards men; although women benefit from in-country training programmes.

47. An analysis of the environmental impact of UNDP-assisted projects revealed that none of them has had any major negative impact on environmentally vulnerable areas. Little conscious effort is made to incorporate environmental considerations in the formulation and design of most projects. However, successful efforts are made to restore ecological imbalance through a number of projects.

48. The voluntary sector in Ghana is well developed and organized and comprises both national and international organizations. Lack of skilled personnel and funds constrain the operations of indigenous NGOs, and UNDP assistance is being provided to train their project managers.

49. Recommendations on issues for special consideration include:

(a) Reports on studies initiated by UNDP should be examined and used as a basis for a country profile on WID issues in Ghana;

(b) Project documents should be more specific on how WID issues will be safeguarded by specifying project activities targeted at women;

(c) Women should be equal beneficiaries under project activities;

(d) Project managers and field-office staff should continue to be trained on how to incorporate WID issues in project design and implementation;

(e) Environmental considerations should be made an integral part of UNDP projects and an environmental impact assessment should be undertaken early in the project identification and formulation process;

(f) An NGO desk should be created in all line ministries to facilitate co-operation with NGOs and an NGO advisory council should be established under the chairmanship of the Ministry of Mobilisation and Social Welfare.

IV. FUTURE DIRECTION OF THE COUNTRY PROGRAMME

A. Priorities for the second half of the current country programme

50. There has been no significant change in the Government's economic reform programme. The central task is to maintain real gross domestic product (GDP) growth of at least 5 per cent per annum in the face of substantial deterioration in terms of trade. Additional policies will further emphasize measures to increase the level of investment, bring down the rate of inflation and improve resource management in the public sector. These reforms will not negate the validity and relevance of the current country programme.

51. It was proposed that there be a review of objective 1 to assess the impact of the programme and to establish criteria for new planning projects and guidelines for linking planning projects more closely to sectoral projects.

52. With the emerging decentralized planning framework, assistance to build up planning capacity has been identified as deserving top priority for both the remainder of the present cycle of the country programme as well as during the fifth programming cycle. Especially important in this regard is training for all key personnel at the various levels of the new planning structure. In addition, the Government should receive assistance to strengthen its capacity to prepare and formulate its own projects.

53. Assistance for human resources development should be consolidated in the remainder of the fourth cycle, using the NATCAP as a framework for technical assistance.

54. Another high priority area is agriculture, and new project proposals will be prepared.

B. Implications for the fifth programming cycle

55. In concluding the mid-term review, the Government expressed the need for further meetings with UNDP to discuss priority areas for technical co-operation for the remainder of the current cycle and also to determine those for the fifth cycle. Further, the Government proposed that more regular meetings be held on the country programme with UNDP and sectoral ministries, as well as with project managers and personnel to discuss problems of project implementation. Related to this is the Government's intention to examine thoroughly with UNDP the weaknesses and needs of the International Economic Relations Division.

56. In the course of these discussions with the Government, the following were put forward as the focus for the future:

- (a) Expansion of objective 2 (Promoting grass-roots participation in rural development) to integrate income-generating and other productive activities;
- (b) Expansion of objective 3 (Strengthening Ghanaian institutions providing training and consultancy services);
- (c) Increased support to science and technology projects and in particular to research institutions;
- (d) Narrowing the focus of objective 1 (Strengthening the capacity of the Government for planning and economic management) and forging greater links between the planning process and sectoral projects;
- (e) Incorporating NGOs in grass-roots activities under objective 2;
- (f) Embodying environmental issues and concerns in all project formulation.

Annex 1

FINANCIAL SUMMARY

	\$	\$
I. ACTUAL RESOURCES TAKEN INTO ACCOUNT FOR PROGRAMMING		
A. Total resources taken into account for programming at time of approval of country programme (including non-IPF funds)		40 887 000
B. Resources taken into account for programming at time of mid-term review <u>a/</u>		
IPF allocations	40 535 000	
Programme cost-sharing	0	
Government project cost-sharing	1 432 000	
Third-party cost-sharing	0	
Other sources	-	
TOTAL ACTUAL RESOURCES TAKEN INTO ACCOUNT FOR PROGRAMMING		<u>41 967 000</u>
C. <u>Net change in resources</u>		<u>1 080 000</u>
II. USE OF RESOURCES		
	Start of country <u>programme</u> (1986)	<u>Mid-term</u> (1988)
Approved projects <u>b/</u>	10 833 000	33 970 000
Project proposals <u>c/</u>	19 832 000	10 740 000
Unprogrammed reserve	<u>10 222 000</u>	<u>(2 743 000)</u>
TOTAL	<u>40 887 000</u>	<u>41 967 000</u>

a/ Excluding non-IPF funds.

b/ Including cost-sharing.

c/ Excluding projects agreed to in principle, but not yet formulated.

Annex 2

DISTRIBUTION OF RESOURCES BY OBJECTIVES

Country programme objectives	Allocations	Actual Expenditures	Revised allocation as a result of mid-term review
		(Percentages)	
Strengthening Government planning and management capacity	54	70	68
Promoting grass-roots participation in rural development	28	20	18
Strengthening Ghanaian institutions providing training and consultancy	16	8	12
Other	2	2	1
