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COUNTRY PROGRAMMES

FOURTH COUNTRY PROGRAMME FOR SIERRA LEONE

Note by the Administrator

I. PROCESS OF THE PROGRAMMING EXERCISE

1. This process began with the in-depth assessment of the third country programme (1983-1986), which was undertaken in May 1986 by the United Nations Development Programme office in Freetown in close consultation with the Government, with valuable inputs from local United Nations agency representatives and a number of executing agency and World Bank sectoral and programming missions. A subsequent review carried out with the participation of the Government highlighted the factors which had impeded the successful implementation of the third country programme and stressed the need to address with particular care the constraints identified in order to improve the quality of programme implementation. This review resulted in a clear, firm and unified understanding as to where the resources of the UNDP fourth programming cycle should be concentrated.

2. Programme preparation drew on sectoral review and programme identification missions fielded by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat), the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the International Trade Centre (ITC), the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF). Moreover, the process of consultation with the Government and the major multilateral and bilateral donors, which began when the round-table conference was first mooted in 1984, continued throughout the programming period. Programme preparation was closely linked to this ongoing exercise to ensure compatibility with the policies and programmes to be submitted to the round-table conference. The Resident Representative's note highlighted two major themes of concentration

(a) public sector management and related human resources development and capacity building and (b) agricultural and rural development with focus on food crops and increasing food production capacities, and efforts to revitalize the rural areas, improve productivity and encourage a more equitable income distribution. The note also made specific reference to the constraints and shortcomings, identified during the evaluation, which impeded execution of the third country programme and recommended remedial actions to be applied when preparing the new programme. The note was communicated to and discussed with the major donors represented in Freetown, including the World Bank.

3. Following the issue of the note, the UNDP Resident Representative participated in a series of meetings with the Ministry of Development and Economic Planning and sectoral ministries which resulted in late 1986 in a preliminary draft of the country programme document. Meanwhile, the Government pursued discussions with the World Bank and IMF and, in order to ensure compatibility between the fourth country programme and the short- and long-term economic reform measures envisaged, decided to seek an extension of the third country programme by one year, to end December 1987, and to prepare the fourth programme for 1988-1992, to coincide with the end of the second stage of the Public Investment Programme in 1992. A joint Government/UNDP exercise took place in May 1987, with the assistance of a UNDP programme advisory mission, to further refine the programme and prioritize the project proposals. During this exercise, the programme was refashioned to focus more directly on self-help grassroots initiatives and rural people's participation in the development efforts. Appropriate linkages between UNDP assistance and the aid being provided by other donors were identified and, in some cases, co-financing and cost-sharing contributions were agreed upon. The draft country programme was finalized in August 1987.

4. Negotiations between the Government and the World Bank/IMF, have been protracted, in part because of the difficulties encountered by the Government in implementing fully the policies and reform measures recommended and have contributed to the continuing uncertainty as to the most appropriate timing for a round-table conference which would ensure participation of major donors with maximum results. Discussions are continuing between UNDP, the Government and its principal partners concerning the opportunity and optimal timing for such a meeting. This in turn will have an effect on the implementation of a national technical co-operation and assessment programmes (NATCAP) exercise. In the meantime, therefore, UNDP is assisting the Government in the necessary preparatory work leading to an eventual full-scale NATCAP exercise when conditions are conducive.

II. THE FOURTH COUNTRY PROGRAMME

5. The fourth country programme for Sierra Leone is derived directly from the Government's Programme for Rehabilitation and Economic Recovery, and to that end addresses three major objectives, each of which is in turn closely interrelated with the other, imparting to the programme a high degree of focus and coherence, and providing strong support to the objectives and strategies chosen by the Government for its own recovery programme.

6. The Administrator considers that the series of activities to be supported by UNDP under the first objective, support for public sector management and planning (to which has been allocated 29 per cent of programme resources), are consistent with the technical assistance co-operation needs identified jointly by UNDP and the World Bank as being of critical priority in the implementation of the economic recovery programme in the short-term and in fostering national economic management capacities in the medium and longer term. UNDP efforts, linked with those of the World Bank to rationalize and render more efficient the public enterprise sector, are of crucial importance to the country's economic recovery and to the restoration and efficient maintenance of the economic and social infrastructure essential to economic productivity.

7. The drastic decline in export earnings which exposed the fragility of the present economic structure, with its excessive and unnecessary dependence on imported foodstuffs, warrants the retention of the second objective, promoting food self-sufficiency, as a major objective of the fourth country programme (to which 23 per cent of the resources programmed have been allocated). Given the admitted wealth and variety of the country's agricultural potential (Sierra Leone was once a net rice exporter) it can also facilitate a possible diversification of the country's exports away from the declining mineral resources and the traditional agricultural cash crops such as cocoa, coffee and palm-kernels.

8. In order to secure the required response from the more than 75 per cent of the economically active population who earn their livelihood from the land, it is clear that there is a need for greater attention to the social and economic infrastructure requirements of the rural areas. The Administrator is pleased to note that the largest allocation of UNDP resources of the fourth country programme goes to a series of innovative projects to promote grassroots participatory development under the third objective (to which 30 per cent of programme resources have been allocated), designed to contribute not only to the attainment of the production targets for agriculture, but also to ensure that the rural population enjoys a greater share in the planning and benefits of their contribution to the economic development of the country.

9. In addition to an unprogrammed reserve which represents 8 per cent of programme resources, the programme also retains the capacity to respond flexibly to urgent needs brought about by changes in the economic and social environment, as well as to fulfil the role of UNDP as a catalyst in mobilizing additional resources through the programmed reserves under each major objective, which total some \$3.2 million.

10. An important aspect of the implementation of the fourth country programme will be its contribution to the improvement of aid co-ordination where shortcomings were identified which impeded execution of the third country programme. These are, for example, through: (a) the strengthening of the Central Planning Unit of the Ministry of National Development and Economic Planning; (b) assistance to food aid management; (c) economic advisory services to the President's office; (d) the round-table process, and its follow-up sectoral and special consultation mechanisms, including a planned NATCAP exercise which, it is envisaged, will in due course assist in further refining national technical assistance needs.

11. The Administrator endorses the programme as presented and is pleased to note certain aspects included: (a) the role of women in development has been highlighted not only through efforts in individual projects but through a number of Government initiatives at the development policy level (see paras. 11 and 32); (b) the activities of UNDP, through its programme of assistance to voluntary associations, will involve national and international non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and offer scope for a major innovative thrust leading to wider replication of successful pilot activities, mobilizing additional resources, and developing new programmes of participatory grassroots development; (c) a pragmatic and more cost-effective approach to training will be adopted, more suited to the country's needs and environment; and finally (d) the programme also includes two interventions in areas which are in the forefront of the concerns of Sierra Leone's partners: (i) conservation, management and careful utilization of the country's forest resources through a forestry sector review within the context of the Tropical Forest Action Plan; and (ii) a first initiative in Sierra Leone to assess the incidence of the AIDS virus. In summary, the Administrator considers that the programme proposed is a cost-effective and viable one, fully consistent with the Government's planned management and policy reforms in the short-term and its longer-term objectives for economic recovery.

III. MANAGEMENT OF THE COUNTRY PROGRAMME

12. The programme will be closely monitored to ensure its continued coherence with developments under the economic recovery programme and the progress of policy reform measures. Once the situation with regard to timing of the round-table conference is clarified, the programmed reserve under the first objective, together with the unprogrammed reserve, will allow UNDP the flexibility to respond to priority needs identified and for the implementation of an eventual NATCAP. An in-depth evaluation of the programme will take place to facilitate this exercise. A further in-depth evaluation will take place in 1990. Thematic co-ordination meetings will be convened when warranted in areas of particular UNDP interest and involvement. It should be noted also that programme planning and implementation is reviewed with the Ministry of National Development and Economic Planning at monthly meetings.

13. Particular attention will be paid during programme implementation and the process of continuous programming to the lessons learned from the third country programme evaluation. Some corrective actions have already been taken, and UNDP has continued to focus on the constraints identified by the evaluation:

(a) Closer relationships are being forged with NGOs in the area of project execution. UNDP-financed projects will be encouraged to identify those project activities which involve direct contacts with target groups, for sub-contracting to NGOs;

(b) Assistance will be designed to have maximum impact in capacity-building at Government levels where counterparts are more easily identified;

(c) UNDP will carefully undertake, on a case-by-case basis, the increased provision of otherwise constrained local inputs and the construction of essential

project facilities, particularly for those initiatives targeted to the rural poor, and inputs without which no activity would be possible;

(d) Executing agencies are being encouraged to speed up project implementation, respond more rapidly to changing circumstances, and re-orient project activities towards the creation of high visibility, easily replicable systems and methods with a self-sustaining catalytic impact beyond the project life;

(e) Allocation of inputs among components will be changed, with emphasis being placed on short-term in-service training and the strengthening of national training institutions rather than on long-term advanced training abroad.

14. There are also other actions being taken to improve the capacity of both the Government and UNDP to manage the programme more effectively and efficiently. An allocation of 5.5 per cent of programme resources has been made to two programme support projects. First, in view of financial constraints, the Government has not been able to provide adequate administrative and logistic support to visiting missions and consultants and some small-scale projects; SIL/82/007 meets the aggregate demand for such support as well as servicing all projects not based in Freetown. This enables more economic programming of logistic support costs and releases resources for substantive programming. Secondly, an umbrella programme support project will include components for preinvestment and policy-oriented sectoral studies; specialized short-term training in planning and management for middle-level officers of line ministries; post-project follow-up, review and evaluation; promoting the use of national expertise for multi-sectoral programme support; and support to special Technical Co-operation among Developing Countries (TCDC) initiatives, short-term advisory services, Transfer of Knowledge through Expatriate Nationals (TOKTEN), etc. which are multi-sectoral. Finally, the regular visits of the UNDP-funded field economist based in Ghana will enhance the capacity of the UNDP field office to effect better aid co-ordination with the Government and other donors.

IV. RECOMMENDATION OF THE ADMINISTRATOR

15. The Administrator recommends that the Governing Council approve the fourth country programme for Sierra Leone.

