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COUNTRY AND INTERCOUNTRY PROGRAMMES AND PROJECTS

FOURTH COUNTRY PROGRAMME FOR EGYPT

Note by the Administrator

I. PROCESS OF THE PROGRAMMING EXERCISE

1. The preparation of the present country programme for Egypt has been a continuing process that started with an in-depth review, from October 1984 to March 1985, of the third country programme. The review was conducted by the Government and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), in very close co-operation, and resulted in a comprehensive appraisal of UNDP experience in Egypt. Joint discussions were preceded as a rule by joint visits to nearly all project sites. Main conclusions served to reaffirm the ability of Egypt to manage the technical co-operation process and recommended that, in the future, projects focus predominantly on providing small, but well-selected, innovative and catalytic inputs.

2. The Resident Representative's note, presented to the Government in August 1985, summarized the joint conclusions arrived at and proposed modalities fully reflected in the country programme document before the Council. In every area of concentration there is an attempt to bring about an influx of advanced technology. This is the predominant theme of the whole programme. The Resident Representative's proposal that Egypt continue to cost-share UNDP activities in the country was strongly supported by the Government.

3. The programming exercise in Egypt was also based on the results of technical missions. A technical assistance needs assessment mission carried out in January 1986 by UNDP/Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)/World Bank reviewed the situation in agriculture: programming in this sector is fully based on the recommendations of the mission. A number of

other missions and studies, while not directly related to country programming, enriched understanding of technical co-operation needs and possible solutions in areas such as vocational training (May 1984, British Council survey), irrigation and energy (World Bank sectoral missions).

4. The Government carried out a comprehensive programming effort which started in August 1985 and lasted until June 1986. This involved a continuous formal and informal dialogue between UNDP, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Planning and Economic Development and the sectoral ministries. The latter were requested to review their technical assistance needs against the background of the overall priorities as reflected in the 1987/88-1991/92 National Development Plan. These needs were examined in a series of official meetings in May 1986 with the participation of UNDP staff. Subsequently, in June 1986, a detailed outline of the country programme was approved by the Government High Technical Assistance Review Committee. At the same time, in the spirit of continuous programming, and using available third cycle resources together with those borrowed from the fourth cycle, a number of projects corresponding to established fourth cycle areas of concentration were approved.

II. THE FOURTH COUNTRY PROGRAMME

5. Areas of concentration of the fourth country programme for Egypt have been identified as: agriculture; industry; the development of human resources; the development of information systems and management tools; the improvement of public services; and the transfer of advanced technology.

6. An analysis of the country programme themes reveals both a continuation of assistance to traditional sectors (agriculture, irrigation, water development and management, industry, health, education and vocational training) as well as the identification of new areas (information systems, management tools, public services). A dominant new feature of the programme is the effort to achieve goals in all the identified sectors, both traditional and new, through as wide an application as possible of advanced technology, and in quite a few cases the most advanced technology developed in a given sector.

7. Both trends are fully justified. Egypt still faces the task of assuring the necessary balance between the needs of a fast-growing population and the productivity of basic sectors of the economy. Hence, no meaningful programme of assistance can overlook the need for concentration in the area of agriculture/irrigation/water. On the other hand, technological progress in the world and the technical advancement of Egypt in particular allow even old problems to be tackled with relatively advanced methods. Among other things, genetic engineering in agriculture and mathematical models in water management will, it is hoped, provide solutions for the advancement of food security in Egypt. Once more, the introduction of a completely new technical concept is exemplified in the assistance to the Ministry of Cabinet Affairs in improving the process of decision-making at the Cabinet and Presidency levels through the application of state-of-the-art computerized information and decision-support systems.

8. A comparison of the main thrust of the country programme with the national development objectives, as identified in the National Reform Plan and the Five-Year

Development Plan (1987/88-1991/92), indicates clearly that the technical assistance provided via UNDP projects is relevant and supportive of the Egyptian effort. In this context, the focusing of the country programme on productivity and efficiency issues is appropriate.

9. The intention to make Egypt less dependent on external resources and to achieve a more balanced budget is quite evident throughout the Plan. Thus, the country programme stresses, for instance, raising productivity in agriculture and increasing the efficiency of energy production. More abundant supply in these sectors would facilitate a gradual rationalizing of Government subsidies. Both will have a positive influence on the balance of trade, as will enhanced industrial productivity and quality, two factors which also find expression in the country programme, and are accompanied by appropriate stress on specialized vocational training. In addition, the country programme proposes to extend direct assistance towards enhancing the Government ability to monitor, analyse and manage the national debt, to promote exports and manage imports and to develop capital markets.

10. Finally, the human dimension constitutes an important part of UNDP assistance in the fourth country programme. Stressing this dimension separately does not imply that the introduction of advanced technologies and the raising of productivity and efficiency are not recognized as contributing to a better quality of life in Egypt. Nevertheless, certain valuable aspects of the programme deserve special mention as they represent good examples of what may result from a proper understanding of the unique possibilities offered to the Government by UNDP and the United Nations system in general.

11. The programme contains projects that address, inter alia, problems of persons needing assistance from social services and social rehabilitation institutions; of young delinquents; and of the broad strata of the population, especially in rural areas, with difficulty of access to potable water and adequate sewage facilities.

III. MANAGEMENT OF THE COUNTRY PROGRAMME

12. Past UNDP experience in Egypt permits the continuation and further development of certain modalities of programme implementation that have proved successful: for instance, the wide use of National Project Directors, Government execution, and national experts and consultants. The modality of Chief Technical Adviser will be used only exceptionally, the main effort being directed towards obtaining highly professional short-term experts and consultants.

13. A great deal of sophisticated technical expertise will be required in formulating project documents. This requirement stems both from the high technical level of the programme and from the character of the programming effort that was aimed at addressing rather well-defined, specialized fields of assistance.

14. Regular tripartite reviews, periodic, systematic project evaluations and a mid-term review in 1989 will ensure an indispensable means of continuous improvement of the ongoing programme and an invaluable source of experience to be used in future programming.

IV. RECOMMENDATION OF THE ADMINISTRATOR

15. The Administrator recommends that the Governing Council approve the country programme for Egypt.
