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SUPPORT

PROGRAMME PLANNING

COUNTRY, INTERCOUNTRY AND GLOBAL PROGRAMMES

REPORTS ON MID-TERM REVIEWS OF COUNTRY,
INTERCOUNTRY AND GLOBAL PROGRAMMES

Reports on mid-term reviews: an overview

Report of the Administrator

SUMMARY

The present report is the third in the series responding to Governing Council decision 89/10 of 23 February 1989. It focuses on the salient points that emerged from the reviews of 46 programmes. No significant changes were noted in the economic policy or priorities of the programmes concerned to warrant any resubmission of them to the Council.

It should also be noted that addendum 1 to the present report contains a note by the Administrator on the evaluation of the mid-term country programme review process.

INTRODUCTION

1. The Governing Council, in its decision 89/11 of 24 February 1989, decided to consider mid-term reviews of country, regional, interregional and global programmes on three occasions, firstly at the thirty-sixth session (1989), secondly at the organizational meeting in February 1990, and thirdly at the thirty-seventh session.

2. The present report focuses on the salient points of the 46 programmes reviewed during the period 1 July-31 December 1989. In general, it confirms the observations made in the report of the Administrator on mid-term reviews (DP/1990/12), which was submitted to the Council at its special session in February 1990. Addendum 1 to the present report contains a note by the Administrator on the evaluation of the mid-term country programme review process. The annex to the present report contains summary financial data on commitments against the indicative planning figures (IPFs) of each of the 46 programmes at the time of the mid-term reviews.

3. Summaries of the mid-term reviews for the following programmes are being distributed to the Governing Council:

Regional Bureau for Africa (RBA): Ghana, Zaire, regional programme;

Regional Bureau for Asia and the Pacific (RBAP): Myanmar, Viet Nam;

Regional Bureau for Arab States and Europe (RBASE): Egypt;

Regional Bureau for Latin America and the Caribbean (RBLAC): Caribbean multi-island.

I. SURVEY OF THE PROGRAMMES REVIEWED

A. General observations

4. During the period 1 July-31 December 1989, mid-term reviews were completed for the 43 countries listed in table 2 of the annex. Additionally, mid-term reviews were held for the regional programmes of Africa, the Caribbean multi-island programme and the Interregional and Global Programme. The total IPFs for these country and regional programmes amounted to \$1.1 billion, or 30 per cent of the total IPFs for the fourth programming cycle.

5. The present mid-term reviews reflect essentially the same points reported to the Governing Council in document DP/1990/12, namely:

(a) Preparations for mid-term reviews. There is no doubt that mid-term reviews receive the special attention of Governments and UNDP field offices alike and that substantial time and effort are invested in them. Preparatory arrangements vary but, in many countries, these have been extensive and have included sectoral reviews by specialized agencies as well as reviews of specific topics and programme areas by specially engaged national or international consultants;

(b) Participation. Attendance from Governments and United Nations agencies continues to be good. This was particularly impressive in the case of Governments where, in many instances, the head of the national co-ordinating authority presided over the proceedings and the user ministries and departments were well represented. In many countries, the mid-term reviews constitute the rare occasion when the central co-ordinating authority, the user ministries and UNDP staff - all at a senior level - have an opportunity of meeting together on an agenda focused exclusively on UNDP programmes and projects. Additionally, executing agencies and UNDP headquarters staff regularly participate;

(c) Programme and project monitoring. The mid-term review continues to be an admirable instrument for project-by-project monitoring. Since it usually takes place at the midpoint of the programming cycle, the major part of the programme is operational, allowing sufficient duration on which to judge performance and sufficient time before the end of the cycle for any corrective action deemed necessary. This experience has been repeatedly reported by several Resident Representatives; the increased attention given to mid-term reviews is proving to be most effective in maintaining the quality and timeliness of programme and project delivery;

(d) Commitment. It is commendable that, at the time of most mid-term reviews, a high commitment level has been achieved (see annex, table 2). However, uncommitted balances are sometimes insufficient for any significant IPF investment if any redirection of the programme is recommended by the MTR. This question is dealt with in para. 18 below;

(e) Changes. The mid-term reviews showed that no country programme had any change so significant as to warrant a complete resubmission to the Council. The Governments of Myanmar and Viet Nam indicated major changes in their respective economic policies but, at the time of the mid-term reviews, it was agreed to continue with the current country programmes and address changed government policies more fully during the fifth programming cycle.

B. Regional, interregional and global programmes

6. The content and modalities of intercountry programming are of a distinctive character. The mid-term reviews are likewise decidedly different from the exercise at the country level, as will be noted from the three intercountry mid-term reviews briefly described below.

1. The Caribbean multi-island programme

7. The mid-term review of this subregional programme confirmed its validity in promoting solutions to a number of common problems faced by the small island States of the Eastern Caribbean, particularly in the areas of agricultural diversification and rural development, improved public sector management, and human resources development, which are the major themes covered. The programme has been able to attract additional cost-sharing contributions that have been supplemented by the

use of national IPFs and have served to maximize the impact of activities carried out in this small but significant subregional programme.

8. At the same time, the mid-term review disclosed that there are inherent difficulties in the management of a programme catering to the needs of nine different countries and territories: complementarity must be ensured between activities carried out at the national level and those undertaken at the subregional level. Moreover, support for the programme, designed to lay the basis for economic and political integration, has proved problematic because of the need to secure high-level political decisions throughout the process of implementation. However, the mid-term review established that such challenges should continue to be addressed in view of the importance of promoting the objectives of regional integration as a strategy for optimizing the development potential of the individual countries.

2. The fourth regional programme for Africa (1987-1991)

9. With \$243 million distributed among more than 350 projects, the fourth regional programme for Africa is the largest of all UNDP programmes, both in terms of resources and in projects covered. The mid-term review commenced in April 1989 and continued until December of that year.

10. The thorough mid-term review process painstakingly covered all the main elements of this complex and wide-ranging regional programme. As a result, evidence was garnered that the prime objectives, and there are many, were well addressed by the time the mid-term review process was under way. These include the four main areas of concentration: (a) research and development for food production; (b) productivity and management for the production of goods and services; (c) natural resources; and (d) infrastructure. Within these overall objectives, special attention is also given to complementary areas of intervention i.e., (a) regional and subregional co-operation and economic integration; (b) women in development; (c) drought and desertification; and (d) support to the United Nations Transport and Communications Decade in Africa.

11. The mid-term review disclosed, however, that considerable difficulties have been encountered, understandable in a programme of this magnitude and diversity. The following observations emerged:

(a) The multiplicity of the partners of the Programme has added to its complexity and has meant extensive and lengthy consultations both during the formulation of intercountry projects and in the monitoring of their implementation, thus causing some delay. In this connection, an innovative approach in project management that has had positive results is the creation of steering committees to oversee the implementation of particularly large and complex projects;

(b) The mid-term review has confirmed the coherency of the programme, its relevance to the established strategies of the region, and its effectiveness in operational activities;

(c) The mid-term review also noted that the programme has adhered to its original intentions in terms of project approvals and sectoral allocations. As of 30 June 1989, the midpoint of the programme, practically all the resources at the disposal of the programme had been committed.

3. Interregional and global programmes

12. The mid-term review, carried out during September-December 1989, was led mainly by a senior external consultant supported by other external consultants who prepared thematic analyses and by staff from the Division for Global and Interregional Programmes who assisted in a review of specific subjects. The review revealed that:

(a) Almost all programmes are being implemented as foreseen;

(b) Considerable financial support is derived from national and regional IPFs. Bilateral and multilateral donors also make significant contributions. For each dollar of the interregional IPF, more than \$8.00 of collateral financing has been secured. In global programmes supported by multi-donor consortia (the Consultative Committee for International Agricultural Research (CGIAR) for instance), there is a matching of the global IPF by a ratio of 1:25;

(c) Independent of the mid-term review itself, almost every individual global and interregional programme will be subject to external review;

(d) Global and interregional programmes have picked up new development issues not foreseen when the full fourth cycle programme was formulated. These include, for instance, the human immunodeficiency virus and acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (HIV/AIDS) and debt management.

13. While the review was, in the main, extremely favourable, the global and interregional programmes are not without their particular difficulties. These are:

(a) Resources. The mid-term review reported that programme resource commitments and disbursements were well advanced, but resource constraints were also beginning to appear. Three years through the fourth cycle, 66 per cent of the \$93 million global IPF has been committed and 51 per cent expended. The global pipeline indicates that \$35 million worth of project proposals could be implemented in the fourth cycle, while the uncommitted IPF balance is only \$33 million. Likewise, in the interregional IPF, the current cycle pipeline of implementable projects valued at \$26 million is constrained by an uncommitted IPF balance of only \$9.8 million;

(b) New themes. As stated above, while interregional and global programmes have responded in an innovative manner to development issues not clearly foreseen when the total fourth cycle programme was put together, this responsiveness itself has increased the resource constraints that face the Programme as a whole;

(c) Integration. The Administrator is of the view that global and interregional programming needs to be integrated, more effectively than hitherto, with regional and country programmes, both core and non-core. Internal arrangements to accomplish this are already under way.

14. One conclusion has clearly emerged from the fact that the mid-term reviews of the intercountry programmes are indeed substantial in content and extensive in coverage. Clearly, there would be an advantage in using the information contained in these reviews as the first steps of the programming exercises for the fifth cycle.

II. PROGRAMME ISSUES

A. Programme-level issues

15. It was noted that most mid-term reviews do not focus sufficiently on programme-level issues. To argue that most of the original country programmes were project-oriented and that this more limited approach is reflected in the mid-term reviews, permits only a partial assessment of the benefits of the mid-term reviews.

16. However, there are some significant instances where the mid-term review has led to policy changes in the country programme. For instance, in the case of Ghana, the 1989 mid-term review of the fourth country programme reflected a process which began with the mid-term review for the third country programme in 1984. At that review, a project-oriented country programme was changed to one which was programme-oriented and which carried over to the fourth country programme with three major objectives: (a) strengthening the capacity of the Government for planning and economic management; (b) promoting grass-roots participation in rural development; and (c) strengthening Ghanaian institutions through training and consultancy services. The 1989 mid-term review again supported the original allocation of funds to these objectives, with an especially strong commitment to the objective of planning and economic management.

17. In certain cases, the mid-term reviews offered an opportunity to finetune programmes. The mid-term review for the fourth country programme for Egypt concluded that human resource development and transfer of technology should not be categorized as separate areas of concentration but as common features permeating all UNDP activities in Egypt. The 10 projects under these two areas were recategorized; at the time of the review the programme had 61 ongoing projects in industrial development, agriculture and water management, public administration management, and public service delivery.

B. The mid-term review and IPF commitments

18. During the discussions on document DP/1990/12, it was noted that by the time a mid-term review is held, most IPFs have already been committed. Therefore, it was not possible, even if desirable, to change the focus of the country programme during the mid-term review. Table 2 in the annex confirms this point by

illustrating the level of IPF commitments when the mid-term reviews were held. These commitments range from over 100 per cent for 12 countries to over 75 per cent for 41 countries, with an average of 88 per cent for all programmes. It should be remembered that to deliver 100 per cent of the IPF, a country must commit at least 70 per cent of its IPF by the end of the second year of the cycle. Therefore, in a well-planned programme, approximately 75 per cent of the IPF will have already been committed when an MTR is conducted. In the context of this kind of resource situation at the time of their mid-term reviews, Myanmar and Viet Nam adopted the course of action described below.

1. Myanmar

19. In 1989, the Government of Myanmar decided to abandon its centrally planned, economic management system in favour of a market-oriented economy. Despite an increase of about \$24 million from a supplementary IPF allocation and least developed country (LDC) funds, the amount available for programming to meet new needs was only about 35 per cent of the amount required. Accordingly, the mid-term review noted that the dramatic changes in economic policy and management in Myanmar called for a thorough reassessment of technical assistance priorities. In this regard, eight sectoral missions were fielded. Their findings will constitute the new priorities on which the next country programme will be based. Until the reassessment process is completed, the ongoing programme will continue with essential adjustments to be agreed upon in consultations between the Government and UNDP.

2. Viet Nam

20. In Viet Nam, the Government's economic reforms of 1988 and 1989 were aimed at adjusting to a centrally planned economy, taking into account market forces. While the mid-term review found that the basic tenets of the country programme were valid, it was decided that the unprogrammed reserve available from all sources would be utilized to respond to the country's new needs, particularly those enabling it to utilize hard currency inflows.

C. The mid-term review as a first step towards the country programming exercise

21. While it is true that resources may not always be readily available to finance all of the redirections that may be proposed during a mid-term review, it is certainly the time to initiate the policy dialogue that can determine the course and content of the next country programme. Thus, the mid-term review is increasingly being recognized as an essential first step in programming for the next cycle. This was evident in a number of mid-term reviews such as those for the country programmes of Egypt, Ghana, the Philippines, Myanmar, Viet Nam, Zimbabwe and Fiji. Furthermore, the mid-term review of the third country programme for India (DP/1989/73/Add.4) was preceded by comprehensive evaluations and sector reviews that provided the basis for the fourth country programme, which is being

submitted to the Council at this current session. The Indian experience illustrates the desirability of holding a mid-term review soon after the midpoint of the ongoing programme cycle to ensure that its findings can be used for the following cycle.

22. The case of Zimbabwe is also typical in this context. One year prior to the mid-term review, the Government and UNDP decided to reorient the UNDP programme, which was too diffuse and in which small projects proliferated. Consequently, four areas of concentration emerged: planning and management; agriculture; transport and communication; and selected global thematic issues. The relevance of these programming arrangements were endorsed at the mid-term review and will, as was the case for Ghana, constitute the main objectives of the fifth cycle programming exercise. Similarly, the mid-term review for the fourth country programme for Egypt not only endorsed future areas of concentration for the fifth cycle programming process but also: (a) indicated the main national development objectives for the formulation of the fifth country programme; (b) agreed on the nature of the detailed information required for each technical co-operation programme; and (c) agreed on specific criteria to be applied for the selection of major technical co-operation packages to be covered by the fifth country programme in each area of concentration.

D. The use of the mid-term review as a programming tool for non-UNDP technical co-operation

23. This issue was addressed in document DP/1990/12 and was discussed during the special session of the Governing Council in February 1990. The question of how best to co-ordinate technical co-operation in any given country has been a long-standing issue. Nothing new emerged from the reviews of the current mid-term reviews, and the Administrator will reiterate his previous request that Resident Representatives encourage donors from outside the United Nations system to participate in the UNDP mid-term review exercise. It should be noted here that both Myanmar and Viet Nam included bilateral donors in the reviews.

E. Programming as a continuous process

24. The emphasis on the actual mid-term review itself should not obscure the fact that programming, review, and monitoring are all continuous processes at the country level. Numerous related activities are in process throughout the cycle. These include annual tripartite reviews for all medium- and large-scale projects and major in-depth evaluations held once in the lifetime of each large-scale project. There are also round-table and national technical co-operation assessment and programmes (NATCAPs) exercises, surveys related to the Management Development Programme (MDP), and similar exercises. It would be most advantageous if, in the 12-month period or so immediately preceding a mid-term review, these other surveys and reviews could be timed and organized in such a way to serve as resource material to the review itself.

25. The continuous programming process is illustrated in the mid-term review for the Philippines. Since the approval of its fourth country programme in June 1986, major changes in the country's leadership have resulted in policy shifts and a new generation of projects progressively reflected the changes in the Government's priorities. The mid-term review, in effect, formalized and recorded a process of continuous programming and decided to refocus the sectoral aspects of the country programme using a three-tiered approach: poverty alleviation, sustainable development and growth.

F. The mid-term review in countries with small IPFs

26. Mid-term reviews are held in all countries regardless of the size of their IPFs. However, mid-term reviews for countries with small IPFs differed not only because of their size but also because of their special features. For example, the smaller island countries of the Caribbean for which mid-term reviews were held, i.e., Anguilla, Aruba, Bahamas, British Virgin Islands, Grenada, Montserrat, the Netherlands Antilles and Saint Kitts and Nevis were careful to focus on programme-level issues since this was obviously the best way to make use of limited UNDP resources. The multi-island programme for the Eastern Caribbean Islands focused on two areas of concentration: (a) agricultural diversification and rural development; and (b) public sector management and human resources development. This also enabled participating countries to address common interests such as tourism in the context of a subregional perspective.

G. The quality of the mid-term reviews

27. This aspect of the mid-term reviews is addressed in the report of the Administrator on evaluation of the mid-term country programme review process (DP/1990/38/Add.1) and was also the subject of discussions at the special session of the Governing Council in February 1990. It is clear from a large number of mid-term review reports such as those for Myanmar, Zimbabwe, Egypt, Ghana, India, and Bangladesh that mid-term reviews entail extensive prior preparation. This includes sectoral reviews by specialized agencies, the use of national or international consultants, and evaluations on specific areas of development such as capacity-building, planning, and decentralization.

H. Implications for field offices and at headquarters

28. Mid-term review preparations impose an additional work-load on field offices. However, the advantages of a well-managed mid-term review have been fully appreciated and, indeed, the benefits have been commensurate with the efforts made.

29. In UNDP headquarters, the mid-term review report and the original country programme document have become the basic management texts for the operational staff in the Regional Bureaux. Most mid-term reviews are regularly attended by staff from the regional bureaux and the background material collected and brought to headquarters far exceeds, in volume and in operational detail, the simple text of

the mid-term review report itself. Regional Directors attest to the fact that there are considerable exchanges between the Bureaux and the field prior and subsequent to the actual convening of a mid-term review.

III. RECOMMENDATIONS

30. Based on the reviews completed by the end of 1989, the following recommendations are made:

(a) Revised guidelines be issued for the conduct of mid-term reviews which will (i) more clearly define the purpose of the mid-term review, including the monitoring of programme results and the planning of future programme activities; (ii) eliminate any inconsistencies identified in earlier guidelines; and (iii) emphasize their use and importance as a basis for the next country programme exercise;

(b) Resident Representatives be requested to ensure that, in the best way possible, all internal reviews and surveys as described in para. 24 above are scheduled so that they can serve as resource material for the mid-term review;

(c) Consideration be given in the case of intercountry, regional, interregional and global programmes to using the mid-term review in a more formal way as the first step in the programming exercise. In regional programmes especially, the advantages of an intergovernmental regional meeting merits attention;

(d) Since some 45 mid-term reviews are scheduled for January-June 1990, the Council might wish to consider whether further reporting is required under the terms of its decision 89/11 of 23 February 1989.

Annex

SUMMARY FINANCIAL DATA ON COMMITMENTS AGAINST IPFs

Table 1. Summary of IPF commitments at mid-term reviews a/

Percentage of commitment at mid-term review	<u>RBA</u>		<u>RBASE</u>		<u>RBAP</u>		<u>RBLAC</u>		<u>Global and inter- regional</u>	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
75 per cent and above	14	100	7	78	4	80	12	71	0	0
Between 50 per cent- 74.9 per cent	0	0	1	11	1	20	5	29	1	1
Below 50 per cent	0	0	1	11	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	14	100	9	100	5	100	17	100	1	1

a/ The high level of commitment by the time mid-term reviews were conducted left little scope for redirecting the unprogrammed resources based on the recommendations of the mid-term reviews. Eighty per cent of the programmes reviewed during the period 1 July to 31 December 1989 had committed over 75 per cent of their IPFs, 18 per cent had committed between 50 and 74 per cent, and 2 per cent had committed below 50 per cent.

Table 2. IPF commitments at mid-term review by region

	Date of mid-term review 1	IPF a/ (millions of United States dollars) 2	Budgets approved at mid-term review b/ 3	3 as a percentage of 2
I. REGIONAL BUREAU FOR AFRICA				
Botswana	9/89	6.1	10.1	166
Cape Verde	11/89	6.6	7.8	118
Côte d'Ivoire	12/89	17.5	15.2	87
Ghana	10/89	34.7	32.2	93
Guinea	11/89	31.9	36.0	113
Guinea-Bissau	11/89	18.5	18.1	98
Regional Programme	12/89	218.5	242.5	111
Lesotho	7/89	13.9	12.3	88
Niger	11/89	36.5	30.8	84
Sao Tome and Principe	11/89	3.2	2.7	84
Swaziland	11/89	4.8	3.8	79
Togo	12/89	23.9	21.6	90
Zaire	12/89	55.9	45.3	81
Zimbabwe	11/89	18.1	17.7	98
II. REGIONAL BUREAU FOR ARAB STATES AND EUROPE				
Albania	10/89	6.4	8.6	134
Egypt	10/89	38.0	34.4	90
Iraq	12/89	8.7	11.3	130
Oman	10/89	1.8	1.2	67
Qatar	12/89	.7	.3	43
Somalia	11/89	34.0	29.7	87
Tunisia	8/89	8.7	9.0	103
Turkey	10/89	13.8	15.4	112
Yugoslavia	11/89	4.4	5.6	127
III. REGIONAL BUREAU FOR ASIA AND THE PACIFIC				
Fiji	7/89	2.9	2.4	83
Myanmar	11/89	80.2	51.6	65
Philippines	9/89	28.8	28.8	100
Vanuatu	11/89	1.8	1.5	83
Viet Nam	11/89	80.4	85.8	107

	Date of mid-term review 1	IPF <u>a/</u> (millions of United States dollars) 2	Budgets approved at mid-term review <u>b/</u> 3	3 as a percentage of 2
IV. REGIONAL BUREAU FOR LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN				
Anguilla	11/89	1.00	.71	71
Aruba	11/89	.38	.31	82
Bahamas	11/89	1.40	.91	65
British Virgin Islands	10/89	.25	.27	108
Caribbean multi-island	7/89	2.80	1.70	61
Colombia	11/89	12.80	12.70	99
Cuba	8/89	12.00	9.90	83
Dominican Republic	8/89	8.00	6.70	84
Grenada	8/89	1.30	1.10	85
Haiti	12/89	33.50	23.80	71
Regional Programme	12/89	55.00	47.90	87
Montserrat	7/89	.60	.55	92
Netherlands Antilles	11/89	.63	1.70	270
Nicaragua	11/89	9.80	7.20	73
Paraguay	7/89	5.70	4.40	77
Saint Vincent and the Grenadines	8/89	1.90	1.87	98
Uruguay	12/89	6.00	4.90	82
V. GLOBAL AND INTERREGIONAL	11/89	157.20	95.60	63

a/ Reflects only IPFs plus supplements established in accordance with the Administrator's report on the mid-term resource situation (DP/1989/26). Does not include carry-overs from the third cycle.

b/ Source: Monthly approval reports. (N.B. Some approved budgets include non-IPF sources of financing).
