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S U P P O R T

UNITED NATIONS POPULATION FUND

PERIODIC REPORT ON EVALUATION

Report of the Executive Director

S U M M A R Y

This document has been prepared in response to Governing Council decision 82/20 I, paragraph 8, and decision 88/34 I, paragraph 7, which requested the Executive Director to supply further evaluation reports periodically. Part I discusses the evaluation activities of UNFPA in 1988-1989, including internal and independent, in-depth evaluations; revision of guidelines; and feedback and use of evaluation results. Part II summarizes the results of the independent, in-depth evaluations undertaken in 1988-1989.

INTRODUCTION

1. This report on evaluation activities in 1988 and 1989 has been prepared in response to Governing Council decision 82/20 I, paragraph 8, and decision 88/34 I, paragraph 7, which requested the Executive Director to supply further evaluation reports periodically. In view of the information provided in UNFPA's previous report to the Council (document DP/1988/36), which covered the period 1986-1987, the Governing Council welcomed the Fund's increased emphasis on monitoring and evaluation as an integral part of its priority programming process, in particular the shift in focus of independent, in-depth evaluations from individual projects to country and intercountry programmes and to technical areas and issues in a global comparative perspective, the establishment of an evaluation database for lessons learned, the fullest possible use of evaluation results during the programming cycle, and the emphasis on training in evaluation (decision 88/34 I, para. 7).

2. During the period 1988-1989, the Fund implemented the evaluation programme foreseen in document DP/1988/36. Thus, UNFPA continued to emphasize and expand internal evaluation activities; to focus its independent, in-depth evaluations on country and intercountry programmes and on technical areas and issues in comparative perspective; to refine the Fund's guidelines for monitoring and evaluation; and to strengthen the system for feedback and use of evaluation results. These activities are discussed in part I of this report. Part II, as usual, provides summaries of the results of the independent, in-depth evaluations organized by UNFPA.

I. EVALUATION ACTIVITIES

A. Internal evaluations

3. The evaluation activities of UNFPA were intensified during the 1988-1989 period in line with the increased awareness of their usefulness as a management tool. Most individual projects now include, and are starting to implement, plans for both monitoring and evaluation. These internal evaluation activities are of a great variety, ranging from self-evaluations conducted by the project management to large-scale evaluations carried out by a team of independent consultants. Depending on the circumstances of each case, internal evaluations of individual projects are organized by the project management locally, by the UNFPA office in the country, by the executing agency, or by the respective Geographical Division at UNFPA headquarters. Evaluations organized by the Geographical Divisions at UNFPA headquarters are usually the most elaborate and often follow the same methodology used in the independent in-depth evaluations organized by the Fund's Technical and Evaluation Division (TED). TED, and in particular, the Evaluation Branch within TED, often provide technical advice to the Geographical Divisions or to the field offices regarding terms of reference, preparation of background papers and identification of consultants.

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4. There are at present no exact statistics on the different kinds of internal evaluations that have been completed or planned. However, it appears that approximately half of the Fund's large-scale projects now include plans for evaluations that go beyond the minimum requirement of the self-evaluation form, and that roughly one third of these have undergone such evaluations. Some, but not all, of the internal evaluations have cost implications. In an effort to get a sense of what these costs were, in 1987, UNFPA introduced a new budget line to record such evaluation activities. So far, evaluation activities have seldom been charged to this line, since the projects evaluated in 1988-1989 were approved before 1987. Nevertheless, in 1988 about 20 projects used this budget line. The number quadrupled in 1989. At present, the Fund is developing a new system, linked to the project management plan (see para. 14 below), for tracking planned and actual evaluations.

5. The quality of the reports of the built-in evaluations has varied considerably. Indeed, less than half of the reports screened for inclusion in the Fund's Lessons Learned Database have met the established quality criteria.

6. Nevertheless, the experience to date of project evaluation is encouraging. Recent project proposals show that evaluation results are being used more and more in the design of new projects, in particular when the project is a follow-up to a previous one in the same country. New country programmes also make use of project evaluation findings, as can be seen in the 13 country programmes being presented to the Council this year. Furthermore, it should be kept in mind that the widespread use of evaluation as a management tool is a fairly new concept and that many of those undertaking the evaluations have had little or no training in evaluation methodology. However, further refinement of the guidelines (see below) and expansion of training activities should considerably improve the performance in internal evaluation.

B. Independent, in-depth evaluations

7. In accordance with the plans indicated in document DP/1988/36, and endorsed by the Council in decision 88/34, the focus of the independent in-depth evaluations organized by UNFPA has shifted from individual projects to country and intercountry programmes and to technical areas and issues in a global comparative perspective. The work plan established for such evaluations is based on the need to make use of programme evaluation results and cumulative lessons learned in revising ongoing programmes or in planning new ones.

8. Programme evaluations conducted during the past two years covered both country and intercountry programmes. However, in view of the Fund's introduction in 1989 of the Programme Review and Strategy Development (PRSD) exercise, combining evaluation, needs assessment and strategy development, no separate country programme evaluations have been undertaken since then. Instead, staff trained in evaluation have participated in the PRSD missions. The country programme evaluations in Nigeria and Zaire, initiated in 1988, were undertaken

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during the transition period. Still, each included sectoral reviews in addition to the regular evaluation and were undertaken in close collaboration with other United Nations or bilateral agencies active in the respective country.

9. Most independent programme evaluations, therefore, now involve only intercountry programmes. As part of a series of evaluations of interregional programmes, most of the major specialized agencies executing UNFPA activities have already been the subject of such a review, including the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the International Labour Organisation (ILO), which were evaluated in 1988-1989. Similar evaluations of several regional programmes have also been undertaken.

10. The comparative or thematic evaluations vary in scope and intensity. They range from complicated, time-consuming studies of a whole sector in several regions, such as the one regarding population and development planning, which, including preparations and follow-up, lasted more than two years, to analysis of the comparative results of innovative projects, for example the one on newly-wed couples, which was completed in two months (see part II). Experience so far has shown that the methodology for such studies has to be very flexible and tailor-made for each case.

11. The comparative evaluations provide information useful both for programme and project formulation and for policy development. They are particularly important given the Fund's new programme directions emphasizing improved substantive analysis and strategic programming. In line with this emphasis, which was noted with satisfaction by the Council in decisions 88/34 and 89/46, the Fund's technical and evaluation staff participate in the organization of such evaluations. UNFPA's two-year-long review and assessment of accumulated population experience (see document DP/1989/37) has provided many interesting suggestions for future thematic studies.

12. The results of the independent, in-depth evaluations undertaken in 1988-1989 are presented in part II below.

C. Monitoring and evaluation guidelines

13. The guidelines for the Fund's system of monitoring and evaluation, described in document DP/1988/36, have been subject to testing for about two years. During this period, UNFPA has solicited comments on their use from its field offices and from executing agencies regarding their experiences in applying the guidelines. Based on these comments and taking into account changes that had been made in the monitoring and evaluation guidelines of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), UNFPA prepared a revised version of the guidelines for discussion at the global meeting of UNFPA headquarters and field staff held in Noordwijk, the Netherlands, in November 1989. The feedback received at that

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meeting provided the last input required for the finalization of the guidelines. They are now being translated from English into French and Spanish and will be distributed in all three languages for use by all concerned.

14. The revisions included an increased emphasis on monitoring and evaluation of programmes (including that provided by the PRSD exercise), greater acknowledgement of overlap between monitoring and evaluation, increased use of the country programme review and tripartite project review meetings for substantive discussion and revision of programme or project plans, further specification of requirements for intercountry and multi-bilateral projects, and increased focus on the need to integrate women's concerns into all activities supported by UNFPA. In addition, the project progress report is now required only once a year (instead of twice a year), and a new project management plan has been introduced to facilitate the continuous overview of project implementation at the field level. Finally, the terminology used for evaluations has been changed. In the past, only those evaluations organized by TED were called independent and in-depth. However, since many of the so-called internal evaluations, as seen above, are also of an in-depth nature and usually undertaken by independent consultants, the new guidelines now refer to project, programme and thematic evaluations. In other words, the terms indicate the focus of the evaluation regardless of who is responsible for the organization of it.

15. However, the main problem in the past has been not so much the design or content of the guidelines, but rather the difficulties encountered in ensuring their proper use. This may partly be due to the need for further simplification and flexibility, which has been dealt with to a certain extent in the revised guidelines. But much more needs to be done through training on the rationale and methodology of monitoring and evaluation for UNFPA and executing agency staff as well as for government project personnel. Furthermore, more emphasis has to be given to follow-up in the use of the system of evaluation. An important step towards this end is the recent introduction of discussion of reports on implementation in both the Fund's Programme Committee and Project Review Committee.

D. Feedback and use of evaluation results

16. The database on evaluation lessons became operational in mid-1988. Since then, it has been considerably expanded. It now includes lessons learned from all the independent, in-depth evaluations as well as from a number of internal evaluation reports. UNFPA has found it difficult to get access to the results of internal evaluations, since the reports are prepared in the field and are not always transmitted to headquarters. However, the number received is steadily increasing. As mentioned above, these reports are screened to ensure that they meet the minimum criteria for evaluation reports before they are added to the database. In addition to increasing the number of reports entered in the database, the Fund has updated the classification system used in the database in light of the experience acquired.

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17. Although the database has now been linked with the local area computer network at headquarters (see document DP/1990/51), it is unfortunately not yet directly available to many of the staff members who are on the network. Further expansion of the computer hardware, which is under way, is expected to remedy this problem. The field staff will also have direct access to the database once field office computers have been linked to the headquarters system. In the meantime, the Fund is disseminating database information in various ways, including providing demonstrations for visiting field or agency staff, distributing newsletters synthesizing evaluation results concerning specific issues of general interest (e.g., project institutionalization or women's concerns), and sending print-outs with all potential lessons on a country to a UNFPA Country Director before the preparation of background papers for a PRSD exercise. Although the response to these initiatives has been generally positive, it is difficult to measure the actual use of the results thus disseminated. UNFPA is, of course, also providing information at the request of users, who include not only UNFPA staff but also the staff of a variety of other international organizations and universities.

18. The database and thematic and intercountry evaluation reports were particularly useful in the preparations for the review and assessment, as well as for the ongoing United Nations capacity study, organized to assess the technical and administrative capacity of the executing agencies. The country reports have been used to great advantage in the revision of existing programmes and the preparation of new programmes. Furthermore, the reports on the independent, in-depth evaluations continue to be discussed in the Fund's Programme Committee, and until very recently this was the only kind of implementation report reviewed at this level of decision-making. As mentioned above, other types of reports, for example from tripartite and country review meetings, are now also being screened as part of the Fund's increased emphasis on the importance of quality implementation.

E. Future plans

19. The trends in evaluation activities established during the present reporting period will continue in the near future. Monitoring and evaluation as a regular and integral part of project activities will remain a major feature of UNFPA's programming process. The Fund will continue to organize independent, in-depth evaluations, but mainly of intercountry programmes and thematic issues. Such evaluations organized by headquarters will be somewhat fewer than in the past, however, in view of the expanding use of PRSD exercises. The evaluations of agencies executing UNFPA intercountry activities for the next reporting period will focus on the United Nations Department of Technical Co-operation for Development (DTCO) and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). In addition, UNFPA will review a number of regional agency or non-governmental organization (NGO) programmes. The thematic evaluations will include, inter alia, a large-scale evaluation of population education.

20. The Fund will also continue its efforts to increase the use of evaluation results in policy-making and in the design of new programmes and projects. In this regard, UNFPA is learning not only from its own experience, but also from the experiences of other organizations in synthesizing and disseminating evaluation lessons. Ensuring the use of evaluation results, in particular of general lessons, is difficult. However, in view of the Fund's increasing emphasis on the importance of such lessons in improving programme quality -- as demonstrated by, among other things, the recent introduction of implementation reviews in UNFPA policy-making committees -- prospects for the future are better than at any time before.

II. RESULTS OF INDEPENDENT, IN-DEPTH EVALUATIONS

A. Programme evaluation results

Zimbabwe country programme (Mission August 1988).

21. The mission found that although the country programme did not delineate any specific objectives, the individual projects had objectives consistent with the overall goal of making the country self-reliant in the formulation and implementation of population policies and programmes. The programme, as designed, was more an accumulation of individual projects rather than a coherent programme and did not provide any mechanism for co-ordinating the projects.

22. The mission concluded that the programme implementation, nevertheless, was relatively successful. The achievements included the enhanced awareness of population issues among policy-makers, the strengthening of the Maternal Child Health Department of the Ministry of Health, the establishment of a family planning programme at Harare Central Hospital, an increase in the supply of contraceptives and the consolidation of the undergraduate programme in demography at the University of Harare. However, the programme made only an indirect and rather marginal contribution to the ongoing efforts at formulating a national population policy.

23. A number of factors contributed to the achievements of the programme. These included the strong political and financial support of the Government to population programmes, the country's well-developed socio-economic infrastructure, the commitment and qualifications of the programme personnel, and the presence of numerous other donor agencies in the field of population. Constraining factors included the general shortage of project staff, the high turn-over of trained staff, the underutilization of fellowships, and the lack of involvement of nationals in the design of the country programme. The mission's recommendations for further improvements were taken into account in the preparation of the new country programme, which was approved by the Council in 1989.

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Nicaragua country programme (Mission August-September 1988).

24. The mission, examining the UNFPA-assisted projects in Nicaragua in terms of the implicit programme objective of institution-building, noted that population units had been established in the Planning Secretariat, Statistics Institute and the Ministry of Education, that a National Sex Education Commission had been created and that the MCH Department in the Ministry of Health had been strengthened. Despite this progress, however, the mission found that Nicaragua was still far from self-sufficient in the population area, in part due to constant staff rotation and turn-over.

25. The mission, while noting that the organization recently of a National Seminar on Population and Development had been a successful step in forging national agreement on population policy, observed that the Population Unit had neither the data nor the staff necessary to research options for a national population policy. Moreover, the results of the demographic survey conducted in 1985-1986 were not yet available. To address this problem, the mission suggested improvements in the organization of the Statistics Institute. It also emphasized the importance of conducting a census in early 1990.

26. While progress had been made in the provision of primary health services, including MCH, throughout the country, the Ministry of Health had not yet demonstrated the administrative capacity to take full advantage of the training, equipment and supplies, and technical assistance offered through UNFPA project activities funded with the assistance of Finland and Norway through multi-bilateral arrangements. The mission recommended that renewed efforts be made to improve family planning service delivery.

27. The mission found that the Ministry of Education had effectively integrated population education into primary and secondary school curricula and had initiated "parents' schools" where gender and population issues were presented. The mission also noted that additional efforts had been undertaken to train teachers at all levels and to assure distribution and use of materials. The sex education project had, through seminars and television programmes, contributed significantly to the growing demand for sex education.

28. The mission noted the efforts to actively involve rural and urban women in planning and programming. The recommendations of the mission were used in the preparation of the new country programme for Nicaragua, which the Council approved in 1989.

Indonesia country programme (Mission November 1988)

29. The mission concluded that the third country programme in Indonesia responded well to the needs identified in the 1984 needs assessment report and was consistent with the priorities expressed by the Government. Although some of the projects in the country programme appeared unrelated to each other, they

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did form part of a mosaic of strategic activities aimed at meeting the goals of the national population programme, and complemented well the activities supported by other donor agencies and the Government. Overall, the mission noted the dynamism and continuing innovativeness of the national programme.

30. The mission found that projects in the population dynamics and policy formulation sectors had all contributed significantly to the sectoral objectives. The capacity for research had increased markedly, in particular at the central level, and an impressive amount of training had taken place. However, the project aimed at strengthening the newly-formed Ministry of Population and Environment had suffered somewhat from differing interpretations of its mandate.

31. In the MCH/FP sector, emphasis was given to capacity-building in programme management. The mission noted that, while the two projects in this sector were on their way to achieving their objectives, adequate links between them, in particular in terms of utilizing results of operations research, had not yet been established. The mission also noted that new management skills will be needed for the Government's plans involving the private sector in achieving self-reliance in family planning. Two MCH/FP service delivery projects addressed groups with low contraceptive prevalence, in specific, those living in the Outer Islands and industrial workers. Both projects were on track, even though the second suffered from initial delays. The mission reported that the demand for the NORPLANT sub-dermal contraceptive implant had increased despite only modest promotion, but that more training in insertion and removal was needed.

32. While noting the success of the array of information, education, and communication (IEC) activities, the mission emphasized the importance of improving the technical quality of front-line workers, achieving better understanding of target audiences, increasing efforts to decentralize IEC plans and strategies, and improving the quantity and quality of audio-visual materials. The mission was generally very favourably impressed with the women, population and development project, which encouraged income-generating activities, and suggested further refinement in training, research, IEC, monitoring and evaluation activities. The main concerns of the evaluation mission have been addressed in the new country programme being presented to the Governing Council at this session.

Nigeria country programme (Mission July-August 1989)

33. This mid-term evaluation reviewed three dimensions of the current (1987-1991) country programme: (a) the overall programme; (b) the individual sectors of population and development/population research; MCH/FP; population IEC; and women, population and development; and (c) six selected projects in the areas of population and development, MCH/FP and population IEC. As usual, the role of women was assessed in all projects.

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34. At the time of the evaluation, the Government had just begun to put into operation the National Population Policy. The mission observed that the relationship between the federal programme and the state and local government work programmes or population projects had not yet been clearly delineated. The mission also found that the Department of Population Activities in the Ministry of Health, charged with integrating population factors into policies and programmes, needed strengthening. Its task was particularly difficult given the lack of data. In this regard, the mission noted that the most recent Government-accepted census had been conducted in 1963.

35. The mission concluded that UNFPA support had contributed to the development and launching of the national population policy and to progress in the sectors of basic data collection, MCH/FP, and population education in secondary schools. However, a great deal more could have been done within the framework of the approved country programme in implementing IEC strategies targeted at women of reproductive ages, out-of-school youth and males; in extending MCH/FP services to underserved populations in rural areas; and in addressing specific issues in the area of women, population and development. The mission noted the good communication among donors regarding ongoing projects, but observed that the size of the country and the federal system (wherein states have primary responsibility for programme implementation) meant that co-ordination among donors in Lagos did not always prevent overlapping or duplication of activities at state or local levels.

36. The mission identified the following priorities for Government/UNFPA programming: (a) extending MCH/FP services, IEC activities, and women, population and development activities to rural communities; (b) more directly assisting states and local governments to improve their MCH/FP services and to initiate and/or expand out-of-school IEC and women's activities; and (c) furthering donor co-ordination and expanding co-operation with NGOs working with the Government at local, state or national levels.

Zaire country programme (Mission August 1989)

37. This mid-term evaluation was conducted in conjunction with evaluations of UNDP and UNICEF programmes in Zaire and led to the identification of areas for joint efforts (e.g., assistance to the local health zones; improvement of primary health care services to reduce maternal and child morbidity and mortality; promotion of integrated women's centres; strengthening of IEC activities in support of assistance programmes and the fight against AIDS).

38. The UNFPA evaluation showed that the programme design lacked integrated interventions and that achievements in sectoral areas and for the programme as a whole had been very limited, particularly in the MCH/FP and IEC components. This was due to internal factors (for example, insufficient national commitment, inconsistent technical backstopping and insufficient monitoring, delays in the receipt of project funds) as well as to external conditions such as the badly-deteriorated infrastructure and severe difficulties with communications.

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39. An important result was the programme's contribution to the formulation of a national population policy and plan of action and the strengthening or establishment of institutional structures for implementing population activities at the central, regional and sectoral levels.

40. One serious delay occurred in the area of data collection and analysis. The final results of the 1984 census were not published, thus delaying preparation of development plans. The project in the Department of Demography of the University of Kinshasa was successful in helping to develop a core of faculty and researchers qualified in demography and to train students in demography, but its contribution to research was less positive.

41. MCH/FP services sponsored by UNFPA and the International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF) were limited to three isolated health zones. These pioneering efforts were slowed down by severe logistical constraints, and the impact on contraceptive prevalence was insignificant. National provision of contraceptives through the IPPF affiliate was hampered by distribution difficulties.

42. For a long time, population education activities had lacked the needed political and administrative backing of the Ministry of Education and were at a standstill. The mission found that activities in this area had recently resumed with the establishment and training of the project team.

FAO intercountry programme (Mission February-March 1988)

43. The evaluation team examined regional and interregional activities in the areas of population advisory services, population IEC, and population and development during the 1984-1987 period. The office of the Population Programme Co-ordinator is linked to all UNFPA-funded FAO population activities technically and/or administratively. The 1985 position paper developed by this office was a successful first step in involving FAO technical units in efforts to incorporate population into their work programmes. The main strengths of the regional advisory services included the excellent technical abilities, wide experience and personal dedication of regional adviser incumbents, as well as the team's active collaboration with national officials. Most UNFPA Country Directors indicated that they not only knew of the activities of the regional population advisers, but also enjoyed close working relationships with them.

44. The well-conceived strategy adopted by the FAO population programme consisted of: (a) the expansion of country assistance for integrating population factors into development planning; (b) the use of specific intervention instruments such as training of planners, demographers, policy-makers, and administrators; (c) the provision of technical assistance and substantive backstopping in such areas as population IEC and women, population and development, and (d) the undertaking of research to define the interrelationships between population and agricultural/rural parameters. The mission concluded that the strategy had been most successful in the realm of training, technical

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assistance and materials development, particularly in population IEC. A good example of this assistance was the strengthening of demography in the teaching and research programmes of agricultural universities and the manual developed for this activity. Unfortunately, some good publications had not received the continuing and wide distribution they merited. In the view of the mission, the research element in the strategy, while yielding insights and understanding of how population and development are linked to each other, had not really succeeded in developing a comprehensive conceptual framework that could be translated into concrete development policies and strategies. Design of national policies and programmes, because it is so dependent on country-specific circumstances, also had not been a strong feature of the FAO strategy.

ILO intercountry programme (Mission March-April 1989)

45. The evaluation of ILO's interregional population programme focused on eight projects representing the main areas of concentration of the ILO population programme: population, human resources and development planning; population education/family welfare; and policy-oriented and methodological research.

46. The mission found that, overall, this programme had made valuable achievements in each of its areas of concentration. It had contributed to a better understanding of the interrelationship between population and development among planners and policy-makers in developing countries and had also provided them with supporting materials, techniques and advisory services for population and development planning. It had made progress in integrating family welfare and family planning concepts into workers' education and in developing new target audiences. The programme had also produced a reputable body of research and made important methodological contributions in data collection. Moreover, women's concerns had been given a central focus both in programming and in research, and this constituted a major strength of the programme.

47. The main issues raised by the evaluation included the dwindling ratio of staff to country projects both at headquarters and at the regional level, the over-burdening of staff with administrative responsibilities at the expense of their attention to technical and substantive issues, insufficient awareness at the country level concerning activities of the interregional programme, poorly designed projects, a less than optimal exchange of materials and project experience among advisers and country project staff, insufficient skills of regional advisers, and inadequate promotion of research findings into policy. The mission called, inter alia, for strengthening the role of the technical co-operation staff in substantive backstopping; improving communication between the interregional team and UNFPA headquarters and field offices; improving project formulation; strengthening the capacity of regional advisers, especially in the Africa region; increasing population integration in other ILO units; and promoting research findings into the policy agenda.

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WHO/Eastern Mediterranean Regional Office programme (EMRO)
(Mission May-June 1989)

48. This evaluation focused on the collaboration between UNFPA and WHO/EMRO with regard to the execution of regional projects (in particular the activities of the UNFPA-supported Regional Advisory Team at EMRO in Alexandria, Egypt) and of country projects. The mission found that although the EMRO/UNFPA collaboration had created advantages for both organizations, a number of areas were in need of improvement: EMRO needed to play a stronger role in advocating family planning for health reasons in the region; UNFPA and EMRO needed to develop more country-specific approaches, considering the diversity of countries in the region; and EMRO needed to give more visibility to UNFPA inputs.

49. The mission concluded that the design of the regional projects had not been very clear or realistic, that the monitoring and evaluation had been weak, and that the implementation was seriously constrained by the inability to staff the Regional Advisory Team fully, the consequence being a very heavy workload for team members and a lack of success in providing a strong focal point at the regional office for executing UNFPA-funded projects. The mission, however, was impressed with the qualifications, dedication and achievements of the team members and was aware of the constraints under which they had to function.

50. The main constraining factors in EMRO's execution of UNFPA-funded country projects concerned recruitment of international project advisers, placement and processing of fellowships, and delays in financial matters. The mission noted that WHO's national quota requirement in personnel matters was the main cause of recruitment difficulties. The assessment of qualifications (especially family planning experience) and preparation of advisers for UNFPA projects were not always appropriate, and better prior consultation between UNFPA and EMRO as well as a thorough briefing of all personnel recruited for UNFPA projects on UNFPA policies and procedures was needed. The mission concluded that both UNFPA and EMRO must work together to ensure a better definition of the training needs of the fellowship candidates and the availability of training institutions. Also, more careful appraisal by both agencies was needed before project approval and agreement on execution. The mission found that the organizations' different financial regulations and the inadequate understanding of the regulations by the staffs of both organizations were the main reasons for financial delays. The frequent turn-over of staff in the two organizations exacerbated this constraint. The mission recommended that staff from the two organizations should meet to clarify procedures and agree on a common practice.

WHO/Regional Office for Africa (AFRO) intercountry programme
(Mission September-October 1989)

51. The evaluation team examined the performance over the period 1982-1989 of the two sub-regional MCH/FP advisory teams based in Bamako, Mali, and Harare, Zimbabwe. It also assessed AFRO's capacity to execute UNFPA-funded MCH/FP

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projects. Even though the quality of the advisory teams' performance differed in many areas, the mission identified a number of common issues which affected the performance of each team. These issues included AFRO's lack of emphasis on family planning, its national quota system for recruitment, the inappropriate criteria for selection of countries for backstopping services, the inconsistent and multiple directions given to the teams by AFRO and UNFPA, and the lack of up-to-date and complete knowledge about contraceptive technology and family planning on the part of some of the advisers.

52. The mission found that, overall, the Harare-based team seemed more effective than the Bamako-based team and showed evidence of good leadership and professional competence. Nevertheless, the team's objective to increase emphasis on family planning and achieve a better integration of MCH/FP had not been fully realized.

53. The Bamako team, on the other hand, appeared to lack effective leadership. The team could not produce the necessary project reports and had limited knowledge of the projects for which it was employed. However, it made a notable contribution in the areas of needs assessment and establishment of project work plans, particularly in Mali and Guinea.

54. The evaluation mission took note of the many well-conceived initiatives adopted by AFRO in recent years aimed at increasing self-reliance and enhancing the quality and status of community health care. The mission concluded that if these initiatives, together with AFRO's management and administrative systems, were efficiently utilized, AFRO could possibly develop the capacity to provide an appropriate level of managerial support to country projects. However, the mission identified a number of factors constraining AFRO's ability as an executing agency. These included, among others, the limited technical capacity in family planning within its MCH/FP unit at Brazzaville, the Congo, WHO's national quota system for hiring staff, and the lack of co-ordination between AFRO and WHO/Geneva, particularly with regard to the dissemination of research findings and guidelines to the field.

B. Comparative evaluation results

Training in MCH/FP

55. As reported in document DP/1988/36, MCH/FP training was the subject of the first comprehensive comparative evaluation exercise conducted by UNFPA. Three missions -- to Asia, sub-Saharan Africa and Latin America -- were undertaken in 1986 and 1987. The results of these evaluations were summarized in the 1988 evaluation report to the Council.

56. Due to the many similarities among the three regions, regional drafts were condensed into one general section on common issues, supplemented by three brief regional reports emphasizing features unique to training in each region. The

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general report addresses issues in health planning and forecasting; integration of MCH/FP with primary health care; the decentralization of training; gaps between training and job responsibilities; and the role of donors, executing agencies and Governments. In order to maximize the use of the results of this evaluation, both the report and a programme advisory note based on it will be given wide distribution. In addition, internal seminars to discuss the results are being planned.

Population and development planning

57. The second major comparative evaluation covered projects in the area of population and development planning. This area was selected for study in view of the need to learn more about a fairly recent, but rapidly expanding, sector of population activities. Four regional studies have been completed, and a report with global conclusions based on the regional reports has been prepared. The results will be further synthesized in a programme advisory note, and the reports as well as the note will be widely distributed and discussed in a series of seminars. The findings of the reports are summarized below.

Global report

58. The global report strongly underlined the finding that the integration of population factors into development planning is pivotal to country population programmes. It also demonstrated that this field is complex, multi-sectoral and multidimensional. The analysis of achievements in this area indicated that a number of projects achieved many of the basic objectives, for example, the establishment of a national population council/commission and a population unit, and the inclusion of a chapter on population in development plans. The evaluation found that a considerable body of research had been completed and that training and awareness-raising activities had been emphasized in many projects.

59. In spite of these achievements, the evaluation generally concluded that few, if any, of the projects achieved their fundamental goal of making population an integral part of planning and policy. A common problem was that projects were launched without the establishment of even the most minimal of essential baseline activities: there were no methodologies; no operational definitions of key concepts such as integration, planning and policy; no charting of the various functions to be performed by the projects and the institutions in which they might take place; and no operational guidelines for many of the related activities such as training and awareness-creation among decision-makers.

60. The lack of such bases was compounded by the fact that neither population needs assessments nor project formulation exercises were able to recognize or account for the complexity of population and development planning projects. As a result, most of the projects were unfocused and unrealistic.

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Asia and the Pacific (Mission August-September 1987)

61. The mission found that the design of the projects was often over-ambitious and vague. Even though the role of population in development seemed to be understood in most countries, that understanding appeared to be rather general and incomplete, often leading to narrow operational definitions of integration. Therefore, short-term training for key planners and policy-makers, preferably in the context of the UNFPA-sponsored Global Training Programme on Population and Development, was recommended.

62. The projects used research, projections and macro-economic planning models as methods to facilitate the integration of population factors into development planning. However, these efforts were not always translated into policies, for a variety of reasons, including inadequate presentation of research results to planners, poor linkages between relevant institutions, and ineffectual planning organizations. The mission found that a number of problems arose in the execution of multi-agency projects due to the lack of clarity and definition of the respective roles of the agencies. Furthermore, with few exceptions, monitoring and evaluation reports by agencies tended to be of an administrative nature and lacked the necessary technical content.

63. Women appeared to have been active participants in the implementation of the projects. Nevertheless, little attention was paid to women's issues, including the tabulation of gender-specific data. The evaluation stressed the need for assistance in the population field to take full account of the specific situation of the South Pacific Islands which because of their small size, the fragility of their planning system and the great size of area covered required different modalities of assistance.

Sub-Saharan Africa (Mission January-February 1988)

64. The projects under review sought to address various demographic issues, but little attention was paid to population and development issues of particular concern to the region such as population and food production, and population and health. The mission identified weaknesses in needs assessment and project formulation exercises and called for a restructured needs assessment report as well as a more cautious approach to approval of projects in the population and development field, including pre-project activities.

65. Where projects were reasonably successful, facilitating factors included adequate institutional location of the population unit, its insertion into the governmental structure, the prestige and authority of the various bodies in charge of population policy, the strength of project staffing and the firm linkages between the technical and policy formulation functions. Moreover, multi-function projects attempting to cover most aspects of population and development were less successful than those projects that focused on one key function. In general, the monitoring of projects by both UNFPA and executing agencies was found to be unsatisfactory.

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66. Some of the countries lacked recent census or survey data, while most others had collected but not adequately analyzed data. In many countries there was awareness of the role of population in development, and the development plans in most countries contained a special chapter on population. However, success in integrating population into various sectors was limited.

67. The mission noted the increasing complementarity between UNFPA-funded population and development projects and UNDP efforts to improve planning in developing countries. Nevertheless, the mission reported that no formal links had yet been developed to co-ordinate those activities. Women were found to have played an active role in the implementation of projects, yet a major difficulty in all countries was the lack of gender-specific data. Moreover, there was still a need to sensitize government officials and national planners to women's issues.

Arab States (Mission September-October 1988)

68. Although UNFPA assistance in the field of population and development planning was relatively recent and modest in this region, almost all the countries had ongoing projects and programmes with objectives to integrate population factors into the development process or to formulate population policies.

69. The evaluation mission found that population issues were treated as an exogenous, rather than an endogenous, variable in the planning process. The mission also noted a lack of awareness and clarification of the concept of integration among government planners. Projects were typically started without prior understanding of the concept of integration or sufficient dissemination of knowledge of the requirements for integration or policy formulation. The relationship of integration to population policy formulation had itself not been adequately differentiated.

70. In addition, scarcity of population data and weakness of demographic analysis also affected achievements, since staff were often absorbed in the task of gathering data instead of making policy-oriented analyses. Other important constraints were the uneven skills of personnel, their turn-over once trained and the lack of or inconsistent leadership of high-level professionals.

71. Finally, political commitment, government support and appropriate institutional setting emerged once again as key elements in the implementation of population and development planning projects. Population planning units were often established without first creating awareness and political support, and without a thorough assessment of the requirements for integration in terms of institutional co-ordination and training needs. This led to an inadequate location of the units as well as inappropriate staffing.

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Latin America and the Caribbean (Mission October-November 1988)

72. The principle of the integration of population factors into development planning was widely accepted, but was seldom translated into policy and planning action in this region. The projects were often overly ambitious and the objectives unclear. Consequently, there were problems in the implementation of projects, mainly in relation to the understanding of the concept of the integration of population and development, the adequacy of institutional arrangements, the availability and analysis of data, and the availability of well-trained technical staff.

73. The mission found that UNFPA had played an important role in keeping the idea of integration alive, legitimizing it and supporting various activities that would otherwise not have been possible. The mission suggested further improvements, inter alia, in regard to the needs assessment exercises, which had not dealt sufficiently with this sector.

74. The mission identified a need for different levels of methodological complexity for different planning approaches; i.e., global, sectoral, regional, sub-regional, and local. It further emphasized that future projects in this sector should not be developed without a well-defined conceptual and institutional framework which took into account the socio-political, institutional and cultural characteristics of the country. The mission also recommended better co-ordination between various population-related institutions, expansion of awareness-creation activities, elaboration of strategies for training programmes, production of timely data, and the undertaking of interdisciplinary applied research, including research on women's concerns.

Management information systems in MCH/FP programmes

75. UNFPA commissioned a series of diagnostic exercises of MCH/FP management information systems (MIS) to serve as a basis for decision-making regarding future assistance to improve such MIS. Diagnoses were conducted during 1989 in 27 sub-Saharan African, 5 Asian and 8 Latin American and Caribbean countries. A comparative analysis of the country reports was undertaken as a thematic evaluation. This exercise differed from other UNFPA-conducted comparative or thematic evaluations in that the focus went beyond UNFPA-supported projects.

76. The analysis concluded that too many programmes operated without access to basic input, output and quality indicators. Even where access existed, in too many cases data were not taken into account in management decision-making.

77. In light of the constraints on MIS identified in the diagnostic country exercises, the analysis concluded that the main requirement for enabling MIS to become a useful management tool would be the conveyance of technical knowledge through consultancies and training. Moreover, there was a need in some countries for additional human resources to operate the MIS, although a significant part

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of that need could be met by training existing personnel to carry out responsibilities that had previously been beyond their reach. The remaining personnel requirements, if beyond the financial capacities of governments, might well represent worthwhile contributions from donors. In addition, some systems needed hardware, principally in the form of computer equipment.

Family planning education and services for newly-weds

78. Young couples yet to have children were identified by UNFPA's review and assessment as deserving special priority status for family planning education and services in all cultural contexts. Yet to date, few countries had targeted these particular couples for special attention, and various approaches to this group had been relatively unexplored.

79. In order to learn lessons for future programmes in other countries, in 1989 UNFPA conducted a study of five approaches being carried out in three countries in Asia and Latin America (Indonesia, Mexico and the Philippines). An open-ended questionnaire was used in the field to collect descriptive data and to document perceptions of the implementors regarding the effectiveness of the activity and its acceptance by others, including the couples served.

80. The findings of the study indicated that, although service providers were sometimes opposed to the provision of education and services to this group, a newly-wed or pre-marital education activity had merits for a large number of couples. Couples responded to the activities in different ways, depending upon a number of factors, such as age, experience and marital history. Level of education and rural-urban differences were also factors in some instances. Importantly, it was determined that interest and acceptance could be enhanced when provision of the information on family planning was preceded by an explanation of its significance.
