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#### JOINT INSPECTION UNIT

#### United Nations System Co-operation in Developing Evaluation by Governments

#### Note by the Secretary-General

The Secretary-General has the honour to transmit to the members of the General Assembly the report of the Joint Inspection Unit entitled "United Nations System Co-operation in Developing Evaluation by Governments" (JIU/REP/82/12).

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\* A/38/150.

UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM CO-OPERATION IN DEVELOPING  
EVALUATION BY GOVERNMENTS

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## SUMMARY

Evaluation has been slow to develop as an integral element of development management. The past few years, however, have seen a growing understanding of the value of evaluation in improving the quality and results of programmes and projects, accompanied by new international policy initiatives and increasing co-operative efforts to help develop evaluation by governments.

This report provides an initial inventory of actions, ideas and materials in this "new" development field. It briefly summarizes:

- the concept and challenge of "co-operation in developing evaluation by governments" (Chapter II);
- recent intergovernmental policy initiatives within the United Nations system which increasingly stress programme results and effectiveness, self-reliant national management capabilities, and the significant role which evaluation can play (Chapter III);
- factors which have hampered evaluation development in the past, such as process problems, constraints on governments, and pre-occupations of donors with their own evaluation needs (Chapter IV);
- the favourable trends towards greater evaluation use, understanding and joint efforts which are now emerging (Chapter V);
- current co-operative activities of the organizations of the United Nations system in supporting evaluation by governments (Chapter VI);
- various types of co-operative evaluation activities which are under-way (Chapter VII);
- factors which experience to date has indicated are important for successful evaluation (Chapter VIII); and
- recent relevant documents from United Nations system organizations and other sources (Annex).

The report offers several recommendations for United Nations system organizations to encourage further creative, co-operative efforts to help develop evaluation by governments. The Inspectors hope that governments as well as bilateral, non-governmental and other international organizations will also initiate, encourage, and support such activities, in order to better realize the potential which evaluation has to offer.

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## I. INTRODUCTION

1. Evaluation, in a current definition which has been generally endorsed in the United Nations system, is:

"a process which attempts to determine as systematically and objectively as possible the relevance, effectiveness and impact of activities in light of their objectives."

2. In governments and international organizations, resources available to meet urgent needs have become increasingly limited in recent years. In contrast to the often-criticized past preoccupation with the quantity and "delivery" of these scarce resources, however, evaluation is concerned with helping to achieve high quality in the way in which they are used to produce desired results. Evaluation is thus a learning and action-oriented tool, which should be an integral and continuous part of the basic management process along with planning and implementation. It provides managers and decision-makers with information and analysis of the extent to which stated objectives are being achieved and why, to help improve both current and future activities.

3. Interest in evaluation has fluctuated in the United Nations system since the 1950s, but has recently increased greatly in recognition of the above factors. The Joint Inspection Unit (JIU) has made a series of reports on evaluation progress since 1977 (including a glossary with the above definition), which have included discussion of growing efforts in the system to co-operate with governments to develop their own evaluation capabilities.

4. The Administrative Committee on Co-ordination (ACC) has supported this idea in comments on these reports. It has cited the close inter-relationship of many United Nations system activities with government programmes, the importance of full government management and control of technical co-operation activities, and the potential for co-operation with governments' own evaluations of projects and programmes.

5. During late 1981 and in 1982, the JIU gathered data and comments on this topic from the United Nations system organizations, including the World Bank and the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), which are not participating organizations of JIU. A representative group of UNDP Resident Representatives and/or governments were consulted. The Inspectors also held other discussions and reviewed the considerable amount of documentation now becoming available. They wish to thank all who participated for their many constructive observations.

6. The emerging worldwide efforts of governments in evaluation, and the growing support for them, have great potential for strengthening technical co-operation and development overall. The Inspectors hope that this report can serve as an initial survey and repository of ideas to stimulate further action, among United Nations system organizations, governments and other bilateral and multilateral development organizations.

## II. CONCEPT

7. "Co-operation in developing evaluation by governments" appears at first glance to be a simple and straightforward concept. Closer examination, however, suggests the challenges involved.

8. "Co-operation in developing" A government seeking help in developing evaluation functions is confronted not merely by some 25 United Nations system organizations and their component or associated agencies, offices, institutes and centres. There are some 30 to 40 other multilateral organizations and banks, many with large development programmes. There are 30 or more bilateral aid donors (some of whom are also aid recipients). There are several hundred non-governmental organizations with active international development programmes, as well as an increasing number of national and regional institutions and international consulting firms active in the development management field. In addition,

governments themselves are increasingly developing evaluation processes and accumulating their own experiences. Many of these potential sources have their own distinct evaluation concepts, policies, procedures and methods. While such diversity also exists in other technical co-operation areas, evaluation presents more of a problem because it applies to all development sectors and is a fairly "new" field. Governments have not yet determined who can help and in what ways.

9. "Evaluation" There are various types and categories of evaluation, as outlined below, and opinions on the "appropriate" approaches, methods and techniques to be used in each category may differ considerably.

(a) Evaluation may be "on-going" (conducted during implementation of the activity) or "ex post" (conducted after activity completion) in nature.

(b) It may deal with projects, programmes, administrative processes or policies.

(c) It may be "internal" (conducted within the organization concerned) or "external" (conducted by outsiders), or be "built-in self evaluation" (conducted by those directly responsible for the activity using an established format) or "independent" (conducted by people not directly associated with the activity).

(d) It may deal with a mixture of issues: "process" (operational), "relevance" (continuing validity relative to long-range objectives or other priority needs), "effectiveness" (measure of the extent to which the activity achieves its objectives), or - most difficult - "impact" (identifiable changes produced in the situation as a result of the activity).

(e) It differs from but complements other review functions such as "appraisal" (assessing the potential value of an activity before deciding to undertake it), "inspection" (a special on-the-spot investigation to resolve particular problems), and "audit" (the review of an activity's conformity to pre-determined financial or management standards or criteria).

(f) In particular, on-going evaluation, which examines an activity's continuing relevance and its present and likely outputs, effectiveness and impact in considerable depth, is often confused with "monitoring" (the continuous oversight of an activity during implementation to ensure that it is proceeding according to plan).

10. "By governments" Governments' capabilities for evaluation can vary tremendously. Some governments are quite familiar with evaluation while others know little about it. Some can use fairly sophisticated evaluation processes while others have almost no current capacity. Some may have some skilled staff resources, general public administration capabilities and administrative support systems available, while others do not. Some may have stronger central evaluation efforts but be weak at field levels, while others reverse this pattern. Some governments have great interest in evaluation, others may be sceptical, and others may have little interest at all, or a government may well reflect a mixture of these attitudes. Equally, or even more importantly, the cultural, political, socio-economic, and administrative systems into which evaluation must fit vary enormously from country to country.

11. Governments may also differ widely in evaluation structures and arrangements. Evaluation might concern a central unit (with various possible locations), ministries or departments, special development authorities, and regional, district, state and local bodies. It might involve line managers, special staff units, and co-ordinative bodies. It might also make use of national or regional institutions such as universities, research institutes, and management training institutes.

12. National evaluation systems are not something which developed countries "have" but less-developed countries do not. Many developed countries have a considerable variety of evaluation activities and experience, but much of this is an evolving, fragmented process, is more academic research than operational, is confined to certain sectors, or is vaguely mixed in with other forms of governmental review, analytical and audit activity. There are as yet very few, if any, "models" of comprehensive, operational government evaluation systems to be found.

13. "Co-operation in developing evaluation by governments" is thus a complex concept, involving a multitude of participants, concepts, capabilities, attitudes, and national environments and structures. This impression was brought home to the Inspectors by the frequency with which different sources gave widely differing assessments of the nature and type of evaluation activities which exist in various countries.

### III. POLICY FRAMEWORK

14. The basic concept of technical co-operation has undergone considerable change in the last decade. The old idea of a "United Nations system project", formulated at agency headquarters and involving government "counterpart" activity, is weakening. The ultimate goal of technical co-operation is to foster self-reliant national capacity, thus encouraging countries to manage their own development activities, including evaluation.

15. The Study of the Capacity of the United Nations Development System (United Nations, Geneva, 1969) outlined an integrated managerial approach towards development co-operation. It stressed that each developing Member State should be seen as the "very centre of gravity of the whole operation - the place where problems have to be understood and solved". It emphasized the importance of country programming and the development co-operation cycle, with evaluation as an integral and vital thread running through all phases. Evaluation was to be applied by the governments and the system in close association and with careful co-ordination, and governments were encouraged to establish or strengthen their own evaluation units. The Consensus of the UNDP Governing Council of 1970 (endorsed and incorporated in General Assembly resolution 2688(XXV)) largely reflects these findings.

16. In a resolution on Development and International Economic Co-operation at its Seventh Special Session in 1975 (resolution 3362 (S-VII)), the General Assembly stated its belief that the overall objective of the new international economic order was to increase the capacity of developing countries, individually and collectively, to pursue their development.

17. In 1975 the Governing Council of UNDP adopted and the General Assembly endorsed (resolution 3405 (XXX)) a decision on new dimensions in technical co-operation, urging more flexibility, dynamism and effectiveness in the activities and working methods of UNDP. The decision stated as a first general guideline that:

"The basic purpose of technical co-operation should be the promotion of self-reliance in developing countries by building up, inter alia, their productive capacity and their indigenous resources and by increasing the availability of the managerial, technical, administrative and research capabilities required in the development process."

18. The decision stated further that the selection of priority areas in which to seek UNDP assistance should remain the exclusive responsibility of the governments, that governments and institutions in recipient countries should be increasingly entrusted with responsibility for executing UNDP-supported projects, and that

"technical co-operation should be seen in terms of output or the results to be achieved, rather than in terms of input".

19. The restructuring resolution of 1977 (32/197) was directed towards making the United Nations system more fully capable of dealing with problems of international economic co-operation and development in a comprehensive and effective manner. It called, among other things, for more effective planning, programming, budgeting and evaluation processes, and improved inter-agency co-ordination.

20. Emphasis was also placed on technical co-operation among developing countries (TCDC). The "Kuwait Declaration", issued prior to the United Nations special conference on this subject in 1978, stated that:

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"... traditional technical assistance has generally reinforced earlier forms of dependence ... self-reliant national capabilities responsive to national objectives and requirements are fundamental prerequisites for viable development ..."

21. In 1978 the JIU prepared a report which examined alternative approaches to the increasing cost of providing UNDP-financed expert services (JIU/REP/78/3). The report recognized that the expert cost question was closely tied to basic issues arising from changing perceptions of the purpose and functions of technical co-operation, particularly in the light of developing countries' growing capacity to plan, direct and implement their own development programmes. In its 1979 decision on this report (79/48), the Governing Council invited the Administrator to gradually revise UNDP guidelines and procedures to facilitate options for government implementation and management, promote the increasing use of national capabilities, and improve the quality of overall project management processes.

22. A 1979 JIU report on United Nations system technical co-operation activities in Sri Lanka (JIU/REP/79/16) recommended critical assessment by host governments and system organizations of existing review and evaluation quality, and increased efforts by the organizations to work at the field-level with governments to strengthen their development management capabilities. The organizations' joint comments on this report (E/1980/82/Add.2) endorsed the need to reappraise technical co-operation design, review and evaluation systems and apply them more systematically, and to support governments' efforts to improve their own monitoring and evaluation capabilities.

23. In June 1980 the Director-General for Development and International Economic Co-operation, in a first report on operational activities for development (A/35/224), found that the United Nations system had been slow in adjusting policies and processes to assist governments to build their project execution capacity. The report concluded, however, that progress in this area would strengthen self-reliance, help reduce United Nations system administrative burdens, and turn specialized agency manpower and capacity towards their true vocation of technical advice, monitoring, and global analytical and policy functions.

24. General Assembly resolution 35/81 of December 1980 reaffirmed the concept of governmental responsibility for executing projects. The Assembly also adopted the International Development Strategy for the Third United Nations Development Decade (resolution 35/56), with prime responsibilities placed on the countries themselves but effective supportive action by the international community still indispensable. Review and appraisal was viewed as an integral element, and the Strategy recommended that governments' evaluation capacities be strengthened, where necessary, with assistance as required from appropriate multilateral and bilateral sources.

25. From 1974 through 1981 a series of General Assembly resolutions (particularly 32/179 and 34/137) and ECOSOC resolutions (particularly 1980/12) and Secretary-General's reports have dealt with the role of the public sector in promoting the economic development of developing countries. The resolutions and reports emphasized the importance of improving the development administration and managerial capabilities of public sector institutions, the need to provide additional support to enhance national capacities, and monitoring of new approaches and exchanges of information on the experience of different countries.

26. The Administrator of UNDP reported to the Governing Council in 1981 (DP/558) and 1982 (DP/1982/11 and Add.1) on the progress and problems in applying government execution, its financial and administrative aspects, and the UNDP mandate, policies, procedures and additional support needs in this area. He concluded that increased use of government execution will be a gradual and exploratory but steadily-growing process as experience is gained. The Governing Council (decisions 81/21 and 82/8) and General Assembly (resolution 36/199) endorsed continuation of these efforts.

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27. The 1981 United Nations Special Conference on Least Developed Countries in Paris produced a Substantial New Programme of Action for the 1980s (A/CONF.104/22/Rev.1). The Programme concluded, inter alia, that strengthening of administrative capacities and institutions is crucial for realizing the full potential of development projects and programmes in the least developed countries. It urged support by other developing countries and donors to institutions providing in-service training and the provision of an increasing number of highly-qualified experts in specialized areas of integrated development management, including evaluation.

28. A follow-up meeting of least developed country and donor institution officials held under UNCTAD auspices in October 1982 (TD/B/933, TD/B/AC.21/12) emphasized further the need for the least developed countries to establish and strengthen project/programme preparation, selection and evaluation units in each of their major ministries and organizations, and to make arrangements for effective project/programme implementation. Donor institutions, for their part, should develop more standardized, simple and responsive aid practices, procedures and management. The meeting also stressed that the quality, appropriateness and timeliness of aid are at least as important as volume itself.

29. The 1982 annual report of the Director-General on United Nations system operational activities for development (A/37/445) highlighted the need to further improve their quality, relevance and impact. It recommended closer integration with national programmes, intensified efforts to help strengthen national management capacity, and more flexible adaptation to differing national needs and circumstances while maintaining necessary quality control and improving co-ordination and the harmonization of procedures. The report also emphasized the strengthening of evaluation through its greater application as an integral part of overall planning, programming and budgeting processes, and through co-operative endeavours with and support to recipient governments' own evaluation activities.

30. This brief chronology of past policy decisions indicates a strong trend away from old ideas of "United Nations system projects" towards a "country-centered" approach. The idea of helping to strengthen governments' evaluation activities has been an element (even if only a modest one) of this new policy framework since the Capacity Study. The "new dimensions" of 1975 provide a particularly strong supporting argument through their emphases on promoting self-reliance, building national development management capabilities, increasingly entrusting governments with responsibility for management and execution of United Nations system-assisted projects, and viewing technical co-operation in terms of results rather than inputs.

31. The 1982 Director-General's report observed that the integral role of evaluation in the development co-operation cycle has been largely accepted in concept, but not yet extensively applied in practice. Recent technical co-operation policies and concerns, however, have at least helped to highlight the fundamental role which evaluation could play. The following chapters briefly examine the factors involved in helping to develop evaluation by governments.

#### IV. PAST EFFORTS AND CONSTRAINTS

32. In general, evaluation appears to have emerged rather slowly and unevenly in the development field, and to have suffered from a substantial number of difficulties and constraints. The difficulties encountered are emphasized in this Chapter, not only as lessons to be learned but as the base from which the considerable potential for more relevant and useful evaluation activities is now emerging, as discussed in Chapter V.

##### A. Limited early experience

33. Evaluation activities have been present in the development field for some three decades. Among governments, for example, India established its Programme Evaluation Organization in its Planning Commission in 1952, and evaluation has been evolving at the central and state levels there ever since. In the United Nations system, the Technical Assistance Board reported on the "vital

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importance" of systematic evaluation techniques in 1954, and UNESCO published evaluation material in 1955 and produced a field manual in 1959 for evaluating development projects.

34. In many countries, however, independence and full-scale national development efforts began only during the 1960s. Most of these efforts were (and still are) concerned with large-scale, long-term capital investment projects, and were characterized by strong desires for aggressive development action, a focus on the positive intentions of the activities undertaken, and a dominant concern with loan disbursement rates. In this ebullient atmosphere, evaluation, as a "last step" in the development management cycle which reflected on what was or was not actually being accomplished, inevitably received a low priority.

35. When evaluation activities eventually did get underway, they were strongly influenced by the dominant economic measurement concerns used in feasibility studies - market analysis, balance of payments impact, macro-economic variables, sales and production figures, cost-benefit analysis, shadow prices, and above all rate of return on investment. Although development efforts gradually shifted to include expanded technical co-operation and new emphases on institution-building and social development, economic rationality and quantification in evaluation proved much more difficult to apply to these latter activities.

36. Most early evaluation research also emphasized sophisticated scientific methods, elaborate data-gathering techniques, extensive field interventions with control group/treatment group comparisons, and long-term observation and analysis. Because of the high standards set, however, such studies tended to be costly, time-consuming and complex undertakings, which raised considerable doubts (in developed as well as developing countries) about their relevance and usefulness in actually improving action-oriented government programmes and projects.

37. Evaluation - and especially evaluation of impact - also encountered other difficulties. Assessment of benefits, responsibilities, inter-dependencies and constraints was made difficult by the "experimental" and "catalytic" nature of technical co-operation, its small project size within national programmes, its many intangible and long-term benefits, its co-operative nature, and a lack of measurement data. Many projects and programmes were not well planned and designed; objectivity was sometimes overridden so that evaluations were merely self-serving; many superficial and casual reviews were labelled as evaluations; and the actual resources made available for evaluation, by government and assistance organizations alike, were very limited.

38. In this environment interest and activities in developing evaluation ebbed and flowed sporadically during the 1960s and early 1970s. Evaluation efforts, when they were undertaken, generally produced modest results, were non-collaborative and were "scientific" and "research-oriented" rather than operational.

39. In 1965 the United Nations Technical Assistance Board studied the extent to which recipient governments carried out evaluations of United Nations system projects implemented in 1963-64. Only 14 per cent of the 70 countries included reported "systematic evaluation by co-ordinating authorities", which meant regular joint status reviews (not necessarily evaluations) of all projects. In 12 per cent of the countries, individual ministries reportedly conducted "systematic evaluation" (not otherwise defined), and 19 per cent "occasional evaluation". In 55 per cent of the 70 countries no evaluation was made by government departments, and in the relatively least developed countries it was found that judgements could be expressed on the work of experts but not on the success or failure of projects as a whole. Despite its limitations, this study is apparently the only relatively comprehensive survey ever attempted of evaluation activities of governments.

40. As early as 1966, the Secretary-General had emphasized that every encouragement should be given to recipient governments to strengthen their own co-ordination and evaluation procedures, through technical assistance in planning the machinery for evaluation or through the active assistance of resident representatives and other United Nations system officials in evolving suitable evaluation arrangements

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at the national level (E/4151). However, the United Nations system appears to have done little to support the development of national evaluation capacities until recently.

#### B. Constraints on governments

41. Governments have also faced some very important constraints on evaluation development. First, without strong and sustained political support evaluation cannot be effective, but national development is emphatically a political as well as a socio-economic process, and evaluation of results attained can be viewed as a highly sensitive matter. If governments are not willing to encourage, accept and act on objective evaluation findings, there is little use in establishing the evaluation process. In many countries it was not at all clear that this commitment to critical self-examination existed in the past.

42. Second, attitudes towards evaluation at operating levels were not often taken into account. Evaluation can be perceived as a threat which will be used punitively against individuals rather than as a constructive tool for information feedback to improve results. Past haphazard and externally-imposed evaluation practices did not often emphasize the positive aspects and direct usefulness of evaluation to managers, and accordingly built up a certain residue of scepticism, hostility and defensiveness to evaluation efforts.

43. Third, many countries have lacked the trained manpower needed for evaluation, as is true in other sectors as well. Past training in evaluation, or in evaluation as part of the basic management process, appears to have been rather limited, or too abstract to be widely applied in operational situations. Where national evaluation staffs and units have been assembled, considerable turnover problems have also existed, particularly in the draining off of qualified staff to higher-paying careers in the private sector.

44. Fourth, overall issues of development management have not been much addressed in many countries until very recently. Inadequate data-gathering capabilities, weak national information flows, and incomplete performance, review and reporting data may exist. The underlying national administrative system may be weak, and inadequate planning and poor project and programme design may make meaningful evaluation of progress towards objectives more difficult.

45. As a result of all these factors, past progress in building evaluation institutions and capacity in national development programmes has been very slow. Evaluation has not had high visibility as a development tool nor, in the rush to carry out action-oriented programmes and meet day-to-day pressures, has it been seen as a useful tool for more effective programmes. National governments have not often been willing to commit even modest resources to evaluation development.

#### C. "Donor-centred" evaluation

46. The problems of limited evaluation use and low government priority have been exacerbated by the style of donor approaches. Past evaluation efforts seem to have been essentially a requirement imposed by foreign assistance organizations, employing their own evaluation staff and procedures to satisfy internal management requirements and provide accountability to distant governing bodies. Rather than assisting governments in less-developed countries to improve development administration and raise the overall effectiveness of their programmes, evaluation became merely a "necessary pill" for them to swallow along with the inflow of external assistance.

47. A number of governments emphasized to the Inspectors that donor-imposed reviews and evaluations have often served to disrupt and distract national development management rather than to help it. Several factors have contributed to this image of evaluation as an outside irritant instead of as a useful management tool.

48. Most such reviews and evaluations have been conducted by independent expert missions from outside the country, without much attempt to involve national staff or explain the value of the work, and have conveyed a predominant impression of

external criticism of government operations. Recently, there has been a gradual shift towards government participation in such missions, but in many cases this participation has meant only that government officials make arrangements for the mission, accompany field visits, perhaps attend a review discussion, and receive a copy (but in some cases not even a copy) of the final report. The lack of enthusiasm by governments for carrying out these arrangements is sometimes viewed as lack of enthusiasm for evaluation, but instead may well reflect the low priority which the government places on the minimal evaluation role assigned to it.

49. Although it is often noted that in many countries foreign assistance is a small portion of national development efforts, visiting foreign missions can still put a heavy burden on government development officials. A government may deal with as many as 70 or 80 foreign aid organizations, and if most want to send a steady flow of missions the diversion of host government managers' time can be considerable. A recent study, for example, noted 340 external assistance missions of various types made to one country during 1981, with resulting confusion at all levels and a loss of resources and efficiency.

50. The wide variety of foreign evaluation requirements, concepts and procedures has been confusing and time-consuming for host government officials to sort out, and has hampered their evaluation participation and learning. Several governments also noted that foreign aid evaluation efforts have often been very much ad hoc and directed to individual projects. As one government official stated, "project success" has been a donor's concern, while "programme success" has been a national concern.

51. This narrow focus on "our project" by donors appears to have often been a particular stumbling block to assisting governments in evaluation. Not only has donor attention been concentrated on executing "its" project, which may be only a small part of a large national programme, but it has too often concentrated on the adequacy of the specific project's implementation without considering how to help strengthen the management capabilities of the unit or ministry or government concerned.

52. Assistance to governments has also been blocked by procedural inertia and entrenched attitudes. Project management has put much emphasis on approval of elaborate project documents, "delivery" of easily-identified inputs and ensuing implementation problems. Old project procedures have proven hard to change, compliance with changing policies has been haphazardly ensured, and rewards and penalties for overall project management performance have often been lacking. Not least, the project focus has often been governed by the belief that government management capabilities are inadequate and would result in slow and ineffective project implementation, which leads to implementation by international staff without building any of the intended national management capacity, and thus perpetuates dependence.

53. Foreign monitoring and evaluation requirements can also impose a heavy operational workload. A large and complex project might involve ambitious data-gathering and analysis which would consume considerable local resources, only to provide a large volume of information that would prove neither timely nor useful, greatly exceed the capacity of the local management system to absorb it, and bog down national project management staff in extra duties as well. Such large projects might call for as many as 100 local monitoring and evaluation staff. While this number might seem modest to the foreign-aid organizations assisting the project, it could represent a considerable diversion of scarce skilled development managers and staff away from other equally urgent national needs.

54. In addition, evaluation approaches have often been presented to governments as a rigid, "one best way" approach without attempts to adapt them to local administrative systems, values, traditions, and development approaches. Several governments observed that evaluation had been presented to them (and had subsequently foundered) as a management technology "exercise" which could stand on its own, without emphasizing the need to integrate it into the other basic managerial processes of national development, particularly project and programme design and monitoring, reporting and follow-up systems.

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55. A fundamental attitude underlying these "donor-centred" practices has been the concern with evaluation integrity. Donor institutions have tended to believe that if they perform the evaluation it will be an "honest" assessment, whereas if a recipient government conducts the evaluation it risks being a "whitewash" designed to impress superior officials and donors and avoid recognition of government shortcomings. This type of politicized evaluation was felt to be more pronounced where major programmes and policies were involved, or when a new political party or administration had to make judgements on its predecessor's programmes.

56. However, some governments observed for their part that the basic merits of evaluation and review work were weakened at times by the way in which some foreign aid representatives carried them out. Examples were cited of missions whose members displayed little knowledge of the project or programme which they came to assess, and of project experts with little familiarity with the evaluation methodology they were required to apply. Reviews which were only self-serving or which ignored progress towards objectives to focus on implementation problems were noted, as well as assessments or evaluations which served only to continue a project or begin a new phase, even where the assessment clearly indicated that the project should be discontinued.

57. All these problems have been exacerbated by a basic lack of co-ordination of review and evaluation activities among foreign aid organizations and with governments (as discussed further in the following chapters). For instance, one recent case was noted of a large social development project in which a bilateral and a multilateral donor were each pursuing independent annual evaluations, despite the fact that the national project authority had its own large evaluation staff.

#### V. FUTURE PROSPECTS

58. The main constraints on evaluation by governments in the past - limited use, limited interest and orientation to donor needs - seem less forceful today. Present conditions appear more favourable for significant progress within and among governments and through substantive support from bilateral and multilateral institutions.

##### A. Use

59. Although the evaluation idea has been around for several decades, it never achieved sufficient recognition among governments and institutions to reach a "critical mass" and become a significant and growing operational activity. This situation is now changing.

60. Many governments are establishing or expanding evaluation institutions and gaining specific evaluation experience in diverse fields (as illustrated in the surveys of evaluation experience by FAO, UNESCO and the World Bank and as indicated by the initial Directory of Central Evaluation Authorities compiled by the United States Government, all listed in the bibliography of this Report). Evaluation activities in the United Nations system have expanded greatly, as indicated by the extensive changes which occurred between the 1977 and 1981 JIU reports on this subject. In addition, Member States of the United Nations system organizations, in their policy statements of the past few years, have increasingly and collectively stressed the need for such evaluation progress (as discussed in Chapter III). These developments, while still modest and tentative, suggest that evaluation is really a relatively "new" growth field which is only beginning to come into its own.

61. The present approach to evaluation is more pragmatic than in the past. Evaluation must always strive to be as objective, rigorous and systematic as possible, and it will always be a challenge. However, many of the experiences and experiments described in the bibliography reflect the desire to develop practical methods and techniques which are simple, operational and responsive to diverse development situations, while still maintaining basic quality. The focus is not on elaborate and sophisticated means of evaluation per se, but on answering,

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as effectively as possible under the circumstances, the essential evaluation questions: What objectives were sought? How were they to be achieved and measured? What results have been or are being achieved and why? What decisions about current and future objectives, resources, policies and operations should therefore be made?

B. Understanding

62. As a result of this recent expansion of experience and change in approach and perceptions, national officials are becoming more familiar and comfortable with evaluation and knowledgeable about what it can - and cannot - do for them. First and foremost, of course, national and international development resources have become increasingly tight while needs remain urgent. Governments are therefore more concerned with the quality and results of their programmes, and they expect development activities to bring meaningful specific benefits and avoid waste.

63. In this context, it is newly recognized that evaluation can be a very useful tool for project and programme managers and results, rather than a hindrance or a threat. It can be more than merely "an" integral part of the management cycle: because of its basic concerns, it can help shift management preoccupations away from the narrow concern with inputs and process to a wider focus on objectives, results obtained and improvements in project and programme quality. By helping to improve projects and to re-orient those that go astray, evaluation "pays off": it can yield direct benefits and cost savings far greater than the resources invested in it.

64. A strong theme in the responses which the Inspectors received from governments was that evaluation can help them achieve better management co-ordination and control of their development programmes. They noted that the increasing fragmentation and crowding of development co-operation, and the many pressing needs, makes it much more important to interrelate development activities, eliminate duplication and overlapping, set priorities among the many competing activities (and foreign donor projects) involved, and to assess the value and progress of programmes on a steady and orderly basis. They felt that evaluation at all levels could make a significant contribution to these efforts.

65. The increasing knowledge about evaluation includes recognition that it should be considered as a normal management process. In many countries, there is greater interest in "built-in" evaluation to provide quick feedback to managers for timely adjustments to activities underway. This translates in turn into monitoring (continuing oversight of the progress of implementation) joined with on-going evaluation, or to emphasis on better design and establishment of monitoring procedures along with the development of evaluation. "Ex post" evaluation, while considered important in some countries, is viewed in many others as less useful because of the often more elaborate scope (and cost) involved, the time-lag between the end of the activity and the evaluation, and the difficulties of feeding the results of these evaluations back into operations in a meaningful way.

66. There also appears to be a greater understanding that evaluation is a stimulus and complement to other administrative processes. In the past it has sometimes been argued that evaluation could not take place if effective project design, data-gathering and monitoring processes were not already in place. While these elements greatly facilitate evaluation, however, they are not absolute pre-conditions for it: in fact, evaluation can identify weaknesses in and help develop these other processes. In addition, some governments have felt that where audit functions exist, evaluation may be superfluous. Increasingly, however, governments are recognizing the distinct but complementary functions of these two activities. Both have great value at most operational levels, and they should be developed and managed in a co-ordinated fashion to bring about greater total effectiveness of public service operations.

67. The above patterns suggest that a certain "sorting out" of appropriate evaluation activities may be emerging. Various governmental, multi-lateral and

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bilateral sources which the Inspectors consulted during this study, and which have followed evaluation for a longer time, agree that there is a new trend towards more pragmatic evaluation understanding and use.

68. Despite these favourable trends, however, the operational constraints on governments noted in Chapter IV.B. remain. There is a serious lack of skilled people available for evaluation work, and increased practical training is very much needed. Tight development resources have highlighted the greater need for evaluation to improve programme quality, but they have also hampered the allocation of the specific resources required to activate evaluation units and processes. There is as yet little exchange of information on innovative approaches and experience which could be adapted to the needs of countries interested in developing their own evaluation activities. Active support from other countries and from bilateral and multilateral institutions is very much needed to help overcome these constraints.

### C. Co-operation

69. It is also gradually being recognized that development activities must help to build self-reliant institutions and responsive problem-solving capacities in national governments, with greater participation, appropriate technologies, and activities adapted to a country's particular situation and needs. These policies focus much more attention on co-operative actions to improve government development management and evaluation capabilities.

70. As indicated by the surveys in the bibliography and the responses which the Inspectors received from government officials and UNDP Resident Representatives, governments are slowly beginning to share monitoring and evaluation experience and to seek out useful evaluation approaches and new sources of knowledge. Bilateral and multilateral organizations, for their part, are coming to recognize that support for this information exchange process and the development of evaluation by governments will strengthen their own technical co-operation activities.

71. Although activity is still very exploratory, specific efforts to help develop evaluation by governments have also increased quite rapidly in the past few years. The summary and initial analysis of activities in support of governments in the following two Chapters shows this: very few of these activities were in existence as recently as five years ago. Similarly, the accompanying bibliography shows a considerable variety of recent United Nations system and other material relating directly to evaluation by governments: while some such documents were published in earlier years, their number was very small compared to what is currently available.

72. The underlying issues of appropriate evaluation procedures, integrity of evaluation, and co-ordination of evaluation efforts still exist. However, the current shift away from "donor-centred" evaluation to a more co-operative approach can mitigate these problems considerably. A healthy search and dialogue process is at least beginning to address these issues in a more specific and action-oriented way.

## VI. CURRENT UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM ACTIVITIES

73. As can be expected in a relatively new development field, present United Nations system co-operation in developing evaluation by governments varies widely from organization to organization. The lead has been taken by the larger specialized agencies and the World Bank, but several other organizations have also used interesting approaches. Still other organizations have not been active as yet, although many of them expressed interest in the concept. Some are still developing their own internal evaluation systems, and others are largely dependent on UNDP, which finances most or all of their technical co-operation activities.

74. Brief mention is made below of certain other multilateral organizations, but the descriptions are essentially confined to the United Nations system because this information was available to the Inspectors while the status of other world-wide activities is still largely undiscovered. It appears that some significant

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initiatives in various fields and various countries have been taken by national governments and by national, bilateral, non-governmental and other multilateral institutions, but a more comprehensive status report must await further efforts to improve information exchanges.

75. The following brief summaries of activities are presented in alphabetical order for ease of reference, except for UNDP and the United Nations proper, which are presented in slightly more detail at the end, to outline the particularly important roles which both could play in this field.

#### Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)

76. In recent years the number of FAO technical co-operation projects specifically related to monitoring and evaluation has been increasing. FAO encourages governments to establish or strengthen evaluation units in the agricultural and rural sectors, has conducted Regular Programme training courses and workshops in support of evaluation by governments, has increased the use of national institutions in its evaluation activities, and has issued a variety of guidelines and training material related entirely or partly to evaluation. More broadly, the 1979 World Conference on Agrarian Reform and Rural Development (WCARRD) attached considerable importance to monitoring and evaluation of rural development activities. As a priority part of the WCARRD follow-up programme, FAO has begun an ambitious programme to strengthen developing country capabilities in this field, including preparation of guidelines for national-level monitoring and evaluation, pilot studies in 17 countries to test indicators, a number of projects to assist Member Governments in the monitoring and evaluation of specific sub-sectors (such as nutrition, small-scale fisheries and rural forestry), training activities for national staff through regional centres, and, with other agencies, regional workshops on rural development monitoring and evaluation.

#### International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD)

77. IFAD development projects, directed to small farmers and the rural poor, are all required to have an explicit monitoring and on-going evaluation component, with responsibility assigned to teams from local and national institutions wherever possible. Ex post evaluation is also usually expected to be carried out by independent agencies based in recipient countries to assess overall results after project completion. IFAD technical assistance emphasizes assistance for project preparation, institutional development, and training and research, including establishment of monitoring and evaluation systems. As of June 1982, 51 projects in 38 countries have received assistance in designing appropriate monitoring and evaluation systems for IFAD-financed projects.

#### International Labour Organisation (ILO)

78. ILO's procedures for project design and evaluation have been widely distributed in a simple, generalized format and multiple-language versions, to encourage their wide applicability. They place these responsibilities on project managers (supplemented by other, "in-depth" evaluations), whether they be national or international staff. They also emphasize additional evaluation participation by recipient country government organizations, and by local employer and worker associations, national technical experts, and target group representatives if possible. Over the past two years, the ILO Evaluation Unit has conducted an extensive training programme in support of this new system, including participation of national officials in field seminars and specific seminars for national officials in a few countries. ILO's Management Development Branch has developed and begun to apply a multi-lingual training package for national officials in project design, implementation and evaluation. ILO is also planning several projects to strengthen monitoring and evaluation of basic needs satisfaction.

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International Trade Centre UNCTAD-GATT (ITC)

79. ITC invites governments to participate as full members in all evaluations of national trade promotion projects, and about 58 per cent choose to do so. In addition, its Joint Advisory Group recommended in March 1982 that ITC should give priority to the initiation of training programmes for developing country personnel in evaluating the efficiency of their own trade promotion activities.

United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (HABITAT)

80. Through its Project Management System, UNCHS emphasizes active participation of governments in all phases of the project cycle, including close co-operation in formulating individual "built-in" project evaluation designs in a co-operative training and "learning-by-doing" process. This approach has been applied with some success in a few countries and is being considered for use in others. UNCHS has also helped conduct a series of monitoring and evaluation training courses with the World Bank.

United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)

81. Under its Basic Services strategy and with a "country programming" approach, UNICEF supports government ministries and other organizations at national, sub-national and local levels in providing low-cost community-based services to meet children's needs. Recently it has emphasized monitoring and evaluation activities as an integral part of this co-operation. During 1981, it assisted over 385 evaluation activities, which generally sought to improve programme formulation through more field research, surveys, and baseline information collection, but also included retrospective evaluations to improve future programme performance. UNICEF is helping to strengthen government monitoring and evaluation capabilities through training, including workshops, sponsoring government officials for special courses, and support for government training institutions. In addition, UNICEF supported consultants are advising several governments in upgrading project planning and management systems, including information systems and monitoring procedures, and it has also helped to strengthen existing monitoring units.

United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)

82. The various sectors of UNESCO have been involved in evaluation activities and publications for many years, but there has been a considerable recent increase. The science sector has given more attention to evaluation of research and development, whether UNESCO-assisted or not, at the research unit, national and international levels, using projects, missions, training seminars and technical workshops. The education sector has developed and applied guidelines, training and missions to promote management-oriented, "demystified" programme evaluation in member States. The International Institute for Educational Planning has produced many documents and studies on educational evaluation and conducted considerable training. The General Information Programme has developed a series of guidelines and has conducted workshops on evaluation in the information field. The social science sector had a theme in the 1977-82 UNESCO medium-term plan (3.4/03) on evaluation techniques and training. Its Division for Socio-Economic Analysis has a series of current publications, symposia, workshops, seminars and projects which emphasize information exchange on the "state of the art" at the international level; ways to improve local evaluation practice, methodology and training at the regional level; and training in appropriate evaluation methodology for social programmes and projects at the national level.

United Nations Fund for Population Activities (UNFPA)

83. UNFPA has recently approved a number of new projects designed to assist in establishing, refining or strengthening the evaluation and managerial capabilities of national programmes, and other such projects are presently under consideration.

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Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)

84. Host governments responsible for project implementation play a key role in the UNHCR self-evaluation system, and UNHCR has also begun to involve government representatives in its more rigorous evaluation exercises. A joint evaluation of a refugee rural settlement programme was recently undertaken, and the number of such joint evaluations is expected to increase in the future.

United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO)

85. UNIDO has recently installed an internal evaluation system which provides for total coverage of all field projects and government participation as a sine qua non. An evaluation handbook in multiple language versions has been widely distributed. For the self-evaluation component, the primary responsibility is placed on the Chief Technical Adviser (project manager), whether internationally or locally recruited. For in-depth evaluations, the government is an equal sponsor, participant and end-user of the exercise.

Universal Postal Union (UPU)

86. Since 1972 UPU has regularly requested national postal administrations to assess the technical co-operation provided them, and the Executive Council of UPU annually considers an analysis of these assessments. In addition, to promote self-reliance, UPU has given the principal role for regional projects to the countries concerned. It conducted co-ordination and evaluation meetings on inter-country projects in two regions during 1980, and hopes to continue and expand such meetings in the future.

World Bank

87. Promoting evaluation by Member Governments is a stated policy of the World Bank. This approach is viewed as strengthening self-reliance and national development management and as placing responsibility for evaluation close to operations. The Bank now regularly includes a "built-in" evaluation monitoring and evaluation capacity in its projects, particularly in the social sectors. While assessment reports by the borrowers after project completion are not yet common, it is hoped that in the future Bank project performance audit reports will be based more on documented assessments of results by borrowers than by Bank staff. The Bank's Operations Evaluation Department has conducted three regional seminars on operations evaluation in national economic management, and invites Member Government officials to visit to observe its evaluation activities. Its Economic Development Institute includes post-evaluation as a management course topic and recently held its first seminar on monitoring and evaluation at the national level. Its Agriculture and Rural Development Department has organized regional workshops on monitoring and evaluation experience in different countries. The annual report to the Bank's Executive Directors on evaluation activities also includes a progress report on the way in which governments are becoming more involved in Bank evaluation activities and are developing their own evaluation functions.

World Health Organization (WHO)

88. WHO has the most comprehensive programme of support to strengthen management capabilities, including evaluation, in Member States. The World Health Assembly in 1981 approved a Global Strategy for Health for All by the year 2000, and in 1982 approved a plan of action for its implementation, monitoring and evaluation by Member States at the national, regional and global levels. The WHO Secretariat will support and follow-up this process. The 1982-83 programme budget contained a section on the Managerial Process for National Health Development, which includes a systematic, continuing country health planning and programming process and a particular emphasis on the introduction or strengthening of national health programme evaluation. WHO has developed guiding principles and training courses and materials for these activities, as well as indicators for monitoring progress. Further action is now being taken to improve and field-test the evaluation guidelines, and WHO estimates that the Managerial Process, suitably adapted to local

conditions, has begun to be applied in about 40 countries. A unified management process including evaluation is also being emphasized in actions at the regional and global levels, both to co-ordinate implementation of the Strategy and to create an overall atmosphere in which evaluation becomes a useful and accepted tool.

#### World Meteorological Organization (WMO)

89. Each year WMO sends a questionnaire to governments requesting their evaluation of technical co-operation activities, particularly training. The information forms the basis for the annual analysis of technical co-operation for the WMO Executive Committee, for monitoring current activities, and for formulation of new programmes. In 1981 WMO had a 72 per cent response to this questionnaire from the 106 countries that received it.

#### United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)

90. UNDP is the world's largest channel for multilateral technical co-operation, having approved funding for some 15,000 projects during the 1972-1981 period at a cost of \$US 4.7 billion. Almost all these projects are "executed" by 27 United Nations system agencies and associated institutions, and supported by 114 field offices serving 152 different country and inter-country programmes around the world. In addition to providing funding for many of the activities of the specialized agencies outlined above, UNDP has an important further role to play in at least three areas.

91. First, UNDP's monitoring and evaluation system is very significant. As the major financing agency, UNDP's activities set modalities for other United Nations system agencies and are looked to, especially by smaller agencies, to provide the lead in determining the nature, priority and extent of evaluation efforts. Its tripartite reviews, in which government, agency and UNDP officials meet periodically to assess project progress, have particularly high potential for developing the monitoring and evaluation skills of the many participants.

92. Second, UNDP provides funding for evaluation work, primarily through a nominal line item for project evaluation costs which is included in the project budget. It suggested in 1981 that, as an alternative, .5 per cent of the Indicative Planning Figure (IPF) for each country could be set aside, with government concurrence, to finance additional project evaluations and consultant monitoring and review services. The Governing Council has also requested UNDP (decisions 81/21 and 82/8) to review and analyze the emerging experience of government execution, possible additions to IPFs to help meet training, administrative cost, staffing, services and other support needs, and alternative methods of encouraging and assisting government execution.

93. Third, the UNDP worldwide network of field offices could be a significant evaluation resource. A number of government officials cited to the Inspectors the usefulness of Resident Representatives as contact points with government institutions for evaluation activities, and various formal and informal steps that UNDP field staff could take to encourage and support their evaluation efforts. Several Resident Representatives who were contacted also acknowledged their limited past awareness in this area and their intent to establish working contacts with government evaluation units.

94. UNDP thus has a strong potential leadership and co-ordinating role among agencies and governments seeking to strengthen overall development management and evaluation capabilities. It will report to the Governing Council in 1983 on actions to improve the UNDP monitoring and evaluation system, and this report and a parallel JIU report will both include discussions of steps that UNDP could take to better realize this potential role.

#### United Nations

95. United Nations officials informed the Inspectors that they have done little in terms of any specific activities to support evaluation by governments. The Inspectors believe, however, that the United Nations, with its many relevant functions and responsibilities, can and should help fill critical gaps in this area.

96. The Director-General for Development and International Economic Co-operation has important responsibilities for guiding the operational activities for development of the United Nations system and, as a link between governments, intergovernmental bodies and components of the system, for identifying and implementing important development and policy issues. In his 1982 report on operational activities (see Chapter III), he emphasized the need to strengthen evaluation through its greater application as an integral part of overall planning, programming and budgeting processes, and through co-operative endeavours with and support to recipient governments' own evaluation activities.
97. Several other United Nations entities have also contributed to the monitoring and evaluation field, including the United Nations Research Institute for Social Development (UNRISD), United Nations University (UNU) and the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR). In addition, regional development planning, research and administrative training institutes in Africa, Asia, the Caribbean, Latin America and the Middle East, associated with the United Nations in various ways, could be enlisted as part of a network to encourage and strengthen evaluation by governments through their field services, training and information exchange activities.
98. The bulk of the unrealized potential lies with two United Nations Headquarters departments and its regional commissions. The Department of International Economic and Social Affairs (DIESA) conducts research on policy alternatives, integrated analysis, interdependence and changing concerns of governments. Under the major programme of Development Issues and Policies, it helps to identify emerging development issues and innovative policies, and to monitor and analyze development trends and inter-relationships. While DIESA's predecessor produced a source book on systematic monitoring and evaluation in 1978 (see bibliography) with more work intended to follow, its planned research work for the 1982-1989 period includes only one evaluation report, scheduled for 1983-1984, on methodology and procedures used in the formulation, implementation and evaluation of policies and programmes based on an integrated approach. However, DIESA is also currently developing an internal evaluation system for the economic and social sectors of the United Nations, which is expected to include an emphasis on the role of governments.
99. The Department of Technical Co-operation for Development (DTCD) provides substantive and management support for United Nations technical co-operation activities, including provision of "technical expertise in the formulation, implementation and evaluation of country and inter-country programmes and of specific projects", direct advisory assistance to governments, and training materials for support of training institutions. Its major fields of activity include economic and social development planning and development administration and finance. It also seeks to provide research and analytical information on technical co-operation trends and issues, and to promote new forms of technical co-operation such as the implementation of the new dimensions.
100. Although these objectives have strong potential relevance to governments' evaluation activities, the 1982-1983 programme budget and 1984-1989 proposed medium-term plan indicate little specific evaluation support activity. Under the Development Issues and Policy programme, DTCD will include general work on development plan implementation and review, technical co-operation planning and country programming, but the only specific evaluation work will be on monitoring and evaluation for integrated rural development (an area where FAO, IFAD, the World Bank and other agencies are already very active, as discussed in Chapter VII). The Public Administration and Finance programme of DTCD mentions only a pilot project on "performance evaluation" in public enterprises, and several publications on strengthening development management to be produced during the late 1980s.
101. The regional commissions have been given substantial new operational, review, monitoring and leadership responsibilities under the restructuring resolutions, the new International Development Strategy, and the Substantial New Programme of Action for the least-developed countries, and they are well-placed to help

encourage and support governments' monitoring and evaluation efforts in their regions. The commissions' plans in the Development Issues and Policies and Public Administration and Finance programmes, and through their regional and sub-regional development advisory services, include more emphasis on implementation and development administration efforts during the 1982-1989 period. However, they are still predominantly concerned with development planning and special projects, with little mention of any evaluation component. The commissions are also just beginning their own internal evaluation activities.

102. In addition to the present lack of an internal evaluation system in the United Nations Secretariat, two particular elements of the above programme hamper greater support to evaluation by governments. First, while some observers have stressed the value of using public administration improvement efforts to make evaluation a normal and effective part of development management, public administration has only weak status relative to other sectors of United Nations system development activity.

103. Recent General Assembly resolutions and Secretary-General reports have repeatedly emphasized the need to strengthen managerial capabilities and effectiveness of the public sector. In addition, a 1982 Secretary-General's report analyzing public administration and finance activities of the United Nations system (E/AC.51/1982/4) cited the "clearly articulated need" for administrative mechanisms to, among other things, better institutionalize the systematic evaluation of the results and impact of government activities. However, the Public Administration and Finance programme for the 1980s remains among the smallest of the United Nations programmes, and presently offers little direct support to the current efforts of other agencies to assist government evaluation, or to the evaluation efforts of governments themselves.

104. Second, while the concept of an integrated development management cycle is widely recognized, and many studies have emphasized the need to close the "implementation gap" and develop more pragmatic planning processes, the volume of United Nations activity in the planning phase per se still greatly overshadows implementation concerns, and particularly development of the evaluation process. Development planning is undeniably important in overall development administration. The evaluation phase is also very much needed, however, to feed back lessons learned and improve future planning and operations, and to put into practice the new dimensions emphasis on output and results rather than inputs.

105. DTCD officials stated their full support for the main themes of this report. They stressed their belief, however, that development planning is an ongoing process which already includes evaluation throughout the exercise, that governments have not chosen to devote scarce technical co-operation resources to developing specialized evaluation capabilities, and that establishing specialized evaluation units would not guarantee effective or even serious attempts at evaluation. They also cited various general DTCD development planning, development administration, public auditing and public administrative activities as including aspects of implementation and evaluation.

106. The Inspectors agree that evaluation must be an integral part of development planning and administration, but do not believe that it should be an almost invisible or largely theoretical one. They concur instead with the conclusion of the 1982 Director-General's report that greater application of evaluation is needed (see paragraph 29) and those under the Substantial New Programme of Action for the least-developed countries urging increased expert services and in-service training in evaluation and the establishment and strengthening of ministry and other evaluation units (paragraphs 27-28).

107. These recent policy emphases, the evidence of expanding government evaluation activity worldwide (Chapters V and VII), and the specific activities of other United Nations system entities (this Chapter) highlight current evaluation interest and actions. The Inspectors believe that, however modestly, room must be found (somewhere within the 270-some professional staff assigned to the Development

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Issues and Policies programme, or within the 90 economic development planning and 86 development administration projects which DTCD carried on in 1981, or among the many other entities and resources discussed above) for the United Nations to participate more actively and specifically in this important development co-operation field.

#### Non-United Nations system activities

108. Data on other evaluation activities is at present very incomplete. The 1981 Directory of Central Evaluation Authorities (see bibliography, United States), currently being expanded and updated by UNDP, provides the only approximate summary of (central) activities by governments. The African Development Bank, Asian Development Bank and Inter-American Development Bank have each been expanding their evaluation activities in recent years, including varying interactions and contacts with government units. The Development Assistance Committee of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) established a group of evaluation correspondents in 1980 - primarily heads of evaluation units in Member countries' aid agencies. This group has been collectively reviewing past evaluation work and has already expressed interest in comparing notes on measures to support evaluation by governments. The Commission of the European Communities has collaborated in evaluation activities with officials of African, Caribbean and Pacific countries (ACP States) under the Lomé convention.

### VII. TYPES OF ACTIVITIES

109. The current United Nations system activities in support of governments' evaluation efforts provide some clarification of what each is doing, but hardly indicate patterns that are emerging or what governments themselves, and non-governmental, bilateral and other multilateral organizations, are doing. From the initial data which they gathered, the Inspectors offer the following very tentative impressions of types of co-operative evaluation efforts, primarily but not exclusively focused on United Nations system activities.

#### Individual projects

110. The most common means of assisting governments is the narrowest - evaluation of specific projects. Although the many different approaches used still create difficulties, some new patterns appear to be emerging. Interest is shifting from casual project reviews towards more concern with results, from traditional visiting evaluation missions to ongoing monitoring and evaluation built-in to projects, from simple delivery of inputs to stronger design, and from mere project completion (or extension) to greater emphasis on strengthening local project management capacities. Each of these suggests greater concern with co-operation, but practice has not yet caught up with policy. In addition, the evaluation of scattered individual projects can go only a part of the way towards any significant strengthening of national management capacities.

#### Ministries and sectors

111. Some evaluation activities have long taken place in the various development ministries and sectors which United Nations system specialized agencies serve, but significant new actions are now being taken in such areas as health, agriculture, education, science, children's programmes, urban development and human settlements, labour and training, trade promotion, and postal and meteorological services. One trend, particularly in WHO, is a broadening of focus away from individual projects to programmes, with attempts to determine how agency actions can best fit into and support the much larger sectoral programmes of the particular country. A second is a shift away from creating new institutions and towards a strengthening of existing institutions and management and implementation capacity. These two trends are leading in turn to more comprehensive management training programmes including evaluation, and to concentration on job-related training and workshops. They also lead to greater concern with decentralized and field operations rather than the traditional focus on central sectoral ministry functions.

### Integrated rural development

112. This is presently the most dynamic (and crowded) area for assisting evaluation by governments, as well as a high-priority area for technical co-operation in general. FAO, IFAD and the World Bank are all active in a large number of countries to establish or strengthen monitoring and evaluation units, and many other United Nations system agencies (and others) are involved as well. The ACC Task Force on Rural Development and the inter-agency follow-up activities of the WCARRD conference are recognitions of the need and potential for co-ordinated activity in this challenging area. However, the experience cited in Chapter IV.C indicates the care needed to ensure that the various systems do not overlap or compete with government systems in countries, and that extensive monitoring and evaluation resources are not crowded into rural development activities to the detriment of evaluation opportunities in other sectors. At the request of the ACC Task Force, FAO is preparing guidelines which are intended to provide a common framework for improved co-operation among developing countries, agencies and donors in the monitoring and evaluation of rural development projects and programmes. These guidelines will take into account the methodology and experience of agencies and donors.

### National (central) evaluation units

113. It has been estimated that there are now about 25 central monitoring and evaluation units in various countries, often located in central planning units, finance ministries, or under the head of government. Such units appear to be an innovative phenomenon, found more in developing than in developed countries. An over-emphasis on central evaluation units can inhibit the development and use of evaluation at other levels, but they can also be very useful focal points to aid overall development co-ordination, improve national development management, and serve in a leadership, support and particularly a training role for other evaluation activities. Considerable interest was expressed to the Inspectors by some governments and organizations in the untapped potentials for technical co-operation in this area. Some assistance to these units has been provided by the World Bank, bilateral donors, and some of the regional development banks, but the United Nations system has been little involved.

### National institutions

114. Another area with much untapped potential is the use of national institutions, including local universities, in the organizations' evaluation work on a collaborative or contracting basis. FAO has done this in several evaluation studies with UNDP, IFAD seeks them out for its projects where possible, and they have been included to some extent in the information and experience exchanges discussed below. The evaluation qualifications and capacities appear to vary considerably (as for any other type of evaluation), but it does seem that only a few of the many such institutions have yet been "discovered" by the United Nations system and other organizations, let alone utilized to the extent possible. The use of national institutions is not only a direct application of technical co-operation among developing countries (TCDC), but a good potential source of scarce evaluation talent and another stimulus to evaluation by governments.

### Information and experience exchange

115. Activity in this area has also been modest, with some regional and global efforts by UNESCO and in the rural development field by FAO and the World Bank. Government officials indicated a special interest in such exchanges, particularly among government units that have made some evaluation progress and encountered successes or difficulties that they wish to compare with others. The desire for such activities includes an emphasis on pragmatic workshops and symposia rather than on formalized training or academic discussion, particularly at sub-regional and regional levels. Another useful information activity concerns guidelines, reports, and training aids for various types of evaluation efforts. The volume of this material produced by the international organizations has increased substantially in the past few years, as evidenced by the bibliographical material in the Annex to this report, but government evaluation procedures and products have as yet received very little international exposure.

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Participation in organizational evaluation

116. Finally, evaluation is strengthened when governing and intergovernmental bodies of United Nations system organizations actively use it. This is a less clear-cut but not insignificant way of encouraging evaluation interest and capabilities in governments. As discussed in the two 1981 JIU reports on this subject (A/36/181 and 182), most United Nations system organizations have made considerable progress in the past few years in developing or strengthening their own internal evaluation systems, and are now considering how best to facilitate reporting to governing bodies and governing body involvement in assessing the work of the organizations. WHO encourages Member State participation at all levels under a basic global strategy. Specific evaluations and assessments are done for and by governing bodies in ILO, UNESCO, the United Nations (CPC) and ITC. UPU and WMO rely on governments for feedback and assessment of their technical co-operation activities. If done in a substantive and meaningful way, these internal evaluation system activities can be very important as positive examples of the use and value of evaluation.

By functional type

117. Assisting evaluation by governments can also be looked at from one more perspective: by the basic type of technical co-operation available.

(a) Institution-building In the light of past experience and newer concerns with self-reliance and overall development implementation problems, this appears to be the dominant evaluation assistance form. Rather than creating new institutions or bringing in experts with specific evaluation techniques, however, the emphasis seems increasingly on working with (not taking over) existing institutions to strengthen management development and capacity, using approaches suitable to the local situation.

(b) Training Evaluation training has been fairly limited thus far. It has more often been found as a component of a large sectoral institution-building project. Such "pure" training as has occurred appears to place much more emphasis on pragmatic association with actual implementation situations, on workshops, and on the inclusion of evaluation as only a part of broader development management training. There does not seem to be much demand for evaluation fellowships as yet, unless they could be placed in a pragmatic and probably TCDC information-exchange context. However, it does not appear that management training institutes around the world, whether they have a development planning or traditional public administration focus, have yet become much involved with specific, action-oriented evaluation training, even though it could and should be an important element in their training work. The Government of India, however, has an extensive training programme in evaluation, and this or similar national programmes might provide very useful training opportunities in a TCDC context.

(c) Special grant support Several governments and several aid officials suggested that, given the emphasis on country-specific evaluation development and the growing knowledge of governments about evaluation, direct financial support could be a significant option. Such actions could not only strengthen evaluation in a country through funding of an institution, but should eventually help to improve the quality of the overall national or sectoral development programmes which the organizations seek to support. UNDP is considering the possibilities of earmarking evaluation funding and additional and alternative methods of encouraging and assisting government execution of projects (see paragraph 92) which could help to identify a variety of new appropriate actions. Greater use of national institutions in evaluation work (see above) could also help nurture capabilities.

118. The above limited survey indicates that co-operation with and among governments in evaluation is still a modest and rather ambiguous effort. Many governments are now receiving technical co-operation in evaluation in one sector or another, in varying forms and from varying sources. However, a series of fragments does not make a coherent approach. Progress is being made, but the full

significance of co-operation and co-ordination with governments in evaluation and management development is yet to be realized.

#### VIII. FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE EVALUATION

119. Experience has begun to indicate which courses of action are likely to work and which will not in efforts to develop evaluation by governments. It is clear that there will never be a standard formula to apply or a "one best way" to go but certain factors undoubtedly influence success or failure. The list that follows of 17 points to look out for is not definitive nor in strict priority order. It does however provide a working set of factors which are regarded by some governments and organizations as important and which may stimulate the thinking of those now considering or undertaking evaluation.

##### Support

120. Evaluation cannot succeed without firm and continuing political commitment and support. There must be active demand for evaluation by top-level policy makers rather than merely at technical staff levels.

##### Adaptability

121. Evaluation should be flexible and creative rather than rigid and dogmatic, while still maintaining basic quality. It must fit into many diverse national and sub-national contexts, with attention to:

- (a) the broader cultural, socio-economic and development factors and values which exist;
- (b) the existing administrative system, structures and practices;
- (c) the human, institutional and financial resources available for evaluation.

##### Integrity

122. Evaluation must be as objective, honest and complete as possible. If it becomes a political or bureaucratic game, it rapidly loses both credibility and value.

##### Focus on action

123. Evaluation is wasted if its findings are not used. It must be a decision-oriented management tool, responsive to the information needs of those who have the authority and capacity to act upon it. Evaluation does not end with reporting: it should lead to action by decision-makers.

##### Attitudes

124. Evaluation should not be imposed: it is necessary first to build understanding of its value as a constructive learning process to improve results, and then to encourage all concerned to participate fully in it. If evaluation is misunderstood as a destructive process to allocate blame to governments and individuals, it will generate hostility and resistance. Rather than fear of evaluation, there should be demand for it.

##### Management process

125. Evaluation cannot stand alone. It is a normal and integral part of the overall management process. It must be linked to other basic elements of the management cycle, particularly project and programme design and the monitoring of implementation. It should be viewed as an essential element in the overall process of strengthening management.

##### "Built-in"

126. Evaluation should be built-in as an integral element from the start of the activity, not grafted on as an after-thought. Particularly in larger, more



complex activities, evaluation needs should be determined in the formulation stage, funds provided for it, appropriate staff assembled or identified and training undertaken at an early stage, so that evaluation action and follow-up can be undertaken on an orderly and agreed basis.

#### Institution-building

127. Evaluation efforts should not be ad hoc or sporadic, but viewed from a longer-term perspective of building and reinforcing management capabilities. The fact that co-operating organizations are accountable to their governing bodies should not obstruct recognition, encouragement and development of the essential national management responsibilities. Evaluation should be an important stimulus to the ultimate development objective of building a self-reliant, creative, problem-solving national capability.

#### Feedback

128. Evaluation information for projects and programmes must be rapid to allow appropriate adjustments to be made, and must also be timely to fit decision-making cycles and meet important decision-making deadlines. Feedback channels to project managers, programmers and planners should be as clear and direct as possible, and evaluation information should be presented in a simple, summary format which managers can digest.

#### Reporting

129. Evaluation is not just a matter of improving internal administrative effectiveness. It must also consider the essential political nature of development as a change process, often experimental and uncertain, which imposes stresses and strains on established ways of doing things. Cultural and political factors are therefore important in determining how to report evaluation information about projects and programmes to higher levels. As one example, some governments emphasize public reporting, while others want strict confidentiality.

#### Multiple elements and levels

130. The introduction of evaluation at all levels of a government simultaneously is hardly feasible. However, recognition of the various possible alternatives and levels should be kept firmly in mind:

- (a) project, programme, sector and national elements;
- (b) local, district, state, ministry and national levels;
- (c) decentralized activities vis à vis central units;
- (d) sub-regional, regional, global and foreign institutions and programmes;
- (e) use of other national institutions, such as universities and research and training institutes.

#### Co-ordination

131. To cope with the above diversity, evaluation plans and actions must consciously seek to avoid overlap and resource waste. Co-ordinative mechanisms and focal points must be clearly established within governments and among concerned units to find common ground, provide mutual support, and exchange experience. A perspective on the eventual development of evaluation as a national system must be maintained, and on the connections and strengthening that such a system implies.

#### Training

132. The human element is a key to success in evaluation. Skilled evaluation people are scarce. Training is needed to develop basic understanding for modest built-in self-evaluation at project and programme levels; for supervisors and managers of more ambitious, large-scale monitoring and evaluation efforts; for evaluation specialists for more specific, full-time work; and internationally for those responsible for developing and strengthening evaluation systems overall.

### Incentives

133. Evaluation should be supported by incentives and rewards. It should be established as a normal, continuing element of operations and included in basic managerial job descriptions, with recognition given to those who carry it out well and use it effectively to improve their activities. For staff who specialize in evaluation, governments need to recognize the skills developed by providing career prospects and professional satisfaction to diminish the current drain of skilled staff to the private sector.

### Methodology

134. Evaluation methodology should be realistic, practical and appropriate to the specific situation. The tendency to grandiose (and over-sophisticated) schemes should be avoided in favour of the simplest possible methods needed to maintain a basic level of quality and objectivity. It should be recognized that evaluation can never encompass all relevant objectives and indicators, that development activity is often complex and experimental and heavily influenced by external factors, and that scarce evaluation resources must be carefully planned for and applied. However, the evaluation label should not be applied to superficial and informal review activities.

### Data

135. Information requirements for evaluation should be carefully considered and adapted to the situation and the users, seeking the simplest possible system to collect minimum information to be effective. Available data should be used first, and overall data costs kept in proper proportion to the benefits the evaluation information will provide.

### Time

136. Developing and strengthening evaluation is a long-term gradual process, not a "quick fix". It involves basic changes in managerial attitudes and behaviour, from a focus on inputs to one on results. The effort requires an ability to:

- (a) recognize and act on opportunities for evaluation, no matter how modest, but not force it into inappropriate situations;
- (b) maintain a healthy tolerance for imperfection;
- (c) start modestly, develop and demonstrate evaluation value, and then gradually expand;
- (d) not lose sight of the link between good evaluation and constructive, action-oriented project and programme improvement.

## IX. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

"One of the generally amiable idiosyncracies of man is his ability to expend a great deal of effort without much inquiring as to the end result".

- J.K. Galbraith

### A. Conclusions

137. Evaluation has been slow to emerge as an integral element of development management. The past few years, however, have seen new international policy initiatives, accompanied by a growing interest and understanding of evaluation and increasing co-operative efforts to help develop evaluation by governments. These developments are a recognition of the value of evaluation in improving the quality and results of programmes and projects.

138. This report is only a starting point. Encouraging evaluation use as a normal development management function on a wide scale will be a long, gradual

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and challenging task. The Inspectors hope that this study will prove useful as an initial inventory of current actions, ideas, and materials on the subject, and that it can help stimulate further creative, co-operative efforts to develop national and joint activities, seek solutions to operational constraints, and evolve appropriate methods and approaches.

139. The recommendations which follow are directed to United Nations system organizations, and suggest actions they can take to facilitate co-operation in developing evaluation by governments. The Inspectors hope, however, that governments as well as bilateral, non-governmental and other international organizations will:

- (a) consider the relevance to their own situations of the material presented in this report;
- (b) encourage and support continuing efforts by the United Nations system; and
- (c) in particular, seek out and develop co-operative relationships, exchanges and activities in the evaluation area.

#### B. Recommendations

140. Secretariats The organizations of the United Nations system are only one element of the joint efforts needed to help develop evaluation by governments. The organizations must continue to develop and strengthen their own evaluation systems to maintain accountability and increase operational effectiveness: co-operative evaluation work with governments should be based on "do as we do", not "do as we say". They need also to further develop the specialized expertise, action approaches and research and analytical work which can contribute most effectively to meaningful co-operative action in this relatively new field. UNDP in particular has a strong potential leadership role in fostering and strengthening evaluation by governments. In so doing, the United Nations system organizations can significantly enhance their support for worldwide economic and social development in a way consistent with their legislative mandates.

#### RECOMMENDATION 1

Each organization, and particularly its evaluation unit or units, should consider the following set of actions on a continuing basis:

- (a) Assess its internal evaluation system policies, procedures and activities to ensure that while maintaining internal accountability they also facilitate and support, rather than hinder, governments' own evaluation and management improvement efforts. Organizations should also seek to maximize opportunities for substantive participation by the governments concerned (paragraphs 9-11, 42, 46-57, 116, 121, 130, 134).
- (b) Seek out opportunities and arrangements for co-operation and co-ordination in monitoring and evaluation activities with governments and other development organizations when formulating and implementing projects and programmes, including multidisciplinary and multi-sectoral work and government execution of projects (paragraphs 4, 8, 13, 24, 29-31, 45, 51-57, 69-72, 136).
- (c) Be alert to opportunities for specific technical co-operation projects, in support of evaluation as well as built-in evaluation of projects or programmes, special financial support and field-level activities which can encourage and strengthen monitoring and evaluation efforts by governments. Parallel to this, organizations should develop and maintain data on relevant evaluation needs, resources, skills and contacts (paragraphs 22, 25, 27-28, 40, 61, 76-89, 91-93, 110-113, 117, 138).
- (d) Seek out opportunities to identify, use and support national, sub-regional, and regional institutions in the organization's evaluation work (paragraphs 8, 20-21, 97, 114).

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(e) Help develop opportunities for sharing monitoring and evaluation experience and information among countries and development organizations through pragmatic, action-oriented workshops, seminars and reports (paragraphs 8, 13, 25, 59-61, 67-68, 70, 115).

(f) Identify co-operative possibilities for training in monitoring and evaluation, particularly in developing countries and as a part of broader development management training, and seek to utilize governments' own evaluation products as part of general training materials (paragraphs 43, 48, 52, 68, 117, 132).

(g) Ensure that monitoring and evaluation ideas and practices are an explicit, active and integral element in its overall development co-operation policies and guidance (paragraphs 2, 15, 27-31, 44, 51, 63-66, 102-106, 125-127).

141. Administrative Committee on Co-ordination (ACC) An underlying theme throughout this report has been the need to better co-ordinate the work in this challenging and increasingly crowded "new" field of development co-operation. Many of the past "interventions" in this field were ad hoc, rather than collaborative efforts to help develop longer-term capabilities, institutions, and innovative approaches to the benefit of all concerned. Many current agency activities seem more responsive to joint efforts than before, but their rapidly growing number further underlines the need to seek out co-ordination opportunities wherever possible (paragraphs 4, 8-13, 57, 64-67, 72-74, 94, 108, 112, 118, 131, 139).

142. The ACC has encouraged the idea of supporting evaluation capacities of governments in joint inter-agency comments on several past JIU reports on evaluation, and in such activities as its Task Force on Rural Development. In its annual overview report for 1981/1982 (E/1982/4), the ACC concluded that the ultimate purpose of intersecretariat co-ordination is to support Member States in their efforts to promote economic and social development. Its Consultative Committee on Substantive Questions (Operational Activities) is considering the priority issue of increasing support for multi-lateral co-operation activities. Both ACC and the Committee for Programme and Co-ordination have observed (A/37/38) that this exercise includes the topics of improved co-operation, more systematic evaluation procedures, and new forms of co-operation with bilateral and other aid institutions. The Inspectors believe the subject matter of this report fits well within these concerns.

## RECOMMENDATION 2

The Administrative Committee on Co-ordination should consider specific areas, roles, arrangements and mechanisms which could be developed to better encourage and co-ordinate joint United Nations system and other activities to help strengthen evaluation by governments.

143. Governing bodies As is true of ACC, resolutions of governing bodies of the United Nations system have given increasing general support for the concept of developing self-reliant management by governments. At present, however, co-operation with governments in developing evaluation capabilities is a largely under-emphasized topic. Specific policy statements by governing bodies on this issue could encourage the expansion of governmental evaluation activities and focus the organizations' activities more directly on the value of this area of development co-operation (paragraphs 14-31, 41, 60-62, 68-69, 120).

## RECOMMENDATION 3

The governing bodies of the organizations might consider issuing a statement of policy which would, in the context of their operational activities for development, stress the value of support to the efforts of governments to establish or improve evaluation. Such a statement of policy should also encourage the allocation of specific resources to this task. Governing bodies might also request, in future reports on their organization's general evaluation activities, a periodic discussion of actions being taken to encourage evaluation by governments.

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144. United Nations In addition to its consideration of the above recommendations, the Inspectors believe that the United Nations should undertake further actions. It has many relevant general programme activities, but as yet has developed few specific efforts to support evaluation by governments (paragraphs 95-107).

RECOMMENDATION 4

Under the leadership of the Director-General for Development and International Economic Co-operation, the United Nations should determine what actions it can take on a continuing basis to (a) develop the role of governments in the internal evaluation system now being designed for its economic and social sectors; (b) include support to evaluation by governments as a more specific part of its Development Issues and Policies and Public Administration and Finance programmes; and (c) enlist Headquarters departments, regional commissions, other entities, and regional institutes associated with the United Nations in a co-operative network to encourage and strengthen evaluation by governments.

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SELECTED, ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY OF RECENT DOCUMENTS  
RELATING TO EVALUATION BY GOVERNMENTS

This bibliography is a very preliminary and abbreviated one. It is composed of United Nations system documents published since 1978, plus a few recent publications of governments and other international organizations. It is thus only indicative of the kind of work being done on evaluation by governments, evaluation approaches and methodologies for use by governments, and co-operative activities with governments. The Inspectors hope that more comprehensive knowledge and information exchange of the growing literature in this field will evolve in the future. The citations below include the languages in which the documents have been published: (A.) Arabic, (C.) Chinese, (E.) English, (F.) French, (R.) Russian, and (S.) Spanish.

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Canada

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Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)

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