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DEVELOPMENT	DEVELOPMENT

COMPREHENSIVE POLICY REVIEW OF OPERATIONAL ACTIVITIES
OF THE UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM

Note b· the Secretary-General

Addendum

1.   In paragraph 5 of its resolution 43/199 of 20 December 1988, the General
Assembly requested the Director-General for Development and International Economic
Co-operation to set out the interrelationship among problems and factors in
operational activities for the triennial policy review.

2.   In paragraph 4 of his initial report (A/44/324-E/1989/106, annex) the
Director-General advised that to achieve this and to ensure that both the views of
developing countries and an adequate reflection of the complexity and diversity of
their situations be made available for the policy review, a series of integrated
country reviews would be undertaken in July 1989. The outcome of those reviews,
together with further policy options and specific recommendations, would be
presented by him to the General Assembly at its forty-fourth session.

3.   The Director-General submits to the General Assembly in the annex to the
present note the consolidated findings of seven country reviews undertaken in July
and August 1989. The report has been prepared on behalf of, and in close
consultation with, the members of the various teams by a senior consultant engaged
by the Director-General to assist him in this exercise, Mr. Erskine Childers. The
Director-General is submitting (A/44/324/Add.3-E/1989/106/Add.3, annex) his own
recommendations to the General Assembly on the range of issues covered in his
report for the triennial policy review.

4.   The integrated country reviews have been carried out with the much appreciated
co-operation of Governments and staff of the United Nations development system

drawing on extrabudgetary contributions made available by several States. The reviews were carried out over periods of approximately two weeks each by teams of two persons, led by senior independent consultants supported by staff members from various United Nations organizations and departments. The countries, whose assent and co-operation was requested for these exercises, were selected to reflect the broad spectrum of the size, current conditions and capacities of developing countries, and bearing in mind such other factors as earlier or concurrent studies.

5.   Reviews were carried out in July and early August in:

Colombia	Mr. Peider Koenz (Switzerland)
	Mr. Roberto McEachen (United Nations Development Programme)
Egypt	The Honourable Donald O. Mills (Jamaica)
	Ms. Rubina Khan (United Nations Office of the Director-General for Development and International Economic Co-operation)
Ethiopia	The Honourable Donald O. Mills (Jamaica)
	Ms. Rubina Khan (Office of the Director-General for Development and International Economic Co-operation)
India	Mr. Erskine Childers (Ireland)
	Mr. Sekou Soumahoro (United Nations Department of Technical Co-operation for Development)
Jamaica	Mr. Erskine Childers (Ireland)
	Mr. Baquer Namazi (United Nations Children's Fund)
Niger	Mr. Rabah Hadid (Algeria)
	Mr. Michel Amiot (United Nations Population Fund)
Uganda	Mr. Rabah Hadid (Algeria)
	Mr. Michel Amiot (United Nations Population Fund)

6.   Three other countries that had been approached with a view to their inclusion in the present exercise also responded positively. However, for reasons of timing or availability of key government officials and the country level teams of the United Nations system, reviews could not be organized within the tight schedule imposed by the calendar of the triennial review.

7.   Given the keen interest expressed by Member States in receiving information on the role and nature of operational activities in specific national contexts, it is proposed that reviews also be undertaken in these three countries as a follow-up to the present exercise. These additional reviews would certainly provide additional insights for the ongoing analysis by Member States of the effectiveness of development co-operation organized through the United Nations system.

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8.   The annex to the present note contains a synthesis of the findings of the reviews in the first seven countries and of comparable findings from other sources, including reports from resident co-ordinators.

ANNEX

<u>Report on integrated country reviews on the functioning</u>
<u>of the operational activities for development of the</u>
<u>United Nations system</u>

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I. INTRODUCTION

1.   The United Nations system is held in continuing high hope and regard.
However, the national and international development community evinces a certain
"assessment fatigue". The review teams encountered considerable scepticism about
"yet another study". In some instances at high levels of Government, in many at
senior levels, and almost universally among staff of the system itself in the
countries, the question was posed at the outset: "What reasons do you have for
believing that any more will come of your report, to improve things, than from any
of the others down the years? How seriously should we take this one?"

2.   It is a matter of fact that numerous studies and resultant recommendations and
ensuing resolutions to enhance the system's capacities have to date led to little
significant adjustment - or at best, only piecemeal compromise extraction of single
measures from out of a larger recommended design that would alone have made those
measures really operable. Almost all of the problems and issues raised by the
General Assembly in its resolutions 42/196 of 11 December 1987 and 43/199 may be
found in resolution 2188 (XXI) of 13 December 1966, adopted 23 years ago, in which
the Assembly called for a comprehensive review of operational activities. Many
voices at the country level were, in effect, telling the team members that it was
high time to take meaningful action for improvement.

3.   The review exercise has been built upon the findings of, and the responses of
the General Assembly and other intergovernmental bodies to, the case-studies
carried out by the Director-General in 1987 in nine other developing countries
pursuant to paragraph 22 of the annex to General Assembly resolution 41/171 of
5 December 1986 (A/42/326/Add.1-E/1987/82/Add.1, annex) (the "Jansson report").
The description of the 1989 exercise as integrated country reviews has been
intended to convey that they have integrated into their investigations the Jansson
report; the many issues raised by the General Assembly in resolutions 42/196 and
43/199, and reports prepared in response; and other related observations and
reports from the country level on operational activities.

4.   On the large canvas of the historical evolution of the United Nations system's
operational activities, and of past efforts to improve them, certain
characteristics have predominated. The organization of the United Nations system
to carry out such activities in developing countries has to date very largely
reflected its global dimension, which contains built-in asymmetries of
intergovernmental structure and of purposes.

5.   The "operational activities system" comprises two radically different kinds of
organizations - specialized and technical agencies that were not created for
operational activities for development, but to be world centres of excellence in
research, standard-setting, and trend-analysis; and funds and programmes, almost
all of which are designed exclusively for operational activities in co-operation
with developing countries.

6.   The imbalance of purposes has caused serious difficulties for the specialized
agencies, with constant misunderstandings evidenced by such issues as the
percentage of their staffs held at headquarters, which is precisely where
Governments pre-supposed they would be for their primordial global roles. The same
imbalance has, of course, also presented problems for the development funds and
programmes, mandated exclusively for high-quality and efficient work with
developing countries and seeking to draw upon the specialized expertise of agencies
for which these functions are but one element in their mandates.

7.   The asymmetry in intergovernmental structure has a behavioural as well as
legal dimension. The same Governments of the same Member States (with only a few
differentials in membership) are the governors of both sets of organizations
engaged in the system's operational activities for development. The asymmetry
arises from problems of policy co-ordination within the same Governments, as
reflected in their decisions in the differing governing bodies.

8.   Approaches to country-level reform and improvement of operational activities
have equally been conditioned by these constraints at the global level. Modest
changes at the country level have been the residue of original recommendations
after global-level negotiations among headquarters officials of organizations
hearing different messages from the same Governments in their respective governing
bodies. Yet the objective always stated has been to improve the assistance that
the United Nations system can render to the development efforts of developing
countries. It is impossible to ignore these contradictions in any serious review
exercise seeking improvements.

9.   As will be emphasized throughout this report, the resources of the United
Nations system for operational activities are, above all, its human capacities.
The volume of financial resources flowing through the grant part of the system,
while important in many developing countries, is not what makes for, and makes
special, United Nations multilateral development co-operation. The system's staff
and consultants working at the country level are the make-or-break factor in the
entire enterprise - in the quality of the special partnership with developing
countries that distinguishes such co-operation, and in the quality of the everyday
practical work. It is remarkable how many staff members have retained their
dedication and their hope for coherent improvements in how they should work for
what they understand is their mission -- solely to help the developing countries.

10.   A very comprehensive agenda was set for the reviews, and the teams were very
grateful for the excellent advance arrangements made by United Nations resident
co-ordinators and by Governments, enabling individual and group meetings with
co-operation co-ordinators, central and sectoral planners and managers in many
ministries, project directors, academicians and other non-governmental figures,
representatives of bilateral donors, and all elements of the United Nations system
on the ground. The teams express their gratitude to all who gave so much of their
valuable time to them.

11.   Many pages of a synthesis report of this kind could be filled with
illustrations of the highly positive work of the United Nations system at the

country level. There should be some regular way to report on achievements of the
system as a whole. For reasons of space, however, this report must take on trust -
and in the spirit of the General Assembly resolutions themselves - that it can
concentrate on problems found, whose resolution would make the system even more
effective than it is.

12. The review teams obtained many insights into the critically important role
that the regional capacities of the United Nations system can play in support of
country-level activities and of continuing problems (many of which were reflected
in General Assembly resolution 32/197 of 20 December 1977). It is clear that there
is much work to be done further to enhance and make better use of regional
capacities. The insights obtained will be incorporated into the ongoing
examination of the regional dimension.

13. The problems cited in this report were either found in all countries visited
or, where one may not have been prominent in one of the countries, its general
prevalence in operational activities is validated in others and from other
contemporary reports. The conclusions are largely derived from the findings of the
review teams, but account has also been taken of numerous expert studies in
analysis of problems and in the final assembly of conclusions.

14. The development community naturally has its own special language but as this
has accumulated, clarity of meaning has sometimes slipped, and inappropriate
archaisms have persisted. Two examples follow:

    (a) Prominent among the archaisms is the expression "the field". The concept
that all developing countries and United Nations system offices therein are at
something called "the field level" relative to various "headquarters" is, in the
first place, philosophically inappropriate in operational activities. It is also
likely to reinforce "top-down" and other attitudes in headquarters that militate
against needed decentralization. In this report, the term "country level" is used
throughout.

    (b) A second phrase that is surely a candidate for change is "government
execution" of projects. Used in contra-distinction to "agency execution", it
implies little or no role for the developing countries unless they implement the
externally secured components of projects, all of which are theirs in the first
place. In this report, the term "national execution" is used instead of
"government execution".

15. The review teams took full note of the special emphasis of the General
Assembly, in its recent resolutions, on the paramountcy of the needs of the
developing countries themselves and, within this again, on the necessity that the
system gear itself to be more country-specific in its operational and
organizational responses to those needs. These combined criteria have far-reaching
implications. They require that the system's operational activities be studied
from the interface with poverty and under-capacitation. Looking outward from that
point of reference relentlessly exposes the difference between a system thrusting
its various globally prescribed characteristics and compromises downwards to the

developing country level and a system whose institutions would provide capacities at that level solely according to what each country needs for its development efforts. If once the analysis is firmly made from the latter perspective, many needs and problems which globally diluted reforms have been inadequate to address assume great thrust and urgency. To try better to convey the perspective at country level of national and United Nations system workers, some of their remarks are quoted in the course of this report. It is hoped that this may help to bring the problems experienced at country level more alive to readers.

16. It was with this paramount perspective of the needs of the developing countries in mind that the Director-General decided to carry out the integrated country reviews, and it is from that perspective that this report is made.

II. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

17. The United Nations system continues to sustain its reputation in helping to strengthen the capacities of developing countries, but there are significant problems, most of them long-present, which can be overcome. The report concentrates on such problems, not taking space to recite the many positive achievements.

18. Governments wish to undertake more national project execution - even those with weak capacities, in the conviction that these will be built faster through "learning by doing". Present rules and procedures for national execution contain major hindrances that must quickly be eliminated. The whole question of execution should now be turned around: what should have to be justified in every case is not national project execution, but external agency execution.

19. There continue to be too many problems in the design of projects, in part because formulation missions have been too short, but above all because of continued neglect of "above and before project" analysis and planning based on a programme approach, and top-heavy rules and procedures.

20. Project timetables are often set at unrealistically short durations. Prescribed start-up dates should not be automatically followed if a Government has found it impossible to deliver national inputs on time. The quality, appropriateness and timeliness of arrival of international project specialists continue too often to be deficient, with much evidence that the United Nations system is now financially uncompetitive. Alternative sources of international expertise and back-stopping are inadequately explored. As regards national project staffing, the system needs to become more flexible in approach and procedures to look beyond the traditionally assumed civil-service sources for such personnel.

21. There is a widespread demand for more flexible, more individually tailored training components in projects. Governments also seek more in-country training, which can reach more nationals needing upgrading. The system should be more prepared to accept less senior people for training, and there is continued need for more attention to the training of women.

22. There is a need for new approaches to maintaining support to institutions after projects are "terminated". There is a pronounced need for the system to pay more attention to ensuring that developing country institutions know about and have access to its unique capacities in research, data and shared development experience.

23. The United Nations system faces a major new challenge to its capacities and in the help it should be able to organize for the numerous Governments of developing countries that have seen their existing, painfully built up capacities for development eroded in the 1980s by structural adjustment.

24. The system's mandated role in technical co-operation among developing countries is not being adequately fulfilled. Governments and other institutions continue to lack usable knowledge of other countries' needs and capacities, and they express frustration over the vacuum in these respects in the system at country level and at the continuing obstacles in rules and procedures to employment of the TCDC modality in United Nations-system supported projects, as also those concerning project procurement locally and from other developing countries.

25. The adoption of "country programmes" by so many co-operation agencies paradoxically makes more difficult the internalisation of external assistance to which all in the international community pledge themselves. The failure of the concept of the UNDP country programme as a "frame of reference" for all operational activities affords a fresh chance to return to original concepts. The only valid and viable "country programme" is the national development plan (or other formulation of strategy) of the country itself. The United Nations system should move forthwith to adjust all allocation and programming cycles to those of each developing country and to programme the system's assistance on a co-ordinated basis integrally within the country's national plan. For external purposes this could become "country xx's co-operation programme with the United Nations system", as a part of the national plan, the relevant sections of which could reflect individual United Nations organizations' activities.

26. To assist developing countries in all programming, and greatly also to improve the formulation of projects supported by the United Nations system, there is a widespread need for the system to enhance its capacities for multidisciplinary situation analysis and advice on the formulation of strategic development options. Governments seek this "above and before project" assistance or partnership dialogue from United Nations system of grant-funding organizations, but are seldom able to obtain it at the quality, comprehensiveness and timeliness required. Part of the reason is that delivery and other pressures have made operational activities, and therefore United Nations-system capacities, heavily project-driven.

27. Vigorous expansion of national execution of projects will relieve executing agencies of project-level work and should facilitate their enhancement of their capacities for such situation analysis and option formulation. Much of the need is, however, in plurisectoral and systemic areas (like environment), to which the sectoral structure of the system as construcced by Governments does not easily lend itself. Special initiatives will be needed to assemble such plurisectoral and pluri-agency capacities.

28. A major obstacle to meeting all these problems and challenges, as well as those of country-level co-ordination, is the United Nations system's tangled web of programme and project policies and procedures, in most instances heavily overcentralized at headquarters or regional levels. While international accountability and the maintenance of programme and project quality are essential, measures are urgently needed to decentralize authority in the system uniformly to the country level, to simplify rules and procedures, and to harmonize them jointly for the entire system with those of each Government (improving the latter as indicated). It may be hoped that other sources of external assistance will join in this extremely important process.

29. The vital criterion for judging what co-ordination is needed in the United Nations system is not who needs to be co-ordinated, but what. When the "what" is properly identified, failure of institutions to work together on it becomes clearly insupportable. It is the development interventions that the developing countries need to make, and external support in those interventions, that need to be co-ordinated. All entities of the United Nations system engaged in operational activities should agree to a number of common country-level policies to bring this about.

30. The reviews confirm, however, that more official or legal "authority" for the United Nations resident co-ordinator is not the answer. A new kind of high-calibre multidisciplinary United Nations system development service team must be created; it must be relevant to each country's forward priority development needs and headed by the United Nations resident co-ordinator as the intellectual leader and animator of a (flexible) team of professionals who can themselves be designated leaders and co-ordinators of the analytical, advisory and programming work so needed. Building these team capacities will require serious attention by the system to recruitment, selection, training and retraining, and ongoing informational nourishment of all country-level staff.

31. As envisaged in General Assembly resolution 32/197, a unified United Nations system structure in each developing country should now be established, headed by the resident co-ordinator who is supported by these new teams. Existing country-level programme posts should be largely pooled to work jointly on the priority development thrusts and themes of the country and its co-operation programme with the United Nations system, not only on each source-agency's projects.

32. These measures for improved co-ordination and coherence of the system at the country level must be firmly based on a new kind of collective and collegial leadership. All organizations are entitled to demand that such co-ordination draw upon the best creativity they can provide, not lead to submergence under a dulling and formalistic domination.

33. The Director-General for Development and International Economic Co-operation should be provided with the necessary resources and appropriate inter-agency ongoing consultation and backstopping machinery to enable close monitoring and adjustment of these reforms and improvements.

34. Seen against the resilience of mass poverty, these reforms are modest. They are also achievable, given only political will, uniform policy expression in intergovernmental forums, and creative leadership.

III. CONTEXTS OF DEVELOPMENT AND CO-OPERATION

35. The seven countries directly consulted by the review teams encompass a wide spectrum of characteristics, development needs, capacities and United Nations-system co-operation roles.

36. They encompass one island country (Jamaica), two land-locked countries (the Niger and Uganda), three coastal countries (Colombia, Egypt and Ethiopia), and one sub-continental country (India). Their basic demographic, economic, and development assistance characteristics are reflected in the following table.

	Population (million)	GNP per capita (US dollars)	Official development assistance (millions of US dollars)		United Nations system grants (millions of US dollars)	
			1986	1987	1986	1987
Colombia	29.1	1 240	63.5	78.1	12.5	10.6
Egypt	46.6	680	1 717.8	1 766.3	30.7	36.1
Ethiopia	44.9	130	635.3	635.0	98.5	113.0
India	766.1	300	2 123.8	1 852.0	126.6	122.5
Jamaica	2.4	940	177.9	169.2	5.8	4.8
Niger	6.3	260	307.2	348.0	29.8	31.3
Uganda	16.0	260	198.0	276.0	35.3	41.1

37. Three countries (Ethiopia, the Niger and Uganda) are designated least-developed countries. United Nations system operational activities co-operation with these countries has extended from about 28 years (Jamaica, the Niger and Uganda) to about 40 years (Colombia, Egypt, Ethiopia and India).

A. Perceptions of the role of the United Nations system

38. Perceptions of what the role of the United Nations system should be are remarkably similar, not only among officials and other authorities of the many different countries and cultures, but among the donor representatives and United Nations system staff serving there.

39. The predominant perception is that of "partnership". This word was used with special attributes of confidence in the United Nations system's "neutrality", its "impartiality" and a strongly expected absence of conditionality. These

characteristics are expected in sound advice that respects cultures and national capacities.

40. At a larger dimension, the United Nations system is expected always to be a reliable and innovative associate with whom to search for new and better approaches to difficult problems - but with due caution, not ephemeral enthusiasms. This dimension of the partnership, an intellectual one above actual operational activities, is perceived as extremely important - one illustrative description of the process occurring in several team notes was "brainstorming" the development problematique.

41. These expectations, and the confidence invested, are awesome. They should - and for the most part do - engender both humility and deep commitment among all who serve in the system. They indicate the need for high-calibre minds in high-quality, sensitive personalities on the ground and the ability to call in such minds from outside when needed.

42. Every discussion about the United Nations system at the country level also reinforces the importance attached by developing countries to another dimension of the partnership that is captured in one recurring word - "access". Developing countries count upon the United Nations system to provide them with access to the world's accumulated and constantly expanding knowledge - the world of the wealthier and better-endowed countries, and of other developing countries. The country-level capacities of the United Nations system to act as the switchboards of such access are, however, inadequately supported by headquarters for these functions.

43. Perceptions of the content of development co-operation needed from the system naturally vary. In the least and less developed countries it is, of course, more basic capacity-building of all kinds and active assistance with co-ordination. In middle-income countries the needs in capacity-building are more specialized and there is greater emphasis on focus and programming dialogue - but from a system that is no less expected to provide its resources in an already co-ordinated manner. Diversity and the greater flexibility it requires thus go hand in hand with the expectation of coherence in the system itself.

44. The reviews found much evidence of the search by developing countries for new approaches in face of the whirlwind of international communication and change and continuing adversities in the international economic environment.

B. Devolution and diversification

45. Earlier predominant reliance on the central apparatus of Government is being modified. It would, however, be wrong to deduce any reduction of Governments' sense of responsibility for planned and efficiently organized development or for social well-being and equity. None the less, the search for devolution both of administration and of command over production can be found across the wide spectrum of the countries visited.

46. At the higher reaches of technological development this involves challenges to the United Nations system to assist in the forging of productive linkages between the research and development capacities that it has helped to build and the countries' industries. Yet devolution also produces such challenges as helping in municipalization - and using technology even here, for example, in the adaptation of informatics for development administration at the district level.

47. In countries with less capacity for high technology as yet, there is concern that the United Nations system in particular - because of its impartiality and commercial neutrality - be capable of advising them how to stay abreast of this fast-moving and constantly diversifying field with its "new-generation" packages so quickly overtaken by more "new-generation" packages. The hope is also widely expressed that the United Nations system will prove capable of putting institutions trying to deal with these options in touch with equivalent institutions in other countries that may have gone through the necessary analyses for the most appropriate technology selection, especially other developing countries.

48. Many authorities expressed the expectation that the United Nations system would now make itself intellectually and technically more open to the challenge to help at the sub-national administrative, non-governmental and private-sector levels as well. A member of a national planning commission said that perhaps the next major review of the UNDP country programme should be preceded by a Government-United Nations symposium well outside the capital city and open to local, including non-governmental, representatives.

C. Options for earning one's way

49. A further notable theme across the spectrum of countries was, inevitably, the more and more clearly exposed problem facing developing countries of earning their way within the world's total product and trade, even after surmounting their present indebtedness.

50. There is, on the one hand, awareness of the rapid growth of even more strong economic and trading communities in the north, building upon even greater technological comparative advantage. On the other hand, there is awareness of developing countries potentially finding too many of themselves trying for the same categories of exports to the north, yet of the difficulties so far of achieving both increasing and rationalized trading among themselves. No one suggests that the United Nations system must be able to come up with the complete "answer" to this immensely complex set of dilemmas but, again, the call is for the highest calibre, most disinterested and imaginative dialogue and "brainstorming" and, where requested, dynamic assistance in strengthening capacities to tackle these formidable challenges.

D. Absolute poverty

51. Amidst these, in themselves supremely taxing issues, both governmental and non-governmental thinkers are more and more concerned over the irony of higher national productivity - actual, or visible on the horizon - yet the persistence of entrenched poverty. Such poverty afflicts least-developed countries nationally, but it persists within middle-income countries as well. There is an increasing awareness that earlier "models" for national development have been flawed and mounting concern over the daily rural exodus that was only yesterday advised to developing countries as a positive sign of "progress". There is acute frustration in less developed countries in seeing structural adjustment erode whole elements of the health, educational and social welfare infrastructure so painfully built up.

52. Here again, the expectations vested in the United Nations system are onerous indeed. These expectations are not of the system proffering some panacea for mass absolute poverty; there is by now a healthy alertness against all neat formulae. It is, above all, an expectation that the United Nations be capable of mobilizing global concern over absolute poverty and of distilling and making available the accumulated experience and insight into those comprehensive interventions against it that offer the most promise.

53. The social component in development co-operation of the United Nations system and the moral imperatives of mounting the attack on absolute poverty clearly need far greater attention. The relegation of such concerns to under-capacitated departments and small units usually regarded by economics-trained secretariat officials and governors as "on the soft side of development" is dramatically exposed by such needs. There is an increasing need for enhanced and co-ordinated capacities, readily deployable through operational activities, in all these long-submerged fields, including village-level self-financing and other forms of community empowerment, women in development, self-mobilization of youth and development support communication.

54. The United Nations system is expected greatly to enhance access to the working experience of tackling the grim phenomenon of entrenched mass poverty where such experience obviously above all resides - among the developing countries themselves.

IV. STRENGTHENING NATIONAL CAPACITIES

55. Help in strengthening national capacities has always been a hallmark of United Nations system technical co-operation, and the review teams found further evidence to reaffirm this basic record.

56. In paragraph 8 of its resolution 42/196, the General Assembly emphasized the role of the operational activities of the United Nations system in helping to build national capacities for the better design and management of countries' development processes, and for their co-ordination of external assistance. The countries visited by review teams represented the widest spectrum of results of such work to date, from well-established capacities to still weak ones. It is, however,

important to note that even where a country now has highly sophisticated capacities for design and management of its national development processes and for co-ordination of international co-operation, the Government still places distinct value on a partnership discourse with the United Nations system on design and strategy options in addressing specific plurisectoral needs. It was also evident that continuing problems in the quality and effectiveness of United Nations system assistance in capacity-building are common across the spectrum of the developing countries.

57. It is perhaps insufficiently recognized that this is an imperfect art everywhere. It is not easy to deploy the right expertise and equipment, at the right time, to match requirements even inside a well-endowed country. When the inherent difficulties in such work are made international, with United Nations system executing agencies facing a perennial flow of demands from up to 150 countries and territories needing the right kind of advisory and training skills of the right origin for each country, within narrowly set project timetables, the fact that problems persist in capacity-building is not surprising, as such. The reviews have, however, found long-identified problems that reveal a continued inadequate response.

58. Many problems at the project level are, however, reflections of greater weaknesses at the pre-project levels of programming and of the prerequisites of such programming in analysis and strategy formulation, policies and procedures, co-ordination and United Nations system country capacities and organization. This report will first discuss the problems of strengthening and using national and collective capacities in order to reach the problems existing at the pre-project levels. To be forward looking, it is important to situate continuing project-level problems within the transition to national ("government") execution.

A. National execution of projects

59. Governments in all countries visited expressed the wish to undertake more execution of projects themselves or through quasi- or non-governmental national institutions. This having been noted, however, various difficulties begin - all having to do in one way or another with the long-established premise of using an external executing agency, lack of a programme approach, insufficient decentralization to the country level and other impediments in United Nations system rules and procedures. When a Government states that it cannot take on more national execution because it does not have the capacity to cope, no sweeping conclusion should be reached. The reasons are all-important and different, and call for different responses by the United Nations system. Three such scenarios may be briefly noted.

60. In least and less developed countries, there may seem to be "absolute" limits to installed capacity for national execution, but this does not mean that Government would not welcome expanding this modality. There is virtually universal conviction that national execution is crucial to national capacity- and self-reliance building. ("Doing is learning" was a phrase common in review teams'

notes of what they heard about this.) Such Governments are only saying that they
realistically cannot yet shoulder the entire work-load traditionally performed by a
United Nations system executing agency. The reviews found clear need in these
instances for the new forms of collaboration already under inter-agency discussion,
whereby a United Nations system agency would assist the Government with whichever
requirements it and United Nations country staff could not handle in nationally
executed projects. These will vary per project, but there are strong indications
that the general new pattern will be need of agency help in providing information
on sources of expertise, training and equipment (not their procurement) and on
periodic technical advice.

61. Neither Government nor country-level United Nations staff in least or less
developed countries evince doubt about the answers to such questions as, "But would
you be able to handle the actual procurement?" or "Won't such national execution
take much longer to implement?". They point out that present delays in procurement
by various executing agencies compare unfavourably with rates of procurement from
the country level if source information, approval authority and adequate United
Nations backstopping resources are available at that level. There is also
confidence that more appropriate procurement for the country can be achieved, both
in people (including often nationals) and in equipment. And there is some
impatience over such questions, with the observation that even if national
execution does sometimes take more time, the greater capacity-strengthening benefit
is well worth it. Referring to the traditional assumption that "least developed"
simply means United Nations agency execution one official asked, "Do you not end up
de-responsibilizing us?"

62. Governing bodies should clearly appreciate that in the transition, country
offices may well need temporarily enhanced staff to provide country-level United
Nations agency backstopping. The best arrangement for this is obviously the
temporary secondment, for training purposes, of national staff. In this
connection, if project documents and budgetary rules more easily provided for
training components in project management - not only the specific technical skills
related to the project's development intervention - capacity-building for national
execution could be accelerated.

63. The second scenario concerns those increasing numbers of developing countries
in which the capacity for national execution of given projects does exist, but not
in Government itself. It should be expected that, whether from structural
adjustment or from natural devolutions of initial state responsibilities, the
skilled people needed for project execution may increasingly be outside of
government service. Review teams encountered much impatience over United Nations
system rules concerning national project personnel that made it difficult to
arrange this type of national execution.

64. The third scenario where Government feels it cannot undertake more national
execution is, quite straightforwardly, because it judges it will be
counter-productive to put staff through the complexity of complying with present
United Nations system rules for such execution. In one country, while the review
team was there the Government actually took this decision. Said one official, "The

drain on our human resources, not in meeting the development need but in meeting
the United Nations bureaucracy's demands, just makes it preferable , let the
United Nations go through its self-imposed agonies". This is a severe commentary
indeed. It is the very last obstacle that ought to be encountered in the expansion
of national project execution.

B. Project design

65. If the design of a capacity-building project is faulty, it has a cascading
effect upon all else in the enterprise. Instances still occur of such poor design,
of all the familiar kinds - the "boiler-plate" project largely copied from another
in another country; the project too narrowly planned because, as one educationalist
remarked, "Too often we have had to make decisions not based on adequate facts".

66. The deficiency can take one or more of several forms (again by no means
limited to United Nations supported projects). Sometimes a project has been
designed to create a new institution based on too limited an analysis of capacities
needed or upon one of the incessant waves of external "enthusiasms" that roll over
developing countries. The Government and the United Nations system sooner or later
face the question, what to do with the new institution whose non-viability begins
to be demonstrated in lack of demand and support for it. In other instances, an
existing institution was to be strengthened, but its vital linkages to assure use
of its skills and services have not been properly forecast. Since these flaws are
in turn usually the consequences of inadequate pre-project analysis and
programming, they will be discussed under that heading later in this report.
Another weakness noted was that project formulation missions were often so short
that the design finally arriving back from a headquarters, instead of properly
worked through in the country, was accordingly superficial. It was remarked to
some teams that, behind these and many other problems was a fundamental one in the
tendency of both the United Nations system and bilateral donors to "projectise" -
and there and then to externalize an intervention from its indigenous context and
realities.

C. Project duration

67. Many instances were cited of projects given wholly unrealistic timetables for
completion. There is really no adequate excuse for this, after so many years of
hard experience that capacity-building does take time if it is to be done well and
to take root. The causes are numerous. There can be suspicion on the part of the
funding organization or someone in a Government keen to conserve its United Nations
allocations that an executing agency - or a self-interested consultant - may be
"stretching to earn more". Equally, teams heard it suggested that agencies
sometimes prescribed short timetables to keep the project budget under the present
local approval authority ceiling and therefore away from headquarters (an example
of the effect of inadequate decentralization). Like many charges against the
agencies, these may be exaggerated, but it only takes a few plausible instances to
engender the doubt. All the accumulated indications, not only from the reviews but

from many other contemporary reports and assessments, point to the need for programme supervisors to reverse the prevailing question - ask not is the project timetable too lengthy; ask instead, is it realistic, to achieve intended impact?

D. Criteria for the start-up of a project

68. Another example of a long-standing "local project problem" whose real cause may lie elsewhere concerns the actual timing of project start-ups. Not only government officials, but country-level United Nations system staff as well, urged that it is pointless and often severely counter-productive blindly to follow a prescribed timetable and start up a project if needed national inputs (building, national staff etc.) are obviously not going to be ready. It may remain desirable to prescribe early delivery of these inputs in order to press indirectly involved authorities to marshall them. However, once these inputs are patently going to be delayed, starting up the project merely because the document so states (or in fear of headquarters criticism about "delivery") usually delivers more confusion than development. The ostensible delay in national inputs is not infrequently because distant United Nations system approval of the project itself took so long that the original national commitments had been dispersed elsewhere; or again, that in the drive for projects as such, without proper situation analysis and programme approach, those commitments were never going to be realistic.

E. Quality and timeliness of specialists

69. There are still too many instances where the calibre of international project personnel was judged inferior or inappropriate to the task in terms of actually needed skills, or in attitudes and approaches. Remarks like "the United Nations should brief its people that they come to work, not just 'advise'", or that too often an international specialist seems to concentrate on "building his own career rather than the institution", should not still be heard at the end of the 1980s, but review teams did hear them. These syndromes are not limited to, but they are felt especially inappropriate in, United Nations system supported projects, as is any "arrogance" from a United Nations international project specialist. There are still instances of tension where national project personnel are not provided the same basic facilities to do their work, alongside differences in living conditions.

70. Review teams were also told on all sides that the United Nations system is now so uncompetitive financially that optimum international recruitment is often affected and final recruitment in any case severely delayed. Best qualified candidates try to renegotiate the remuneration but finally turn down offers, then forcing further time-consuming resort to the second- or third-best tiers in the rosters. This may also be one explanation of another common criticism, that Government too often only receives one nomination, and that curricula vitae are insufficient foundations for judgement of an international candidate. Lack of performance reports on a candidate's previous project work is also criticized. It was urged that, at least for major projects, it would be worth the investment to arrange actual interviews.

F. Alternative sources of international project staff

71. The development process itself and improved perceptions about it call for more and more imaginativeness and flexibility over sources of needed project expertise, including through TCDC modalities. Greater effort was urged to identify international specialists not continuously "in the market" but periodically available during "sabbaticals" from relevant institutions, or along the lines of UNDP's Standard Technical Assistance Agreements. Considerable interest was also expressed in the UNDP TOKTEN (Transfer of knowledge through ex-patriot nationals) programme to attract from industrialized countries highly qualified nationals for project services, especially in face of the increasing phenomenon of emigration and brain drain, now aggravated by structural adjustment.

72. One government official, with experience himself inside the United Nations system, urged that, instead of what he called the system's "ingrained tendency to go for the individual expert", far more attention should be given to the many networks of international professional associations that nowadays conduct their own studies and sharing of practical experience, and that could often provide projects with a far wider foundation of relevant experience and advice on a recurring basis (i.e. an extension of the concept of "twinning" with a single overseas institution).

73. The persistent difficulties in obtaining appropriate and timely international project specialists are prompting more and more impatience over what are viewed as unnecessary bureaucratic obstacles to the hiring of available national personnel instead. Review teams in some countries were told that, for the base pay of an international specialist (that is, eliminating such costs as installation, home leave etc), the Government would have no difficulty in finding fully as qualified a specialist in the country if United Nations rules allowed this. Above all, one country-level United Nations officer said, "The worst impact on the image and credibility of the United Nations system in a country is when Government accepts all the arguments against national execution - and then an agency sends in inferior inputs after long delays".

G. National staffing

74. Yet again, however, it seems clear that the many earlier reports about difficulties in finding adequate national staff for projects in traditional ways have not been sufficiently heeded. Two traditional assumptions, in particular, seem to need much wider examination.

75. The first such assumption is that such project personnel should come from within Government. In many instances they are either not to be found there because of the general under-capacitation of less-developed countries or, in better endowed countries, cannot be found as readily within the civil service as they could outside it. Less timidity about proposing to seek project personnel outside Government, and more flexible rules and procedures to enable recruitment from non-governmental sources could reduce this frequent cause of under-supported projects. It was also urged that the United Nations system would find Governments

well-disposed to proposals that it work with national professional and commercial associations, both as alternative sources of expertise and as valuable advisers on means of meshing a project's outputs with the local economy.

76. A second persistent assumption among United Nations system drafters of projects is that all specialized skills must be provided for a project full-time by nationals of the country. Sometimes this is indeed desirable, but if proper investigation discloses that it is simply not going to be possible, there is little point in insisting upon it and, meanwhile, leaving the project bereft of even part-time skilled professional support. In one country there were seven ongoing projects (four with United Nations system support and three with bilateral support) all demanding full-time hydrologists, of which there were simply not such numbers in the country, and which were not in any case needed full-time. A water-resources specialist of the country ruefully suggested that better situation analysis and a programme approach would have enabled the seven projects to share the available national hydrological support and achieve greater cohesion in other respects as well.

77. A further observation from the reviews concerns the inadequacy of either governmental or United Nations system "tracking" of skills already acquired, especially in still under-capacitated countries. This is particularly ironic when new projects supported by the United Nations system cannot find needed national expertise, yet those very skills were acquired through fellowships in earlier projects by nationals whose present whereabouts is unknown. It is, of course, difficult to "track" individuals who do not join or do not remain in government service but the need is so paramount amid scarce human resources that the building and maintenance of data banks of both needs and available skills should surely be a concern of the system and of national technical co-operation needs assessments.

H. Training

78. The review teams found considerable concern within Government and among United Nations system country staff that training in capacity-strengthening activities should be more individually tailored to identified skills-upgrading needs. More individualized care is required in finding the most suitable training courses abroad, possibly in more than one overseas institution, or more combined formal course-training with study and observation visits to relevant institutions. This, in turn, means less prescription from headquarters and more at the country level.

79. The problem is not limited to training in higher technologies or to countries with strong installed capacities. Indeed, the need to provide the most fine-tuned training for national personnel is the more vital where each such person is an especially valuable source of scarce skills. It would seem that the smaller executing agencies are generally better at providing such closely tailored training, but the needs are just as great in the other sectors.

80. Two other familiar problems evidently not yet adequately addressed concern the level and gender of people selected for training fellowships. The traditional

tendency has been to send senior personnel, but in many cases their very seniority makes them liable to promotion out of the project institution (or to their finding a job elsewhere). Review teams heard requests for more training of rising, junior staff. A continued lack of attention to the candidature of women - who may also be more junior, or whose advancement may particularly depend upon skills upgrading - was also found in most countries.

81. There is also a pronounced wish for more in-country train'ag, again regardless of the level of national capacities. Government authorities pointed out that in-country training can reach more personnel per investment and can be more culture-sensitive. In-country training can also cover the frequent problem that, while a specialist needs full upgrading in his or her skill, the supervisor or manager needs at least a general orientation in that skill, but can seldom get this within the limits of traditional overseas fellowship provisions in projects.

I. Post-project follow-up

82. Another area still inadequately addressed concerns what happens after a United Nations system supported project formally "ends". Except when there is a further actual project phase, there is a persistent tendency in all international development co-operation, bilateral no less than United Nations multilateral, to "close the books" on each project and move on to new endeavours. Yet post-project support will often be the crucial, "make or break" factor in consolidating real roots of self-reliance or ensuring that the project investment builds real growth.

83. At least two kinds of seriously needed post-project support were confirmed in reviews. The first is for continuing, recurring advisory and experience-sharing links with foreign institutions (or individual consultants) that have been involved in a project - but for which funding provision is often not made because traditionally when projects "terminate" they terminate in all respects. The assumption that the Government can automatically finance any such further needs seldom has any foundation. The amounts required may not be large, but they will be in scarce foreign exchange, and United Nations system organizations still seldom enable this kind of post-project help.

84. The second major type of post-project need is in a continued flow of the international technical information that has been coming into the country's institution through a project. Here again is pointed irony - that a project may lift a national institution onto a new plane of ongoing access to knowledge in a given development area, but then abruptly leaves the institution and its personnel bereft of such information flows because "the project has ended". The needs of such continued information linkage range from the inability of the national personnel trained in projects to continue updating their knowledge at international meetings, to the entire field of electronic access to global information networks that is now possible but that is unlikely to happen unless provided for.

J. Access to capacities of the United Nations system

85. Much more also needs to be done to inform national development institutions about the data banks, ongoing research work and the now improving information systems on development experience that exist within the United Nations system. This is surely a form of operational development co-operation - and often might result in more of a programme approach through national staff having better backgrounding in a given development problem. Even national directors of United Nations agency-executed projects may never be familiarized with the agency's global headquarters: one review team meeting with 28 such national directors discovered that only 4 had visited the headquarters (one of these only at his own expense). United Nations country-level staff are hard-pressed at present even to transmit to the right people such documentation on these capacities as they receive from United Nations system organizations. Problems of wrong languages in such documentation persist. An entire area needs serious attention. that of making the system's very extensive capacities of such kind "user-friendly" and of assistance from headquarters to country-level staff to enable them to design the best means of access for national institutions. It is another reflection of the extent to which the system, like the rest of the international development community, has become dominated and driven by "projects".

K. Erosion of capacities

86. Alongside highly positive achievements and long-standing problems in capacity-building, there is a new and profoundly disturbing phenomenon - the destruction of national capacities so painstakingly and painfully installed over many years, by the hurricane-like effect of structural adjustment in the 1980s. Jamaica's civil service, for example, has been cut by over 30 per cent. The common observation is that the public payrolls in developing countries may indeed have become swollen (due to a variety of causes, by no means only the easily-alleged "poor management"), but that structural adjustment programmes have demanded such rapidity as to make strategic reductions impossible. In too many instances, the furthest removed and least self-defensible, the "front-line" cadres of extension, health, education and social welfare, have been the first to go, with disastrous consequences on both productive and social services. Governments are facing entirely new challenges in all countries that have experienced these Draconian cuts. In addition, of course, there are such plights as that of Uganda, whose civil service was devastated by civil war and exile.

87. These challenges may, perhaps, be briefly summarized. How to rebuild the civil services in such a way as to exploit the opportunity that the crisis offers? How to identify what capacities perhaps need not be restored directly within line government staffing, but rebuilt or enhanced in other institutions? Does the crisis of civil-service reduction offer an opportunity to decentralize more authority to provincial and district levels? Can advantage be taken of the coincidence that these reductions have occurred just as informatics technology becomes economically feasible for developing countries, with possible real savings in future staff requirements? Running through all such questions, how to rebuild

the necessary services at salary levels that are at once economically feasible and attractive enough to overcome the severe damage by frozen (and devalued) wages to the very image of government service as a tenable career?

88.   There is no accumulated experience of this phenomenon, not even in industrialized countries, because such civil-service reductions as have taken place among them have usually been more orderly, phased processes of reform.   The foregoing cursory summary will indicate the extraordinary mix of factors that must now be taken into account by so many Governments of developing countries.   They look especially to the United Nations system for impartial, unconditional advice and strategic options analysis.   It would seem that the system should especially gear itself, through a strong inter-disciplinary task force drawing on the wisest brains around the world, to develop a set of analytical and planning tools for these complex exercises and to identify high-calibre advisory teams to help in this supremely ironic new kind of capacity strengthening.

L.   Conclusions

89.   As has been emphasized in the introduction to this report, its concentration on problems must not lead the reader to conclude that there are no bright features in the work of the United Nations system at country level.   The review teams found ample evidence of project work justifying the confidence in the system which senior government officials in all countries expressed.   The problems ventilated here are by no means exclusive to the United Nations system.   It goes without saying that the partnership also requires firm commitment and strong motivation among all national associates.   There is, however, a widespread expectation that the United Nations system, precisely because it is "the United Nations", can do better than it is doing, or than others are doing.

90.   The many policy and procedural difficulties found in project-level operations will be addressed in a special section of this report.   The overall conclusion, however, is that the entire concept and construct of a "project" needs to be re-examined in a forthright and innovative way to open up dimensions and not merely allow but positively provide for the many neglected or prohibited facilities identified.

91.   A first perceptual key to this renovation is surely that development is a process, whose real parameters are often artificially constricted by "projectization" into a set of narrow material inputs wrapped up in a document and "terminating" on an inexorable timetable.   It is a process that must address a carefully analysed set of needs with resources that must be very largely endogenous (with the balance to be locally prescribed):   a process that must merge into a larger, already analysed framework of economic and social advancement.   The enabling instruments for this process are a plan and a programme, which may then have clusters of related interventions that can be called projects.   Projects by themselves are all too often artificial, essentially alien, and therefore lose their motive force when their external resources end.

92. A second perceptual approach is surely now to turn around the whole question
of "execution" and of the role of the capacities of developing countries. This
would involve the following basic premises:

(a) What should have to be justified in every case is not national, but
external agency execution;

(b) The use of the capacities of developing countries is what strengthens
them;

(c) The United Nations system must adopt imaginative, flexible, and
decentralized means of completing the transition to national execution;

(d) In these changes, the best qualities of the United Nations agencies that
have historically had execution roles can be enhanced and released for a new
generation of service.

V.   USE OF COLLECTIVE CAPACITIES

A.   Technical co-operation among developing countries

93. The review teams found keen interest in technical co-operation among
developing countries (TCDC), but varying degrees of frustration with help from the
United Nations system in it. The teams travelled with copies of the just-issued
report of the Director-General for Development and International Economic
Co-operation for the triennial policy review. Although it had not yet been read by
those interviewed, their views on TCDC very closely matched the report's assessment
of continuing problems in the system's ability to help developing countries use
their collective capacities. It is therefore not necessary to elaborate these
findings in any extensive way.

94. In fields of galloping technological advances where the options becoming
available are more and more complex, authorities expressed an impatience to be able
to know which other developing countries might have started or even have completed,
crucial assessments or adaptations more suitable to developing country conditions
and needs. In some instances, institutions now equipped with successfully adapted
technologies evinced keen interest to be able to share their work, whether in
solidarity or for future commercial purposes. The range of interest here among the
countries visited was wide, from electronics and informatics to seed and tuber
bio-technologies, and both in terms of research and development and commercial
experience.

95. The ever more pronounced confrontation with entrenched rural poverty is also
prompting increased interest in TCDC. A new generation of development planners and
researchers is naturally asking whether there is not more appropriate experience in
other developing countries with this unyielding problem that they have inherited.
Some teams were told of keen interest in learning of experience in specific areas
within the overall phenomenon of absolute poverty, such as community

self-mobilization for development, rural non-farm income generation, the empowerment of rural women, and harnessing the restive energies of youth migrating into cities and towns or before they do so.

96. In most countries bilateral TCDC exchanges have been undertaken or are being attempted; in some, multilateral exchanges have taken place through regional and subregional machinery. The consistent message heard, however, was one of varying degrees of disappointment with the United Nations system, for the reasons cited in the Director-General's report. The United Nations system's intrinsic global network must provide developing countries with more access to knowledge of each other's development experiences in general and ensure adequate opportunity to use other developing countries' capacities in actual projects.

97. It was generally acknowledged that country-level offices and staff of the United Nations system were open to the concept of TCDC, but were themselves unable to offer sufficient help with either the project dimension or general access to experiences in the field. As regards the project dimension, all of the familiar technical causes were evident - the complexity of procedures for TCDC modalities, the continued prevailing "mind set" in project formulators of inputs coming from industrialized countries and the pressure to finalize and launch projects that leaves no time for exploration of TCDC possibilities from the country level. After all this, however, and for both potential dimensions of TCDC, there was again and again evidence of the root problem of lack of adequate information.

98. This was a primary finding in the Director-General's report on TCDC. It is enough here to emphasize that it is essential for national institutions and country-level United Nations system staff to have efficient access to information about the qualities and not just the existence, the previous operating experience and not just the name and address, of sources of development capacity in other developing countries.

99. Above projects (but very likely then contributing to their better design and input-content), the provision of ongoing, qualitative information about development experience across the world should be regarded as a standard part of the service of the United Nations development co-operation system. The sense that it is the United Nations that, uniquely, should act as the world's "switchboard" in such information was found in many quarters.

B. Procurement

100. As regards procurement, review teams also found confirmation of the recent study prepared for the criennial policy review. There is continued frustration that comprehensive information on equipment that may be available in other developing countries is not more readily available through the United Nations system. Where attitudinal barriers exist they will not be overcome without such information. The Technological Pilot Information System (TIPS) can play a key role in this, as in broader information on technical co-operation among developing countries.

101. There is no less concern that the system enable greater opportunity for local procurement. More can be done to build local capacities for the production of standard bulk equipment and supplies needed, for example, in health and education.

102. It is self-evident that if information is one crucial requirement for greater use by developing countries of their collective and local capacities, decentralization and national execution will complete the needed enabling environment.

VI. PROGRAMMING

A. The "frame of reference"

103. The reviews took place at a moment of some hiatus in the evolution of programming in operational activities by the United Nations system. The last major attempt by the General Assembly (in resolution 32/197) to make such programming more coherent - the urged use of the UNDP country programme as a "frame of reference" for all operational activities of the system in a country - had not worked. In paragraph 15 of its resolution 42/196, the Assembly had requested the Director-General, in consultation with the Administrator of UNDP, to assess the constraints on this formula and to report in 1989 on "a wider, more effective process".

104. The reviews only confirm the failure of the "frame of reference" proposal. The reasons found in the countries visited were a mix of those reported from the 1987 case studies (see A/42/326/Add.1-E/1987/82/add.1, annex (The "Jansson report"), paras. 21-22), and those summarized by Mr. Mahajan in his report on programming, which has been circulated as technical paper 5. There is no need to take space to repeat them here, only perhaps to note a kind of ricochet effect in all this. Specialized agencies that have been unable to make adequate use of regular budget funds to maintain programming advisory capacities have been less able to provide UNDP with such assistance for its country programming, making incorporation of their own country activities in such programming less likely. Concern that the incessant drive for projects may result in pressure on the country programming process from executing agencies has made their participation less likely again. To adapt Mr. Mahajan's pertinent descriptor, the result has been "alienation" - both of programming and of people at the country level.

105. It is essential, however, to emphasize the role of separately constructed and instructed programming procedures within the United Nations system as a wider constraint against greater coherence. The review teams sensed from all quarters - from government officials and United Nations system staff on the ground - a keen appreciation of the advantages of more coherent programming, but an inability to advance without changes in cycles and other procedures that could only come from headquarters levels.

B. The experience of the Joint Consultative Group on Policy

106. The other innovation attempted in recent years has been joint or collaborative programming under the auspices of the Joint Consultative Group on Policy (JCGP), comprising UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF, WFP and more recently IFAD. In April 1989, executive heads of the Group sent a joint letter to their respective country representatives, which highlighted substantive areas that might be reviewed together at country level, as appropriate to each country. The review teams were asked to meet with the local JCGP-membership staff and ascertain local experience in this approach of the several funding organizations to more cohesive programming in the system.

107. That letter had not, of course, been long in their hands when the review teams met with the local group members. In some countries meetings on the letter had already been held and first steps taken either to identify a few substantive issues on the JCGP list (e.g. environment, women in development, or to have a working group do so.

108. The review teams obtained some interesting country-level reactions to the overall "JCGP concept". In a way, the topic was one "litmus test" of many major issues involving the entire system. The views expressed, among which are the following, reflect the generally good spirit among staff at the country level despite the obstacles to better work that they perceive coming from the various levels:

(a) Achievements from any sustained joint programme effort among all the JCGP funds would only be possible if the specific country needs, the wishes of the Government, the five funds' allocation timings and the special political will to overcome procedural obstacles, including widely disparate degrees of local authority, all happened to coincide. There was, it was remarked in one meeting, little use in JCGP heads issuing pronouncements from their headquarters if they did nothing to eliminate these obstacles.

(b) Concern was expressed in some countries as to whether Governments might view JCGP initiatives as some sort of "pressure group". It was also not easy to see how to approach a Government "on a JCGP basis", given that member organizations of JCGP had different standard linkage-points within Government.

(c) Local group members found it easier to identify joint work on projects among two JCGP members (e.g., UNICEF with WFP, or UNDP with WFP, or UNFPA with UNICEF), but these tended to be collaborations that pre-dated JCGP, such as UNICEF school nutrition education with WFP school feeding.

(d) The JCGP initiative on the social impact of structural adjustment had, however, been very useful in a number of the countries. There was not much knowledge of the inter-headquarters JCGP working groups (e.g., that on women in development).

(e) Harmonization of procedures is on the working agenda of the JCGP. This met with a good deal of scepticism at the country level, on a note of "Yes, we'll believe that when we see it". It was also asked, why go through elaborate efforts to harmonize procedures among only five elements of the United Nations system?

(f) On information exchange, all concerned agreed that this would be a major step forward towards coherence. In some JCGP meetings, however, it was strenuously pointed out that it was all very well for headquarters to issue such urging, but "You have to have staff to digest shared information before you can even know whether and if so how to use it for joint programming, and we are not given such staff".

(g) The organizational agenda of JCGP was also discussed, including common premises and shared facilities. Some effort is under way to advance on this issue, but it was remarked to one review team that "a common roof here will not enable unified programming unless people under headquarters roofs start agreeing with each other to that as well".

(h) Significantly, some perplexity was expressed about the very composition of JCGP. It was pointed out that, if the General Assembly was asking for more system-wide coherence, one sure way of provoking local resentment among non-JCGP agencies and thus less "system-wide" co-operation on the ground would be for this "exclusionary group" to be seen to be sharing information and meeting and acting jointly but separately from the rest of the system in the country. In another meeting it was asked, on what possible grounds could WHO be excluded if one of the JCGP substantive issues was the health/nutrition nexus, and FAO if another was rural poverty? In another country, United Nations fund staff said that the exclusion was deliberate, to avoid "executing agency pressure" on their attempts at local joint programming.

109. Those rather mixed reactions to the JCGP construct notwithstanding, most staff are ready to welcome any sign "that even part of the system up there is getting its act together at last, provided they allow us to do so here as well". There was, perhaps, equal support for more locally generated joint groupings, with much observation that a great deal depended upon the personalities who were on the ground from the different parts of the system at any one time.

110. The review teams also held meetings with the entire available representation of the United Nations system in each country. The very fact that one system-wide meeting and one "exclusivist" meeting were thus arranged was perhaps symptomatic of the current disjunctures in the system's operational activities.

C. Programming and global goals

111. Review teams were asked to discuss the place in country-level programming of the global goals, plans of action and strategies promulgated by the United Nations system. The sensitivities in this question were quite well illuminated in the discussions.

112. There was general agreement that the global themes and goals adopted by the General Assembly and other forums of the system were valuable in raising awareness of such problems and factors. However, each such theme could acquire its validity only as its particular application had been found to make sense in and for an individual developing country. Environmental damage is perhaps a prime case in point. In the early years after the 1972 Stockholm United Nations Conference on the Human Environment there had been some resistance because the subject seemed to have a heavy industrial bias. Environmental damage in terms of deforestation, the pressure of population on fuelwood and water resources or salination of soils under dangerous "high-tech" agriculture have b   w given strong validity to this theme.

113. It seems obvious that the goals most quickly accepted as valid for developing countries are those whose importance was already well-perceived in them. The United Nations Drinking Water Supply and Sanitation Decade is an outstanding instance and one on which there has usually been excellent country-level joint effort by the United Nations system, and with other donor sources. On the other hand, there is considerable caution, even scepticism, that some of these themes can become generalized "donor enthusiasms" capable of distorting national development priorities or advanced by well-meaning international missions that lack sensitivity to how such goals can be advanced in a given country's cultural, sociological, economic and other contexts.

114. Although many global goals, such as concern for environmental problems, efforts to encourage private sector development or to strengthen non-governmental organizations for more efficient programme implementation, are important policy preoccupations in the United Nations system, there often seems to be a certain distortion in the perception of these priorities by national officials once they are translated into projects. These issues are often artificially inserted into programme documents without proper perspective. They tend to annoy or antagonize national programme officials rather than fit rationally into the national development strategy. The manner in which such themes are conveyed into the reality of programming is of capital importance in order to maintain the proper focus which they deserve.

115. United Nations system staff at the country level are aware of their very considerable responsibility as interlocutors regarding global goals, but do not see commensurate support reaching them for this role. They point out that some themes "arrive" in the form of instructions to enter into dialogue with a Government on their application, but with no extra resources to make this credible. Others arrive without even guidelines. Action to "launch" such themes is likely to prompt a response from a Government requiring more time-consuming activity by units already very hard pressed by daily project-level work and headquarters admonitions thereon.

116. It was also pointed out that integrating these goals into such programming as greed requires orientation and even training of both government planning d Nations system staff in the country. UNICEF devotes resources to this, but   rally the deficiency is notable. It calls for more than an "awareness seminar". While this may result in the inclusion of a global theme in a national

development plan, in under-capacitated countries neither Government nor the United Nations staff on the ground may have the capacities for situation analysis and strategy formulation to translate the theme into sustainable programming integrated in national development.

117. Although the various organizations are persisting in their efforts to "permeate" their headquarters programme staff with these global themes, most country-level staff of the system still find it difficult to get their headquarters to help with programming them. Theme units themselves do not have sufficient staff to help at country level. Outside consultants seldom receive adequate briefing on these themes, yet are often responsible for formulating projects that should incorporate their objectives.

118. Inevitably, some in government form the impression from this lack of concrete support from the system for global themes that they are "another donor diversion" from some of the basic, North-South structural issues.

119. Another problem noted is that the capacities concerning global themes that do exist in the system - at least basic information and relevant experience in their application - are not made known to those in developing countries who need and could use them or are inappropriately offered. An agricultural planning officer expressed frustration over an international seminar dealing with women, which she found was "all talk about legal problems, the Northern feminist agenda. What I need is to learn how people in other countries are tackling our type of problem, which is upgrading the farming and other income-generating skills of women who are often the single heads of our rural households".

120. To report these views about United Nations system global goals may impart a sombre picture but they were offered by people at country level - Government, United Nations system, bilateral - who fully accepted the importance of such themes and goals, but were experiencing frustration in doing more, in practical development terms, about them. The programming issues involved may seem "special", because the global themes and plans of action have been promulgated as special. In reality, however, these problems are part of the larger serious challenge of co-ordinated, multidisciplinary programming for development.

D.   Origins of programming problems

121. Although it has long been standard language in the international development community to speak of programming external assistance within the Government's national development effort, the gap between external programming and the national development plan has, if anything, widened rather than narrowed. Caused by perceptual difficulties, this situation has in turn led to further perceptual difficulties, in turn reinforcing the gap.

122. Many years ago, development people began to realize that merely raising projects addressed to the most easily identifiable development needs was not

generating self-reliance. Very rightly, the concept of a "programme approach" (rather than project-by-project) was born. Before long the idea emerged of a "country programming process". This, however, led to a demand to see the result of such a process in packaged and accountability terms. Before long, what the original advocates intended to be an analytical and planning process for external assistance within national development planning became a donor instrument and document - the "country programme".

123. There has been ever-increasing adoption by donor sources - of the United Nations system and others - of their own "country programme". Review teams were told that a great deal of time has to be spent by both Government and external staff, separately and with each other, over these programmes and the documents presenting them, even when the financial volume of assistance involved in each such "country programme" would be a fraction of the country's total development investment. Government officials expressed dismay over the diversion of so much staff energy and time into negotiating what can nowadays easily aggregate to over a dozen such separate country programmes in a few years (all then lending to labours over many times that number of projects under each such country programme).

124. The existence of each such separate country programme - bearing the name of the United Nations organ or bilateral partne - then prompts donor supervisors and governors to seek "coherence" and "impact" in that programme, almost as though it were itself the national development plan of a country. Governments try to point out that the real test is whether there is coherence with their total plan, and what impact the external inputs would have on development in a given sector as a whole.

125. The formula in General Assembly resolution 32/197 for greater co-ordination and cohesion for the United Nations system's operational activities - that the UNDP country programme should become the "frame of reference" for all other activities in a country - was a compromise away from what was and still is needed. The "frame of reference" reflected refusals to integrate country-level funds of the United Nations system within a single programme. The idea of using the UNDP country programme at all, however, had itself been one step back from the real programming need - United Nations system programming, synchronous and integral with national cycle planning.

126. The compromise formula thus three times over evaded the fundamental concept originally laid down for United Nations system resources. The effort to make this compromise formula work further diverted everyone's attention for another decade from the primordial proposition - that there can be only one valid and viable "country programme" in a developing country, and it is that of the country itself, namely its own national development plan (or equivalent). External assistance should be planned within that national "country programming" exercise. Anything else is in one degree or another weakening not strengthening national capacity, externalizing not internalizing it.

127. If a country's national multi-year cycle for investments of resources in the various sectors is perceived as a grid on a computer screen, an effective -

including synchronous - programming of the country's external assistance will be dots or bars strategically placed in that grid to complete it, the dots or bars denoting the size of the inputs needed in different sectors or areas.

128. If external resource allocations and programming cycles are not synchronous with those of the country, then the grid will have weak patches in it upon the launching of the national plan. Attempts to add external inputs whenever confirmed donor cycle-allocations arrive will, as often as not, create major disturbances on it. To provide the "counterpart" resources that each asynchronous donor demands, the country's already planned domestic investments of people, money and materials will have to be readjusted and often diverted from ongoing development interventions; if they are not, the Government runs the risk that the donor will not provide funds. In addition, "projects" are often generated under vague claims that they "fit" national priorities but without the real test of a programme approach.

129. In these conditions, by the end of the country's national development cycle the "computer screen" of its (and everyone else's) efforts is pocked with illogical hieroglyphics - far more than from the country's own internal difficulties and management weaknesses, which are usually quite enough for it to cope with.

130. In a fully integrated and synchronized national country programme of external assistance, each individual donor's contribution is not, of course, so "visible"; the computer can be made to print out each donor's assistance, but it will appear as isolated dots or bars on an otherwise blank sheet of paper. The "coherence" (and the "impact") of the assistance is within the country's total planned development effort - it will not show itself if separately printed-out. Equally, if an attempt is made to "concentrate" that assistance for external purposes, for example, for external public-relations, the resource inputs will be in the wrong places on the total grid of the country's national development plan. Isolated dots or bars may look like "scatterization" of the donor's resources, but the only valid tests regarding scatterization are whether the smaller - because spread wider - investments are strategic in the country's plan and programmes and are designed to be effective therein. If the Government knew the forward external resources it could anticipate it would, of course, be in a better position to seek greater impact in concentration on strategic needs.

131. In synchronous programming, for needed "visibility" the effect of the present separate country programme document could still be obtained - but in a corollary document appearing with the country's national development plan. In the case of the United Nations system, this could contain all inputs of the system. The document for external purposes could be entitled "Country XY's United Nations system co-operation programme, 199 to 199 ", and each entity of the system could have its own section therein. The document could begin with the kind of "country statement" described by the Director-General (A/44/324-E/1989/106, annex, paras. 224-229) and currently under study by the ACC Consultative Committee on Substantive Questions (Operational Activities).

E. Conclusion

132. The problems for developing countries from the proliferation of separate, usually asynchronous "country programmes" now come in a common stream from many donor sources, including the United Nations system. The review teams found, as always, that the authorities make significant distinctions between what they hope could be improved in United Nations programming, and programming involving other donor sources. Although by now rather wary of optimism, they simply do expect more of the United Nations system in programming improvements. They hold these expectations because it is "the United Nations", which ought to set standards and to lead; because its resource flows arrive under the same one symbol; and because it cannot justify lack of coherence on grounds of individual national policies.

133. If the system is to be readjusted to enable it at last to take the lead in the one, elusive "country programming" that will do justice to developing country needs and to the purposes of operational activities, many practical deficiencies must be urgently addressed. Central among these is the question of multidisciplinary advice.

VII. PROVISION OF MULTIDISCIPLINARY ADVICE

134. The reviews have amply confirmed the need expressed by the General Assembly in resolution 32/197, and recurringly ever since, for the system to improve its ability to provide multidisciplinary advice and information to Governments. In paragraph 12 (c) of resolution 42/196, the Assembly, gave a particularly comprehensive brief on this for the reviews:

> "The United Nations system should improve its ability, at the field level, to respond to requests from developing countries for advice on developmental issues by, inter alia, enhancing its capacity for, and performance in, providing sectoral, multisectoral and integrated advice to Governments at their request, through, inter alia, increased co-ordination among the organizations of the system and improved technical backstopping".

A. The nature of the advice needed

135. It is important, first, to emphasize that these needs transcend factors of installed capacity in a developing country; they were expressed everywhere. In countries with strong capacities for analysis and planning, the expressed need is not for outright "advice", such as a least developed country may be able to obtain only from an international source; rather it is for the extra benefit from wider experience, and a wholly disinterested source of analysis and ideas. United Nations resident co-ordinators' reports also confirm that the need is extensive throughout the developing countries. Enhancing the capacity of the system to meet this need is therefore of major importance.

A neglected planning dimension

136. The problem begins at the level of development planning below national macro-economic analysis and above actual programme and project formulation. It is here that the most strategically sensitive analysis and planning for actual development investment must take place; here that a development intervention's economic (and social) goals must be clearly elaborated and tested for viability; here that all the domestic resources upon which the intervention will depend - including those outside its "home" sector - must be identified if they are to be marshalled for it; and here that the right mix of external resources must be formulated for it, with careful forecasting of capital needs. The lack of attention to this dimension far precedes the era of structural adjustment, and indeed has been a root cause of numerous earlier weak or failed development interventions, but it is particularly serious if such adjustment is to be part of an integral plan leading to restored, sustainable economic growth and vital social services.

137. In case after case cited to review teams (and known from other countries from other sources of information), the need for such advice arises when a Government is asking itself how to address a major development problem that has multiple roots and whose resolution will have wide ramifications - not merely the strengthening of one specific new capacity. In almost all developing countries, the accelerating search for strategies to address mass absolute poverty in rural areas translates into tightly integrated clusters of need for this multisectoral dimension of analysis and strategy formulation.

B.   Response of the United Nations system

138. The analysis of challenges like these, and the development of strategic planning options to address them call for minds that can "see over" traditional sectoral fences, minds that are not confined within single traditional disciplines, and minds that do not start, reflex-like, with "projects". It is evident that most Governments and resident co-ordinators have had great difficulty in securing these kinds of competence from within the United Nations system. One resident co-ordinator remarked that, "When the need is for helpful dialogue with Government about development - not a shopping list of projects - I feel very alone here. I look on the specialized agencies as specialized agencies, but their response is almost always in terms of project execution". Very similar observations were made by staff in other countries.

139. Governments sometimes resort instead to one of the international financial institutions for this kind of technical advice. If they succeed, they are usually satisfied with what they then obtain, but not necessarily in all areas. There is considerable caution about the inclination of lending institutions to apply cost-benefit criteria to such analyses. There would seem to be a preference for "the more neutral main United Nations system". Requesting such advice from a lending institution is sometimes also deferred lest this disturb ongoing negotiations with it in other areas. It was also remarked that "This kind of help

is precisely what we thought we could get from the main United Nations system
because it is supposed to be the precursor of capital investment". Lending
institutions themselves do not always want the semi-implicit commitment of lending
that may be inferred if they accept such requests. They also often prefer the
United Nations system of grant-funding organizations led by the resident
co-ordinator to carry through such analysis with the Government, in the belief that
the resultant programme proposal will have stronger government-wide commitment.
Clearly, the existence of some capacity in banks and other capital lending sources
to meet this need does not obviate the paramount importance of enhancement by the
United Nations system of grant-funding organizations of its ability to provide such
assistance.

140. In several least developed countries, existing mechanisms, which have been set
up to foster a higher degree of co-ordination among donors in strategy and input
formulation, such as the UNDP-sponsored round tables or the World Bank-supported
consultative groups, are well appreciated by national officials. Another
appreciated element in the preparation of capacity-building programmes is the
National Technical Co-operation Assessment Programme (NaTCAP). Some officials,
however, expressed scepticism and mistrust about the ultimate aim of these
exercises.

1. Sectoral advice

141. The service that the system could provide by strengthening these capacities
was illustrated by a country's experience with external assistance for its energy
sector. No less than four separate donor sectoral reviews were carried out within
about two years by teams that collected data and then wrote up their reviews at
their respective headquarters. One donor pointed out that this disparate process
could have been avoided if the United Nations system had helped Government to
assemble and then to maintain, one "master sector analysis" to which all donors
could refer and within which they could propose programmes.

142. It has been traditional to use the phrase "sectoral and multisectoral" in
describing this vital area. It is, of course, possible that the kind of advice
needed lies neatly within a sector. There is, however, a growing awareness that
the traditional sectoral analysis will not, in many instances, adequately cover
this type of need. On all sides, "sectors" are increasingly perceived to sprout
lateral planning and resource shoots into other such sectors. For example,
oil-seed production and processing not only relate to agriculture but industry, and
therefore energy as well, and not only these, but the whole web of factors involved
in transport and in marketing, to name only a few of the lateral shoots.

2. Systemic challenges to the structures of the United Nations

143. The traditional sectors are also increasingly seen as heavily interdependent
with areas that do not "belong" to any one or even more of them - areas that are
thus not only multisectoral, but systemic. These now more clearly perceived

systemic analytical and planning needs are causing serious difficulties for
Governments, themselves largely organized according to the traditional sectors and
disciplines. Their frustration is the greater when they find that the United
Nations system is no better adjusted than they are to meet these more real
development needs. Poverty and environmental degradation do not obligingly slice
themselves into the sovereignties and sectors into which Governments have divided
the United Nations system.

144. A senior government specialist in water resources remarked that, "In the
United Nations system water is nobody's child, but everyone claims to be related".
He went on, "Somebody comes and gives us inputs on dam design, somebody else on
water measurement, somebody else says they can do water quality - but we cannot get
help on a comprehensive water resources strategy". He thought that there should be
one natural resources capacity in the United Nations for these purposes, drawing on
all elements of the system, and outside it, as necessary. The identical view was
heard about water resources in another country. These are even more important in
light of the Secretary-General's recent warning that the lack of linkages between
water resources authorities and those concerned with national and regional economic
development might lead to distortions in investment priorities and project design
(see E/C.7/1989/8).

145. It was recognized that all sectoral institutions of the system (and of
Governments) must be environmentally aware, but at the crucial analytical and
planning stage this leaves a major vacuum. Team members heard such telling remarks
as, "Everyone in the United Nations system seems to have a piece of environment
now; but who has the whole view? - we must be able to get this, without conditions,
from the United Nations which is supposed to lead". In another country the
Government was confronted by "all sorts of ideas from every donor on environment,
and an argument among United Nations agencies". There are no grounds for special
indictment of a set of United Nations institutions created by Governments that have
themselves only recently seen the domestic structural implications of environmental
issues, but addressing the multilateral dimension of this problem is urgent.
Impartial help from the United Nations system, free of conditionalities and in a
fully integrated manner, is needed now in all environment-related fields.

3. Impact on projects

146. The difficulty for Governments and resident co-ordinators in obtaining
multidisciplinary assistance for situation-analysis and option-formulation on many
needs has then resulted in a cascade-like effect on actual projects, all along the
project cycle. Some consequences were noted earlier in section IV; some others may
be summarized here.

147. One planner remarked that at the design stage, "The economics of a needed
technology are almost always absent in formulation, because they only send the
technologist". In another country the advent of informatics had resulted in
separate informatics projects assisted by United Nations agencies and other donors
in many sectoral ministries; now, a complicated attempt at rationalization is

necessary because there had been no prior multisectoral situation and need analysis. Yet again, projects are designed that separately nibble only around some of the edges of an integral development problem: this can happen because new emphases in intergovernmental mandates cause neglect of wider programming. One country's ministry of health said that each United Nations organization and other donors, want to "pick and choose" only "what currently interests them". In other instances, although the development need is palpably plurisectoral, under external-agency execution modalities it proves impossible to put together a pluri-agency project, and an indivisible intervention is therefore sliced into separate single-agency projects.

148. It was also urged that, if not at the outset, then at least at the mid-term review of a project, there should be an economic assessment so that early enough judgement could be made of "where the project is really leading us". Review teams heard of many projects that were receiving insufficient technical backstopping.

4. Evaluation

149. Technical analysis and formulation of options necessary before consideration of projects are equally needed in evaluating results, because a project worth its investment is supposed to lead to growth beyond its own parameters. Governments wish to have help from the system with advice on what strategic increment they can aim for as a result of a project - where next to go for the larger development result. The diagnoses heard suggest that the present construct of project evaluation - or certainly what has been practised to date - needs re-examination . One official's observation was reflective of many such comments received by the teams: "Evaluation reports by the United Nations are often far too narrow, only on the project's own mechanistic implementation, not on its wider impact, the further needs it should have exposed, its larger sectoral - maybe even multisectoral - implications".

C. Origins of the problem

150. Despite so much urging of "the programme approach", over the years most of the operational activities of the system have become more and more project-driven, and less and less programme-constructed. More recently, human and material resources have been invested in the uppermost level, the national/external macro-economic, and the lowest level, that of project delivery, but neglect of the vital intermediate dimension described above has persisted.

151. From the best of intentions and with impatient parliaments and publics pressing them, the general donor community has pressed the United Nations system for rapid expenditure of contributions, which has translated into even more rapid formulation and launching of projects. It has been suggested that this rapid project generation is because of the lure of the 13 per cent overhead for the executing agencies, but this neglects the parallel pressure for delivery as such. Faced with these demands, specialized agencies have in turn concentrated on finding

and deploying project-level competences. As earlier noted, their governing bodies
have not allowed them to use their regular budgets to maintain adequate staff
capacities for multidisciplinary analysis and advice. Meanwhile and in turn, the
United Nations funds have concentrated at the country level on managing and
administering inputs into the large numbers of projects.

152. The pressures for "projects" have been all pervasive. Many specialized agency
staff at country level feel that their performance reports depend on being seen by
their headquarters to generate projects (not infrequently a key source of their
resentment of the UNDP resident representative as a barrier to funding of such
projects). The country-level staff of the United Nations funding organizations
have also acquired a strong sense that their performance is not judged on their
development knowledge but on their project delivery record. This has been
especially strong amid the recurring "roller-coaster" syndrome, where temporary
cuts in resources due to fluctuations among donors or exchange rates are inevitably
followed by dips in the project pipeline, these in turn prompting urgent
instructions from headquarters to "speed up" and report high levels of new project
launchings. In the ensuing rush back up the delivery slope, it is again situation
analysis and strategic programme planning that are overlooked.

153. The pressures for project delivery have also affected the training of
country-level staff, which has for many years focused on project administration, so
that many are inadequately equipped for work on this middle stratum of the
development process. Yet the best of them, including country agency staff, are all
too aware of the pitfalls of inadequate prior programme analysis and strategy
formulation.

154. The drive for project-level delivery and constraints on use of regular budgets
have also affected the breadth of analytical capacity that the sectoral agencies
can make available from their headquarters even within their sector. Increasingly
government planners, and even more so resident co-ordinators, are nervous about
requesting agency help for these planning dimensions lest the one who arrives is a
specialist and enthusiast of only part of the "sectoral" problem and may proffer
only partial recommendations. The fact that agencies are expected to be able to
perform the dual roles of project execution and technical advice can also generate
doubt as to their impartiality in the latter role, an invidious situation that
deserves consideration.

155. Finally, adding to the diversion away from the vital middle level of analysis
and planning there has been the already noted inordinate amount of effort and
energy devoted to more and more separate country programmes. Governments of
developing countries have had to try to match these concentrations on
donor-by-donor country programme exercises, on the one hand, and the cumbersome
paper flow demanded of them for projects, on the other, in many instances sapping
their own capacities to attend to the vital middle.

D. Conclusions

156. It may be seen from the foregoing that, in reflecting the need for such technical advice and dialogue, the General Assembly is opening up long-neglected questions about the realities of good development planning and programming and about many aspects of the directives that governing bodies have given the system. It is clear from the 1989 review and earlier reviews, and from many other sources of assessment, that the capacities and services that agencies and other elements of the United Nations system make available to developing countries need readjusting. Since pluridisciplinary, "above- and before-project" advice from the United Nations system of grant-funding institutions is sought along the whole spectrum of countries - those with weak capacities all the way to those with strong analytical and planning capacities - the problem is not one of "changing needs". These needs have been there all along; it has only taken time and costly experience to identify them more fully.

157. As the long-awaited wider consensus for national execution of projects now takes effect and the agencies of the United Nations system are increasingly liberated from project-administration work-loads, they can seize the opportunity, and indeed must be encouraged, to take up the challenge of more consistently providing, on request, this kind of help. (The support costs study commissioned by the UNDP Governing Council will presumably address the question of financing these kinds of services.)

158. This major transformation of the primary thrust of agencies for operational activities and of the provision of resources for them will not, however, be easy, even for those types of technical advice whose disciplinary range falls within a single agency's "house". Internal restructuring, redeployment and likely retraining of headquarters, regional and country staff will in some instances be crucial.

159. For many such needs, however, the United Nations system is presently not appropriately structured. At the least, therefore, ways must be found to overcome more consistently, at the country level, these structural constraints of the global level. The practical kind of solution was illustrated by one planner who asked, "Is it really beyond possibility to have the area of such multisectoral needs delineated, all United Nations system agencies with the capability to help are lined up in a team by the resident co-ordinator, and they work on the problem with a parallel multidisciplinary team from government?" These and other implications for the country-level work of the system stemming from the reviews are addressed later in this report.

160. Enhancing the system's capacities in this middle stratum clearly also calls for greater understanding throughout the development community that financing this situation analysis and strategic programming work is not merely as important as the more dynamic seeming "operational" projects - it is the very make-or-break of most such projects themselves.

161. Finally, the issues exposed regarding such technical advice include one that permeates the whole development co-operation community, not only the United Nations system. Development takes time if it is to be real development. To leap downwards from the national macro-economic dimension straight into projects may indeed spend money quickly; it will seldom spend money wisely, and with enduring effect.

VIII.   POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

162. Between the needs for improvement in operational activities so far reviewed and the decisive advance forward called for by the General Assembly, there stands a dense jungle of disparate and top-heavy policies and procedures. The system should not only be leading in efficiency in any case; it actually offers services in training for good development management and administration.

163. The review teams examined policies and procedures no less than all other elements in their brief, from the perspective of the point of intended action and benefit - the country level - and from there back outward to regional and headquarters levels. Most of the teams heard particularly strong language on this subject.

A.   Strategy and formulation

164. Each United Nations funding agency has its own elaborate guidelines, prepared at its headquarters, for the development of its strategy documents that form the basis for allocation of its resources to a developing country. The jargon embedded in these guidelines often has to be deciphered by a country officer of the fund before many government colleagues can grasp what may (only may) be intended. The impediment is of course aggravated wherever government staff really think in a tongue other than one of the official ones. At once, this lack of user-friendly language places a constraint upon a Government's ability fully to participate in the development of a strategy for its own country.

165. Each United Nations funding agency has a different time period for its allocation and programme cycles; therefore, the process of strategy formulation and ensuing country programming is by separate dialogue with the Government; therefore, the Government cannot bring these United Nations system strategies and allocations together even among themselves, leave alone with its own national cycle and planning process.

166. At every stage along the spectrum of work traced in this section it must again be borne in mind that, in addition to the United Nations system, the Government is simultaneously having to cope with anything up to another dozen - or more - comparable, and just as separate, often just as impenetrable sets of policies and procedures for the strategies, country programmes, et cetera, of each bilateral and multilateral donor outside the United Nations system.

B. Project documents

167. Each United Nations organization has its own project document format. Some are more simple than others; review teams were told that they are "more or less the same" - but each bit of "more" and each bit of "less" add up to more work for national colleagues.

168. Where a headquarters has to approve a project, the total process causes delays from about six months to two years. The apparent primary cause is that the draft project document does a great deal of global travelling - back and forth between Government, country and headquarters offices and their approval committees, with much more than overnights at these four stops while its precise wording is contemplated, improvement in a sentence or two requested, the exquisitely important difference is discussed with the harried government colleague, the redraft is duly approved for resubmission, and the global travelling resumes.

169. Government officials and their project managers expressed considerable bewilderment to review teams because they could so seldom perceive, in what was finally approved, any substantive improvement that would enhance the development soundness and sustainability of the project. It seemed to them that many headquarters queries are either from lack of knowledge of the country or about wording changes to "make the project hang together better". The problem in this for country-level development workers is that they know that rather more than precision of words is what will or will not make a project "hang together" and that the elements on paper are seldom those that constitute the real adhesive. The critically important work of situation analysis, formulation of options and programme approach at the country level - the keys to better design - cannot receive sufficient attention at that very level because no one has enough time while moving these project-level documents back and forth across the planet.

C. Project approval processes

170. The foregoing drafting exercises are only the beginning of a process that leads to the approval of a project. Authority to approve projects - as to where and as to up to how much - varies widely. In UNICEF, once a country programme and operations plan has been approved by its governing body, the UNICEF representative in a country has total approval authority. Thereafter, the pattern is diverse. One fund must have all projects approved at its headquarters, and any costing over $250,000 by its governing body. In another fund the country director can approve up to 25 per cent of the total cycle allocation if below $250,000; if above it is at headquarters. In another the country representative can approve up to $700,000 per project but no project that is nationally executed, "innovative" or "complex".

171. It was pointed out to review teams that all these differentials, by themselves, make joint programming within the United Nations system unlikely in the extreme. One happily decentralized fund representative averred that he would be "crazy" to try the joint programming his headquarters had urged him to seek - it would mean that "everyone else would hold us back from getting on with some work".

172. By the time many project documents are approved, inflation has often already eaten into their costings - or soon does - and their budgets must therefore be "revised". Again, UNICEF allows this at the country level. Elsewhere, Planet Earth sees much further global travelling of draft and then ultimately final "project revision" papers, each under further different rules per United Nations organization. And again, each earth-shakingly vital difference must be understood and followed by government staff, as they wrestle with an even larger volume of procedural mysteries emanating from the rest of the international co-operation community.

D. Reporting

173. Still, however, reporting awaits:

(a) Each United Nations organization has its own project-reporting format, of different size. One is a blissful two pages; another 14; one requires the Government to go through 40 pages, and a complex project with several outputs can require as many as 60 pages.

(b) The periodicity of the reporting requirement also differs from quarterly, to biennial, to annual.

(c) Then there are different kinds of reports - there may be financial (monthly), technical, and "progress" reports for Government to complete and send away.

(d) National project directors resignedly explained to review teams that the foregoing was sometimes only the beginning of it: for some projects they had to prepare three different reports, one for the Government, one for the United Nations funding agency, and then one for the United Nations executing agency.

(e) It was also pointed out that for geographically spread projects a report may require collecting and then aggregating widely scattered bits of data from different provinces and remote areas - every time the report had to be submitted. This could be done less frequently.

(f) A ministry that has projects with several United Nations agencies will prepare thousands of pages over a six-month period; the staff start on "the next one" as soon as they have finished "the last one".

174. Reporting for the international development community (including the United Nations system) has thus become almost a sub-industry in many developing countries.

E. Procurement

175. In United Nations agency-executed projects the hiring of specialists, placement of fellowships and procurement of equipment beyond $20,000 is centralized

at headquarters. There were serious delays in the delivery of such inputs.
Officials also complained that centralization seemed to combine with insufficient
capacity at headquarters, since there are so many instances of inappropriate
specialists and/or equipment, fellowships nominally placed at institutions but
without follow-up to ensure individual attention to the trainees' needs. National
policies on standardization of basic equipment were often not followed at the
headquarters, resulting in proliferation of brands with subsequent training and
maintenance difficulties for the Government. For the sophisticated needs of some
projects, it was doubted from experience whether the United Nations system had the
up-to-date international knowledge and contacts necessary, leave alone the capacity
to devote individualized attention, from headquarters levels, to the needs of each
country and of each project within each country.

F. Work-load

176. It is clear that the tangled web of United Nations system procedures and those
of other assistance sources imposes an excessive work-load on developing country
Governments that can ill-afford the staff for such purposes, as illustrated by the
following examples:

(a) One sectoral ministry alone was having to employ some 25 professionals
solely to deal with the reporting requirements of all donors. One bilateral agency
requires submission of some 80 items of information each month.

(b) One United Nations funding organization now requires the maintenance of a
financial structure consisting of up to (i) a core budget, (ii) an extrabudgetary
budget, (iii) a cost-sharing budget, and (iv) an add-on funds budget, each in turn
with runs of components.

(c) The project document and other requirements of specialized and technical
agencies for their own funded projects are comparatively simple and show signs of
effort to make them less burdensome. The procedures they have to follow as
executing agents, along with Governments and country-level staff, seem from the
country level to be made more and more intricate by the funding organization.

177. Again, the point was made that, because of these complex and individual sets
of procedures, no one in the relationship had the staff time to devote proper
attention to what was supposed to be all-important - the design, coherence, impact
and sustainability of externally assisted development interventions, as shown as
follows:

(a) In Government, professionals who have received the technical training for
development work are consumed instead with filling and moving pieces of paper for
external agencies.

(b) United Nations system country offices have to share or in some instances
shoulder much of the burdens of the system's own procedures. As a result,

professional programme officers lack adequate time for pre-programming analysis, programme-approach based design, and substantive monitoring of projects.

(c)   In the projects themselves, international chief technical advisers and national managers, who are supposed to be the action-point foci of substantive, technical and monitoring work, are also caught up in the unending cycle of forms and procedures instead, what some of them call "clerical work".

(d)   Finally, at the headquarters of funds and agencies, the multiplication of steps and schedules and procedures imposed on the country level ironically generates its own work-load there as well, so that technical support takes a secondary position.   The view from the country level is that more staff are added at headquarters, but to deal with the further procedures set up by the headquarters, not for more substantive support.

G.   National execution

178. Against the foregoing picture, it is not surprising that Governments and country-level United Nations system staff demand real and uniform decentralization and simplification of United Nations system rules and their harmonization with those of the Government.   Governments, however, also unanimously claim that the special rules and procedures for national execution currently required by two major funding organizations are even more, not less, complicated and burdensome, as follows:

(a)   Every nationally executed project must be audited, where United Nations executing agencies are required to audit only a small percentage of projects they execute.   Government auditing services are more than fully burdened with auditing government programmes.   Many Governments point to a major illogicality in this special rule for national execution, because when funds from the same financing organization are transferred to them - the same Government - through United Nations executing agencies, these are not audited.

(b)   United Nations funding agencies require a special account to be opened by the Government in convertible currency for each nationally executed project.   A quarterly advance is then transferred, but on a line-by-line request basis; United Nations executing agencies rece' quarterly lump sum advances for all projects they execute, everywhere.

(c)   Similar special complications have been introduced into procurement rules for nationally executed projects, and project reporting systems.

179. Officials in most countries expressed themselves in no uncertain terms on these experiences:

(a)   Some pointed out that, of course, if United Nations funding agencies create especially complicated and cumbersome procedures for national execution, it is easy for them then to claim that this modality is difficult to implement.

(b)   Some commented (as did country-level United Nations staff) that the rules
had recently been made even more complex; that country offices had been refused
extra staff to help comply with them; and that the headquarters had recentralized
some procedures.

(c)   Enough instances of remuneration problems in hiring skilled national
specialists were cited, in various countries, to warrant fresh in-depth examination
of this issue.

(d)   Since all nationally executed projects in the case of one organization
have to be approved at its headquarters, officials cited concrete instances where,
because of the serious delays experienced in securing approvals, they had been
compelled to agree to a United Nations agency execution that was otherwise
unnecessary but could be quickly approved because its costs were within current
country-level approval authority.

(e)   Finally, as noted earlier in this report, one Government took the
decision during a review team's visit actually to halt all requests for national
execution altogether - solely because it had to judge that it was simply not worth
the diversion of so many staff to cope with the procedures demanded. The ministry
concerned had one accountant for all government transactions, but had to hire a
second solely for a few nationally executed projects, and could not handle any more
under the prevailing procedures.

H.   Conclusions

180. The review teams found an often discouraging picture regarding procedures for
development co-operation:

(a)   Proper accountability must be assured, but it is the development
objective that should govern and be facilitated by procedure, not the other way
around.

(b)   Development means working with scarce resources. It is damaging to
development to impose administrative rules that, far from releasing human
capacities for the substantive and technical work, increasingly divert them. The
cost-benefit of procedures in these terms must be properly assessed.

(c)   Development requires optimum co-ordination. Disparate and discordant
procedures place major obstacles to effective co-ordination at the country point of
action.

(d)   National execution is the paramount modality to realize strengthened
capacities in developing countries and to reduce their unnatural dependencies.
Some United Nations funds and many bilateral agencies have proven that this is
entirely possible. Rules and procedures for this modality must be simplified and
decentralized.

181. It must thus be a major focus of all concerned urgently to ensure that all United Nations entities engaged in operational activities unwind red tape from substantive development work, harmonize their rules and procedures with each other and with each Government and decentralize execution and real authority to the country level.

182. Development does entail risk. It demands creativity, innovation and sensitivity to local culture. It does indeed require sound management, but sound management designed from the point of the work, which is the country level, not distant headquarters. As one United Nations representative summed it up to a review team, "Only through decentralization and familiarity with the country can appropriate management techniques be applied".

IX. CO-ORDINATION AND COHERENCE

183. The review teams found a high degree of interest in co-ordination and coherence, and this matches much other evidence of more and more awareness of the need for this elusive element in the development process - in Governments, in the United Nations system, and in the rest of the development co-operation community. The long hiatus in real progress was reflected in initial scepticism, but whenever the subject was pursued and it was explained that the General Assembly was taking the problem very seriously, all concerned voiced views and ideas. The scarcity of funds for development amid so much indebtedness, the accumulated record of isolated projects that "went nowhere", and the immensity of co-ordination needs in addressing now better perceived problems like environmental degradation are heightening concern about co-ordination at the country level no less than in the General Assembly or in donor meetings.

184. An additional spur to improve co-ordination was found, as always, in the ironic experience of the system when faced with the challenges of major emergencies. In most of the countries visited by review teams the United Nations resident co-ordinators and all other United Nations system people on the ground had recently been confronted by such challenges as massive civil disruption by narcotics traffickers (Colombia), drought (Ethiopia, India and the Niger), a vicious hurricane (Jamaica), and the pervasive devastation of years of civil war (Uganda). In the view of Governments and the local diplomatic and donor communities, the responses of the United Nations system to these emergencies had been remarkable. Common features have been quick mounting of information systems and single comprehensive needs surveys, well-co-ordinated emergency operations where requested by Governments, in many instances saving many lives and natural resource assets, and prompt follow-up technical assistance initiatives of a high order.

185. In such circumstances, issues of "mandate" and "turf" largely evaporate; country-level staff feel rather more able to join together without fear of frowns from distant headquarters, so that ground-level ingenuity and innovation thrive; and donor representatives can perceive the unique role of the United Nations system's special partnership with Government and country. The experience

invariably leaves all concerned with the question, if for emergencies, why not for the slogging work of development - since poverty and under-capacitation are themselves human emergencies, only less vivid, less reported, more prolonged?

186. There may be three answers. One most certainly is that country-level emergency is the great decentralizer: local staff often do not wait for instructions from a headquarters that cannot even begin to consider what it should instruct without information from those they normally do instruct. The second is a corollary, that emergency can be a great co-ordinator: local staff, most of whom alway~ want to co-ordinate because they are close to the interface with human need, feel compelled and able to take more risk _vis-à-vis_ headquarters sensitivities.

187. The third answer may be as important in the search for clues to the perennial problem for development. Because of the separatist and even competitive structure bestowed upon the United Nations system by Governments, it has been almost destined, its staff almost ordained, to spend more time debating who is to be co-ordinated by whom (if at all), than what needs to be co-ordinated. In emergencies, however, the "what?" is starkly clear and, on the ground at least, the "who?" becomes embarrassing.

A. Co-ordination in development

188. For the context of this analysis, it may be useful to recall what needs to be co-ordinated in operational activities for development of the United Nations system. This is best defined outward from the nexus with development's silent emergency, from the interface with poverty and under-capacitation:

(a) Poverty is tightly co-ordinated and simply gloats with complacency when an attempt is made to penetrate its ramparts only at one narrow point (for example, safe drinking water may be provided, but it will not eliminate gastroenteritis and may not even remain safe for long if the environment is unsanitary in terms of human wastes, other sources of disease, or chemical pollution). Therefore, the planning of development interventions must be co-ordinated, within or more often across "sectors". Everywhere, there is increased recognition that this requires the kind of multidisciplinary analysis, strategic planning and programme approach discussed earlier.

(b) Effective advisory assistance from the United Nations system to Governments in these processes depends in turn on the system's analytical capacities - spread among organisations that Member States have structured separately - being adequately co-ordinated.

(c) Working outward again from the interface with poverty, material assistance to developing countries to support their development interventions must be properly meshed in their own national development plans and programmes if it is to be optimally effective. The programming of such funds, expertise, equipment and training and their investment in projects must therefore be co-ordinated by Governments. Governments of developing countries have, however, varying degrees of

capacity to do this co-ordination. Even where there is good capacity, Governments wish that the United Nations system could present its resources in an already co-ordinated manner. Where there is weaker capacity, Governments continue to request the United Nations system to play an active operational role in such co-ordination, and they are the first to say that this cannot be effective if the United Nations system itself is poorly co-ordinated. A Deputy Prime Minister expressed the strong wish for the United Nations system's help in co-ordinating all external assistance but said, "First, may I suggest, you have got to get your own act together". Earlier notions of "additionality" through separate funding channels seem to be increasingly discarded, as not worth the drain on national human resources of handling separately presented and timed United Nations system resource-flows (along with the many separately presented donor flows).

(d) There is also need for much better co-ordination of projects supported by the United Nations system. Opportunities for creative mutual reinforcement, even the coalescing of differently funded projects, are often missed. Many staff are aware of this.

(e) Ad_Hoc projects need to be co-ordinated. The perennial injection of non-or low-priority projects through inadequate co-ordination is also increasingly judged perhaps not worth whatever "additionalities" may result. A senior aid co-ordinator of a Government fully equipped to do its own co-ordination remarked that a single, unified United Nations system structure in the country would be of considerable help in reducing this phenomenon. More than one resident co-ordinator pointed out that projects trust-funded by an ad_hoc donor often end when the donor's funds give out, but are then brought to the local UNDP (or other United Nations fund's) door for continued support.

189. For the representatives and staff of the United Nations system at country level, the issue of United Nations system co-ordination inevitably divides between those in and of the UNDP office, and the rest. Few within the UNDP offices can find any useful advance in the United Nations resident co-ordinator formula to date. The typical comment is that "It has just made more complicated what we were all along trying to achieve without it", but with concomitant recognition that not much can be achieved given existing structures and lack of uniform policy expressed by Member States. For other staff of the United Nations system, if a generalization is possible it may be that they are caught in dilemma between an impatient awareness that there ought to be far better co-ordination and a countervailing awareness that this is not yet the policy that emanates down to them from their headquarters. Review teams often heard it said by staff that even with the best "personality mixes" on the ground, locally initiated co-ordination could go only just so far: "Beyond that, it will only happen if it is agreed at headquarters".

190. Most representatives of bilateral and other multilateral donors interviewed by review teams indicated strong support for co-ordinating roles among United Nations system organizations, notwithstanding that there is a certain degree of competitiveness among bilateral donor agencies for high visibility or strong impact projects. Awareness of the dichotomy between country level and headquarters was

also expressed, one ambassador noting that "the country level is doing fairly well" and that for further improvement "the first steps have to be taken at headquarters levels". Bilateral donors seem to be increasingly aware that the unique multilateral partnership relationship of the United Nations system to Government can enable the best elaboration of government commitments for major development undertakings that they could then join with greater assurance of success. In some instances representatives of lending institutions voiced the same view.

B. Who should co-ordinate?

191. The question "Who should co-ordinate?" is indeed important once the question "What to co-ordinate?" has been properly addressed. There were many interesting discussions about who could best fulfil United Nations co-ordination roles as requested by Governments. A common theme, perhaps reflecting deeper thinking in recent years, was that everyone must; that by definition, no one official could do it alone. The idea of clusters of co-ordination on integrated development themes or areas is stronger than in the past, but there was also common agreement that some one official must still manage and correlate all forms of co-ordination, even if delegating the work to partners.

192. There is now more open debate about the role of "money power" relative to who co-ordinates, because, on one hand, the World Bank has increased its country-level representations and, on the other, in many countries UNICEF and/or WFP have become nearly as large as, or larger than UNDP in assistance volumes. It is impossible to summarize this kind of debate, as in a poll, but the following are perhaps prevailing views:

(a) The power money (and conditionality) of the World Bank is acknowledged everywhere, but this does not seem to lead to any clear view that the World Bank should automatically assume ongoing, public co-ordinating functions in support of Government. In general, it seems to be felt that it is the United Nations - weaker in money power but stronger in unconditionality - that should maintain such co-ordination roles as each Government desires. Some World Bank officials themselves indicated that they would not wish to see the Bank try to assume this role.

(b) The predominant view is still that UNDP, as the most comprehensive centrepiece of the United Nations system of grant-funding organizations, is nearest to the "obvious" co-ordinator. Increasingly, however, the lines seem blurred as to whether people mean "UNDP" or the United Nations resident co-ordinator function, with the possibility still speculated that this official should not also have line management functions.

C. The dual focus of co-ordination

193. It follows from the foregoing that the actual needs of co-ordination in operational activities are focused at the country level, but to meet them in full

requires concomitant co-ordination within the United Nations system at the global, inter-headquarters and governing body level, in the following manners:

(a)   For countries where a Government may lack interdisciplinary capacities and thus requests assistance in situation analysis and options formulation, a co-ordinated response may be necessary from several headquarters (possibly regional) levels in each case.

(b)   If the financial resources available to a country from the system are to be synchronized with the country's planning cycle, a common headquarters agreement will be necessary.

(c)   If there is to be improved programming of all United Nations system resources within the process of the country's national development programming, numerous entities of the system are going to have to co-ordinate their agreement to this - and to such a truly United Nations system exercise with Government being led by someone for the system, presumably the United Nations resident co-ordinator.

(d)   And if the obvious, practical desideratum for co-ordination is a unified structure of the whole United Nations system at the country level, this too will require global-level co-ordinated agreement.

D.   "Authority" and co-ordination

194. Most of these desiderata (and in some respects more) were endorsed by the General Assembly in its resolution 32/197, 12 years ago.   At the country level, the key instrumentality for all such co-ordination was stipulated as the single designated official who - after four years of negotiation - became entitled the United Nations resident co-ordinator.   As it became evident that this figure was not achieving enough improved co-ordination, a succession of General Assembly and other resolutions called for increased "authority" for the resident co-ordinator.

195. The reviews have confirmed that this "authority" approach has not worked either.   The picture that emerges from the reviews is a quite close reflection of what is known more generally about this question:

(a)   Many resident co-ordinators are able to achieve moderately good co-ordination in some of the easiest respects.   This, however, is not from acceptance of "authority" in any legal sense, but from each representative of other United Nations system entities accepting his or her leadership because of qualities of intellect, personality, initiative in substantive dialogue with them, and ability to "animate" collaboration.   The same essential qualities influence the perspective of Government on the resident co-ordinator's role.

(b)   The necessary relationship among United Nations system staff is, however, totally reciprocal.   If senior staff of other United Nations system organizations lack the ability to recognize intellectual leadership, do not have a collaborative

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personality or are afraid to co-ordinate lest this be frowned upon by their
headquarters, the most perfectly equipped resident co-ordinator will be powerless.
In one country the enabling qualities for resident co-ordinator had been reversed
from negative to positive in one succession, producing promising signs that the new
resident co-ordinator would be able to overcome the negative legacies. In another
country, a change in the representation of a major agency promised altogether
better collaboration than had been seen for years.

(c) A certain balance of reciprocality having thus been noted, it is also
evident from all reports that the onus is on the resident co-ordinator to "bring
out the best" in all colleagues. Where the co-ordinator has been unable to achieve
even the minimum, it has usually been because of lack of intellectual authority and
requisite personality even to start to animate colleagues to accept collegial
leadership. Having no instructions from their headquarters requiring them to
accept his or her authority on legal grounds, various of those colleagues are
either unwilling to "be co-ordinated" on any other grounds or have strongly reacted
to a deficient resident co-ordinator's attempts to assert such authority over them
in purely formalistic ways.

196. The failure of the "authority" prescription that emerges through these
scenarios should not be surprising. Authority for the resident co-ordinator, in
the legal sense could only emanate from higher-level legal authority, but because
of the way in which Governments have constructed the United Nations system, the
Secretary-General and his representatives do not have such legal authority over
large and powerful parts of it that possess their own sovereignties. With the
Secretary-General lacking such invested authority himself, it could be applied in
the system as it is presently structured only if all Governments were able to
co-ordinate their own policy-expressions and to repeat, through their delegations
in all other forums of the system, what they have called for in the General
Assembly. This, patently, has not been happening.

E. Co-ordination so far

197. Against this background, it is important to be clear about what even the best
co-ordinating leadership - not authority - can achieve to date, against the basic
desiderata outlined earlier:

(a) In the best circumstances, there have been exemplary instances of getting
the relevant parts of the system to work together with Government on a
multidisciplinary analysis and strategy-formulation exercise. This shows what can
be done, rather than what is generally done.

(b) Co-ordination begins with the organized and continuous sharing of
information, and this has been recognized in inter-agency discussions. There have
been many instances of readiness to share development data and other information,
through the resident co-ordinator. Where this is attempted, however, it was
emphasized to review teams (and is emphasized in reports from other countries) that
the United Nations system is not staffed and structured at the country level to

make the best use of such assembled information in any continuous manner. As one co-ordinator remarked, "Data itself, pouring onto my desk, is useless: someone has to have the time, free from daily project administrative work, to organise and analyse it for all of us even to see what co-ordination needs or opportunities it may reveal".

(c) In the best circumstances, the resident co-ordinator runs a recurring programme of meetings with all elements of the United Nations system in the country, taking care that the agenda is substantive - not merely everyone telling each other what they are doing in any case, while organizing appropriate task forces to handle joint administrative and logistical needs, attempts to expand sharing of premises etc. This prescription, now also endorsed at inter-agency level, does not happen everywhere, and it takes but one period of a purely formalistic, "flag-flying" United Nations resident co-ordinator/UNDP resident representative to ruin the atmosphere for meaningful meetings for a long time. Equally, if other senior United Nations system officials rely on flag-flying, they will themselves make meetings formalistic.

(d) There are variations in formulae of meetings. Some effective resident co-ordinators encourage rotation of chairing and hosting of United Nations system meetings. Some point out that, for substantive, programme-oriented co-ordination, it is often better to convene meetings of only the agencies directly involved in a given development problem with the ongoing results then reported to all system meetings.

(e) Outside of some first results from the JCGP initiatives, it is the local coinciding by chance of congenial personalities and the ability to think beyond one's own institution that produce ad hoc co-ordinated programming of projects. Even here, however, there is not a standing sense of this being fundamental United Nations system policy that all system staff members should energetically apply.

(f) In the best cases of a co-ordinative climate, there has been good preliminary consultation on country programmes. There have also been sectoral analysis missions for country programme reviews. Whether, however, country programmes can be synchronized - and even more, whether they can be synchronized with the country's own national development cycle - is subject to chance rather than policy in the absence of any outright instructions to this effect from the relevant headquarters.

(g) The extent to which the resident co-ordinator can "catch" proposed separate projects trust-funded by United Nations agencies and try to ensure that they fit with and support government-agreed priorities for United Nations system activity is subject to wide variation. It can happen where an agency representative genuinely wishes to achieve the maximum incremental effect and is willing to risk frowns from his or her headquarters, and such qualities do exist among agency representatives at country level. It can happen if the multi-bilateral donor insists on first checking with the resident co-ordinator. It can also happen, ironically, if the agency in question will have to ask the UNDP office to administer such a project. It does not happen by virtue of any

established system-wide policy directives. It does not even consistently happen
with UNDP-administered associated funds.

F.   Conclusions

198. The foregoing canvas offers plenty of hope, but also some sharp pointers
towards what real progress will realistically require. At this juncture, much
depends on how far Governments of Member States wish to move to prepare the United
Nations system for its ever more complex responsibilities in the 1990s and beyond.
The range of options has long been laid out through earlier studies commissioned by
the General Assembly. All of them pre-supposed that effective restructuring and
improved co-ordination at the global, inter-headquarters level would be reflected
to the country level.

199. The reviews confirm that there is an improved attitudinal climate, within
Governments and within the United Nations system, for serious effort to achieve
better co-ordination. The forces that have probably engendered this improved
climate would seem to include a far greater appreciation of the complex, holistic
nature of the development process and of the clumsiness of the system's traditional
vertical structures - created as mirror-images of the structures of Governments -
in face of so resiliently co-ordinated an antagonist as poverty. Awareness of the
scarcity of development co-operation resources and of the adverse external economic
environment within which developing countries must strive to advance, is a further
contributing factor. To all these influences towards improving co-ordination is
now added the recent exponentially increased understanding of the tenacious and
systemic threat to the finite natural environment of unrestrained modern
technology, presumptive development "models" and increasing population. Last but
not at all least, there is the idealism and commitment, despite all their
frustrations, of the thousands of United Nations system staff across the world
engaged in operational activities, who are impatient to be given the improved
structures and other resources with which they know they could do a better job for
the peoples they seek to serve.

200. The paramount perspective of this report is the country level. The clear
implication of the past history of attempted reforms that start with the global
level and are supposed to be reflected operationally at the country level is that
by the time all the compromises have been made globally, little that is meaningful
has survived to reach the developing countries. Isolated pieces of reform are
adopted, without their reinforcing elements, and are therefore inherently weak.
When these truncated bits of reform do not seem to work, the global level tries to
add prescriptions to make them work, consuming much further time and further
overloading the system. It is proposed, therefore, to conclude this report with a
picture reversing the historical sequence - starting with what is needed at the
country level - and what should be possible to attain at least there, where the
price of failure to mount a co-ordinated attack on poverty affects hundreds of
millions of human beings.

X. COUNTRY-LEVEL ORGANIZATION IN THE UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM

201. An attempt will be made here to describe the desiderata for more cohesive, cost-effective operational activities at the country level.

A. Principles

202. Operational activities are based upon a number of principles, the elaboration of which is the more important because the General Assembly's view has rightly become much more country-specific:

(a) Member States might agree that, however long the negotiation of the chosen reforms may take for the United Nations system globally, the provision of what developing countries need now from the system at the country level should be set in motion forthwith.

(b) Reforms in organization, in procedure and in people for the country level must enable and facilitate a number of common features in operational activities, but there can be no single "model". Reforms must be flexible enough to meet the differing needs of each developing country - and changes in those differing needs. Poverty wins over bureaucratic rigidity every time.

(c) It is the prerogative of the Government in each country to indicate how it wishes the United Nations system to be deployed in its development co-operation.

(d) There are no perfect institutional saints and no mere sinner organizations in the United Nations system's weaknesses in operational activities; nor is there anything writ in sacred stone about the present structures at the country level.

(e) Headquarters officials should consider reforms from the perspective of that point of action. What may be convenient and tidy at the global level may be damagingly obstructive of development at the country level. International "identity" for purposes of resource mobilization can be preserved; but poverty thrives on institutional chauvinism.

(f) In several countries, it was felt that senior- and middle-level headquarters management, administration and policy staff were out of touch with reality and too far removed from country operations to understand the problems of everyday programme management. It was suggested by several interlocutors that these staff should not only visit country offices and action projects more often, but that they may even gain by spending a few weeks in a given country, participating directly in programme implementation with country officials and United Nations staff. This would seem to be an excellent idea.

(g) The arguments for maintaining separate organizational establishments at the country level are plainly insupportable when all evidence indicates the need

for the closest possible meshing of scarce co-operation resources, and when the
demarcations between "sectors" - or yesterday's individual "themes" - are
increasingly exposed as artificial. Each organization of the United Nations system
is, however, entitled to demand that unification at the country level positively
leads to even better use of its intellectual capacities, not to a dulling and
formalistic domination.

(h) The human capacities of the United Nations system are its most precious
asset in operational activities. The most apparently appropriate structure for the
country level may prove little better than what now exists, if commensurate
investment is not made in providing highest-calibre intellectual leadership which
does not exist in every country - and in refitting and then continuously nourishing
all other human resources of the United Nations system.

(i) The staff members employed by the United Nations system for operational
activities in developing countries are not there as part of some global structure
of such employment in all Member States, for this does not exist. They are
temporary development workers; their priority work is to make themselves redundant
by helping to strengthen equivalent capacities in the country itself. Reform in
country-level organization should be designed to rationalize the total pool of
posts around changed functions; country office staffing for a number of functions
should be reducing as national capacities to take these over are expanded.

203. These principles are offered as the bases for needed reforms in structure,
procedure, and people of the United Nations system at country level, starting with
people. The essence of the challenge here is in the General Assembly's request, in
paragraph 23 of its resolution 42/196, for an assessment of "the resources required
by the resident co-ordinators to carry out their increasing responsibilities,
taking into account differing national situations".

B. A new development service team

204. It is clear from the present reviews and other contemporary reports that the
United Nations system at the country level should be reorganized, the better to
meet needs that are both above and before projects and that will in turn improve
its project work. A new kind of development service team is needed.

205. Its composition must be country specific; it must respond to each developing
country's expressed needs of United Nations system services at a given time. The
overall construct, however, can be described quite clearly.

206. The United Nations resident co-ordinator should be the intellectual leader and
animator of what might be called a created team of leaders and co-ordinators. This
is not a play on words. It fills in a missing prescription in earlier definitions
of "team leadership", which usually assumed that the problem was merely to
establish that whoever happened to be the UNDP resident representative should be
primus inter pares among whomever also happened to be on the ground, separately
chosen and deployed, from other organizations and agencies of the system.

207. The primary functions of a created, not accidental, team would be to provid,
Government with ongoing multidisciplinary programming advice and dialogue above and
before individual project formulation, and then to follow through on this work:

(a)   The team would help Governments to plan and carry out the situation
analyses whose crucial need has been described earlier. The team member most
qualified in a specific development area would be the leader and co-ordinator of
such an exercise.

(b)   Upon the advent of each new ational planning cycle, the team would
assist the Government in identifying the United Nations system's co-operation
components in that national plan and, if so requested by the Government, would
endeavour to ensure optimum meshing of other external assistance in the national
plan as well.

(c)   The team would provide the multidisciplinary planning frames for
formulation, first, of programmes to address given plurisectoral and sectoral
needs, then, of projects under those programmes to be supported by the United
Nations system, and if so requested also helping Government to identify all
possible other external inputs.

(d)   The team would have as one of its key responsibilities helping both the
strengthening and the optimum use of national capacities, above all for government
design and management of development processes and co-ordination of external
co-operation. The team would be a major new, focused resource for the acceleration
of national execution. It would also be a new creative focus for assisting the
country to share its own capacities with and to draw on the capacities of other
developing countries (TCDC and ECDC).

(e)   The team would also act as a key ongoing source of planning (and trouble
shooting) advice on systemic factors in the development process such as
environmental conservation and repair, women in development, popular participation
and communication support, disaster preparedness etc. A key team member might be
identified as the focus-leader and co-ordinator for all United Nations system
support of social aspects of development.

(f)   The team would, further, provide relevant multidisciplinary information
for ongoing and final evaluation of programmes and projects, those supported by the
United Nations system and whatever others Government might identify.

208. The composition of this new kind of team would be prescribed for each forward
period according to the development priorities of the country and its special
external co-operation needs (United Nations system and other if requested). Each
such United Nations system country team might comprise two types of capacity:

(a)   The first element would be development professionals resident in the
country: (i) national professionals to provide a strong endogenous analytical
capacity; (ii) internationals, where external knowledge is preferable for a given

development area, primarily coming from within the United Nations system but, where necessary, recruited from outside it.

(b) Again, depending entirely on each country's identified forward needs, the second element in the composition of this team would be professionals "callable" in from a neighbouring country, a regional or headquarters office, or from outside line staff altogether if the needs so indicate, but closely following that particular country's development in the needed field.

(c) The "callable" component is exceptionally important. It could not be envisaged that all the development disciplines a country might need could be reflected in a resident team. The "callable" element would make new and serious demands on the regional and headquarters capacities of the system, which must be geared up accordingly.

209. To call this proposal a "new" team concept is really only to say that it is newly reproposed. The team concept has been recurringly urged from many quarters, and yet again emerges from the reviews. The question really is, what would it take actually to implement this rather obvious innovation?

C. New policies for cohesion

210. The physical unification of representation and staffing of the United Nations system at the country level can no longer be a serious issue. It has been called for by the General Assembly with increasing specificity over more than 20 years; it has been accepted as a goal at the inter-agency level; and the only acceptable qualifications of such unification can be special geographical needs in the capital city of one or two country-level elements of the system, at most. It was not raised as a priority in every country, but officials so long conscious of the lack of uniform headquarters-level policies are unlikely to perceive much progress coming from physical unification by itself. Not surprisingly, in one instance a review team heard the thought that, under existing circumstances, physical unification might even generate "more tension".

211. The paramount issue concerns the present separate lines of employment, policy and programme direction, representation and reporting of various organizations, some of the United Nations itself, some of specialized agencies. The resolution of all of these issues clearly touches upon global agreement in one degree or another, as outlined earlier. The immediate practical question is, can all entities of the United Nations system (governing bodies as well as senior officials) be persuaded now at least to make certain desirable changes in all developing countries? These desiderata naturally start with objectives which should govern policy and procedure, and structure. They would call for all organizations of the system:

(a) To amend their policies and procedures, as necessary, to enable the synchronization of their allocation cycles with the cycle of each developing country (this would give a further dimension of meaning to the concept of

indicative planning figures, where global cycles would not synchronise with those of various developing countries).

(b) To agree that, on the request of the Government of a developing country, their "country programme" (or equivalent) would become a component of "the United Nations system co-operation programme" in the national development plan (or equivalent), as earlier outlined.

(c) To agree that their presently separate situation analyses and needs assessment exercises would be carried out as an integral part of the team planning and programming exercise for this new unified United Nations system co-operation programme. This would both save much valuable staff time covering the same statistical and other grounds, and would at last ensure the full meaning of such goals as integrating population factors in development, planning for children and youth within national development, national human development planning, integrating natural resource-base management in development etc.

(d) To agree to pool their resources to create, in each country, an efficient single development information system for multisectoral data assembly and analysis (including skills availability and requirements), for programming and cross-analysis, and to provide an electronic nodal point to enable the country to gain access to and contribute to international data networks and the United Nations system's banks of development experience.

(e) To agree further that ad hoc supplementary project proposals would in all cases be tested against national priorities and, if acceptable, would become part of the ongoing United Nations system co-operation programme.

(f) To agree forthwith to join in a combined government-United Nations system review of all existing project procedures expressly to harmonize those of the system with those of the Government (where indicated, of course, improving the latter as well).

(g) To integrate into such revised procedures a very considerable further, and uniform, decentralization of programme approval authority to the country level.

(h) Finally, to agree to make available to a common United Nations system development service team their best talents - resident or "callable" - for the kind of work outlined above.

D. The right mix of human capacities

212. Like everything else about the United Nations system, the acceptability of such a proposal will depend finally - as will, and above all, its effectiveness - on the quality of the human capacities made available at country level. The often expressed fears of United Nations advocacy programmes, long accustomed to their own standards of programming, of being submerged in mediocrity and mechanistic meetings in the name of co-ordination, cannot be ignored - nor, however, can the conviction

of many that they could greatly enhance the United Nations system's efforts in human development if they could work more closely with the rest of the system at the country level. The many difficulties encountered by UNDP resident representatives in obtaining sect ral or plurisectoral advice from relevant agencies that is both timely and of high quality must equally be addressed. The concerns of specialized agencies that the global experience they have accumulated is ignored by funding organs are also constraining factors that must be recognized. The new construct must thus and above all enable all organizations to feel that it will respect and stretch their capacities to the utmost and best and that they are joining a genuinely collective leadership structure.

213. The new country teams of the United Nations system would, however, require major effort in identification of talent, in more substantive training and retraining and in ongoing intellectual nourishment by all concerned organizations. Some indications of the profiles are given hereunder.

1. The United Nations resident co-ordinator

214. A fresh "profile" for the United Nations resident co-ordinator is needed. Much more is required in this profile than has been iterated to date or than necessarily arises through the career service of any one organization. The demands, when properly identified, are for 110 or so exceptional persons of outstanding calibre. The profile should include the following:

(a) Far before competence at the project level, the incumbent must have the deep experience and the intellectual capacity to see development as a whole, not to be expert in all fields and sectors, but to know what questions have to be asked, what analytical and programming linkages must be tested and formulated. The ability to comprehend systemic factors and forces in development - for example, to perceive the social and environmental and cultural implications of any given proposed intervention - and to perceive economic and fiscal linkages are also essential.

(b) The "big mind" that this requires must be accompanied by the essential highly sensitive personality traits of a real leader and animator. The decentralization urged throughout this report should be extended to this post; the incumbent should be fully ready and able to delegate substantive responsibilities to team members. A good United Nations resident co-ordinator does not need legal authority; people respond to leadership of mind, of experience and of a personality that encourages and ensures visible credit for initiative.

(c) Such a person will be able, at root, to generate confidence - in the Government, among United Nations system colleagues and among the rest of the donor community - confidence based upon appropriate modesty, a demonstrable "development intellect", an exceptional ability to become at home with the indigenous culture and value-system of the host country, and a clear ability to organize team work.

(d)   He or she must be very substantially liberated from line project management duties. The question as to whether a full-time resident co-ordinator should be employed by any operational organization will not go away. The fact that it recurs underlines, as found by the reviews and voluminous other observation and reporting from a great many countries, that the real resident co-ordinator function is an all-consuming one. Release from daily project work-load is one of those resources whose identification the General Assembly has requested.

(e)   To the extent possible, the optimum profile for the resident co-ordinator should be drawn in relation to the total development team needed for each country. This complementarity will better assure "leadership of a team of leaders and co-ordinators".

2.   Other team members

215. The essential profile for the membership of the new development teams may be adduced from observations made in section VIII. Drawing upon the kinds of qualities noted above for the resident co-ordinator, the profile should also include the following:

(a)   By definition, the resident members of the team must between them encompass adequately specialized knowledge in each of the country's highest priority objectives for forward development.

(b)   It is essential, however, that (as one resident co-ordinator remarked to a review team) each member has "a development mind". In other words he or she must not be only a sectoral or sub-sectoral technician, but must be of the calibre to lead and co-ordinate situation analyses, work with Government on the formulation of strategic programme options, and be fully capable of helping Government, upon request, in its dialogue with all donors.

(c)   The "callable" members of each team must be as country-specific as its resident members. In most instances their profiles would probably be drawn from other, but not the highest national development priorities over the forward period. The choice might well also depend on the timing of the national effort in a given development area. United Nations system organizations offering such "callable" members would be expected to sustain these country-related commitments.

(d)   It would be logical that bodies of the United Nations development system currently posting representatives to countries would offer them as team members. Thus, the senior officers of funding and technical organizations would be members of the team. For other team needs according to national priorities, a United Nations agency might have to deploy a high-calibre line staff member (or outside recruit). It must be emphasized that the team construct would undoubtedly require an upgrading of development competence (which is not the same as running projects) at the country level.

216. Pending such restructuring of development teams as Governments may address in the future, it seems obvious that existing funding would be maintained for team members contributed with existing country posts and that for new deployments and costs of the work of the "callable" team members appropriate pro-rations between operational funds and regular budgets might be worked out. It is hoped that the report of the UNDP Governing Council's expert group on support costs may be helpful in this regard.

217. It must, however, be clear that creating such United Nations system development teams will call for the kind of genuine pulling together and overcoming of ostensible bureaucratic obstacles that ought to be a hallmark of the United Nations, at least at the interface with poverty. Advocacy organizations should welcome the opportunity to ensure far more integration of the goals and techniques of their programme, with greater resultant impact. Specialized agencies should find in the new country-level construct a major new opportunity for their most creative and innovative work.

E. Unified United Nations system country structure

218. As has already been suggested, the time has obviously arrived to move to implementation of the call of the General Assembly in its resolution 32/197 for a single United Nations system office in developing countries. The full organizational details for such offices need not be elaborated here. However, the following desiderata may assist:

(a) Each such office would be headed by the United Nations resident co-ordinator, leading the team of leaders and co-ordinators whose composition and required capacities would be determined by the country's needs, not by the global structure of the United Nations system. The team would be assisted by a small staff, principally to run the integrated development information systems earlier described.

(b) Deputies or assistants would assume major working responsibility for the ongoing management of projects supported by the relevant fund or agency so that the team members would not be encumbered by such work, although acting as advisers as necessary.

(c) Organizations with country-level programme officer posts would contribute some of them to pooled assignments based upon the country's priority development thrusts, such as human development, on an integrated basis. All such organization within the unified office would be country- and need-specific - for example, in a least-developed country there might be need for a training specialist, serving all training requirements of co-operation programmes of the United Nations system, and advising Government on its wider needs in training programme and technique. Other examples of this kind include pooled staff in the fields of women in development, communication support and participation by non-governmental organizations.

(d) Within the unified structure, project-support functions could well be handled on a pooled-staff basis, especially as project procedures are simplified and harmonized both within the system and with Government.

(e) Fresh assessments, however, should be made in many countries to determine what project-support administrative functions now undertaken in country offices should, subject to sound international accountability, be devolving into and thus strengthening the capacities of the Government.

219. The evolution of unified offices (or perhaps United Nations system services) should be specially monitored by the Director-General in close consultation with the heads of all participating entities, so that both positive and negative experiences can be captured and appropriate adjustments made. An early start should be made with a first 10 or 12 such offices to evolve and test modalities.

F. Staff training and nourishment

220. The serious need for more substantive, development training of United Nations system staff serving at the country level, so often heard as an appeal from them and so often noted in reviews and reports, must now be systematically addressed. The need for general professional upgrading indicated in this report and the advent of unified country services with theme assignments rather than agency and project assignments will make the long delay in tackling this problem insupportable. The staff college for the system as a whole, proposed so many times, should now be established - not at one campus, but economically along the lines of the United Nations University, drawing on the resources of many academic and training institutions across the world.

221. A second major and neglected requirement is the ongoing nourishment of staff and their national associates with substantive information about development experience, issues and options. Country-level staff have repeatedly voiced this need. It should be an integral feature of the unified country services.

G. Oversight by the United Nations system

222. The many improvements suggested for country-level work and organization will inevitably involve experimentation and ongoing adjustment, under the overall leadership of the Director-General for Development and International Economic Co-operation. A considerable degree of collegial inter-agency trust and confidence, very clearly supported by Governments in all governing bodies, would be required.

XI. CONCLUSION

223. This report, as forecast, has concentrated on problems that must be faced by a United Nations system whose operational activities have a remarkable record of over 40 years. In the countries visited by review teams, many of their discussions took place in national institutions whose key contribution to development today reflects the sustained, unglamorous capacity-building work by all entities of the United Nations system. In every country, there were examples of both sound and steady development co-operation work and of unusually imaginative special efforts.

224. It is, indeed, because of its generally good record and the potential that this demonstrates that the United Nations system is challenged to do better again and to face unresolved problems. That was the universal theme encountered by the review teams, as no less reflected in all other reports taken into consideration in this paper.

225. The proposals in this report will relieve the system from constraints in order to build upon its achievements in service to the developing countries even more creatively.

226. Only poverty should fear these suggested reforms.