

# Evaluation System of the United Nations Development Programme

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## SUMMARY

The UNDP tripartite evaluation system is a very influential one in the United Nations system. In the light of the interest which the Administrator and the Governing Council expressed in 1982 in further improvements to this system and JIU's own past series of reports dealing with aspects of the UNDP evaluation system, JIU decided to undertake this study.

This report is in agreement with the general thrust and many of the points made in the Administrator's own concurrent report on this subject, and especially with the need to re-establish a central evaluation unit in UNDP as soon as possible.

UNDP has long engaged in an extensive range of evaluation activities, but in recent years its overall evaluation system has not operated as productively and cohesively as it should. New system management arrangements are needed to strengthen the evaluation system on an integrated basis. The Administrator should take action to:

- ensure that future terms of reference and guidance for the evaluation system clearly define its purposes, functions and role as an essential element within UNDP operations which focuses management attention on results obtained in the light of objectives and on a continuous process of learning and improvement (Chapters II and VIII).
- re-establish a small central evaluation unit in UNDP headquarters as the "focal point" to lead, co-ordinate, support and oversee a network of clear evaluation responsibilities and activities in field offices, governments and executing agencies, and UNDP regional bureaus and other units (Chapter III).
- combine results-oriented tripartite reviews, more disciplined project evaluations, an evaluative component in country programming, and a tighter programme of thematic evaluations into a well-organized structure to determine effectiveness and improve operations (Chapter IV).
- strengthen key linkages of evaluation with the new project design process, with governments through increased support to their evaluation efforts, and with executing agencies through a new inter-agency working group on evaluation (Chapter V).
- ensure effective system operation and improvement through revised responsibilities and processes, particularly in the central evaluation unit, for evaluation planning and oversight, evaluation guidelines and training, and systematic analysis of evaluation information and its orderly feedback into operations (Chapter VI).
- combine and co-ordinate each of the above elements at the central evaluation unit and bureau level for overall assessment of UNDP technical co-operation activities and reporting on Programme effectiveness to the Administrator and the Governing Council (Chapter VII).



## I. INTRODUCTION

1. Among international organizations, the evaluation system of UNDP is a particularly important one. UNDP is the world's largest channel for multilateral technical and pre-investment co-operation, currently financing about 4,600 operational projects in virtually every economic and social sector. UNDP has a worldwide network of more than 100 field offices supporting programmes in some 150 developing countries. Its "tripartite" system of operations links governments, whose projects UNDP assists, with 27 "executing" agencies of the United Nations system who contribute to these projects in their fields of expertise. UNDP has also been given important team leadership and co-ordination responsibilities in the technical co-operation activities of the United Nations system, particularly at the country level, by the series of restructuring resolutions of the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council.
2. The Joint Inspection Unit (JIU) has given this significant UNDP role special attention in its past reports on evaluation in the United Nations system. The first JIU status report (77/1) cited the potential of UNDP's evaluation framework for shaping the then limited evaluation activities within the system. The report on the role of experts in development co-operation (78/3) stressed the importance of tripartite evaluation efforts in increasing technical co-operation effectiveness, and the evaluation of United Nations system technical co-operation activities in Sri Lanka (79/16) emphasized the importance of improving field-level design, review and evaluation processes.
3. The second JIU system-wide evaluation status reports (81/5 and 81/6) highlighted the co-operative and potential leadership role of the UNDP evaluation system, the need to further strengthen its major components, and the need to designate full-time staff to further develop and guide this process. The most recent report (82/12) notes the important role which UNDP can also play in United Nations system co-operation in developing evaluation by governments.
4. JIU decided to make this separate study of the UNDP evaluation system as a result of the significant actions presently being considered for the future development of the system in the light of the Administrator's proposals and the ensuing discussions and decisions at the twenty-ninth session of the Governing Council in June 1982. In decision 28/15 the Council noted the Administrator's comments on evaluation, JIU reports 81/5 and 81/6, and the significant progress being made in the evaluation of programme activities; welcomed the Administrator's initiative to study a further improvement in the evaluation system, including the possible establishment of an independent evaluation unit; and invited the Administrator to report on these matters at its thirtieth session.
5. The study requested from the Administrator, entitled "Arrangements for the Evaluation of the Results and of the Effectiveness of the Programme", was submitted to the Intersessional Committee of the Whole of the Governing Council in December 1982 as UNDP document DP/1983/ICW/6. In the interests of brevity, this report does not repeat the conceptual and cost/benefit discussions and the general description of the UNDP evaluation system contained in the first three sections of that report.
6. The Inspector is in agreement with the general thrust and many of the points made in the Administrator's report. In particular, he strongly supports the proposal to re-establish a central evaluation unit in UNDP, which should be done as soon as possible. The following Chapters discuss the essential role which evaluation is expected to play within the total UNDP management system (Chapter II), the network of evaluation responsibilities headed by the central unit which is needed (Chapter III), and the elements, relationships, and operational and reporting functions of the evaluation system which should be strengthened in a co-ordinated way (Chapters IV through VII).

## II. IMPORTANCE OF EVALUATION IN UNDP OPERATIONS

7. Evaluation has been a part of UNDP operations almost since its inception in 1966, as indicated by the following brief chronology.

1967: An independent Evaluation Division was established in the Bureau of External Relations, Evaluation and Reports. Its seven professional staff were to carry out a programme of sectoral, project, country programme and special evaluation studies and report on their results to the Administrator and Governing Council (DP/L.68).

1969: The Study of the Capacity of the United Nations Development System (the "Capacity Study") proposed a comprehensive, controlled evaluation system as part of a decentralized management system. Evaluation was to be an indispensable and "constant thread running through all other phases" of the development co-operation cycle, which would provide operational control and assessment of results to maintain accountability and improve operations.

1970: The Consensus of the Governing Council (incorporated in General Assembly resolution 2688(XXV)) recognized evaluation as a basic phase of the development co-operation cycle and called for monitoring at the country level and for selective and tripartite evaluation restricted to the minimum essential and made with the agreement of the government concerned. It also stated that the more rational and effective procedures for evaluation and follow-up envisaged in the country programming approach must be fully reflected in organizational restructuring at the headquarters level.

1973: Tripartite reviews were added to project and country programme evaluation work. Project evaluation responsibilities were largely shifted to the field and the regional bureaus, and central staff attention focused on development of evaluation guidelines, training, a memory bank, and sectoral studies. The Evaluation Division, however, was disbanded and merged into the Programme Policy and Planning staff at headquarters, in part to develop better feedback from evaluation findings (DP/48).

1975: The Administrator proposed "new dimensions" of technical co-operation, with the main goal of making UNDP more and more results or achievement-oriented rather than rule-oriented, and he cited the need for more systematic evaluation efforts to this end (DP/114). The Governing Council and General Assembly adopted the "new dimensions" (Assembly resolution 3405(XXX)), including the statement that "technical co-operation should be seen in terms of output or the results to be achieved, rather than in terms of input".

1976: The Administrator reported that the restructuring and decentralization of UNDP operations was "virtually complete" and that a new, comprehensive Policy and Procedures Manual had been issued as a first major step towards "quality control" in project management. Evaluation activities were therefore undergoing a "major shift" from concern with improving the concept and process of technical co-operation activities to specific studies of programme substance (DP/184). As part of a headquarters re-organization, and to "sharpen the tools of analysis and evaluation", headquarters evaluation and policy responsibilities were joined with technical advisory work in a new Bureau for Programme Policy and Evaluation (BPEE) (DP/255).

1977: As part of an exploration of possible developments to enhance the Programme's effectiveness, the Administrator proposed a broader, more systematic approach to evaluation processes (DP/261). The Governing Council (decision 77/47) requested him, in full co-operation with the agencies, to consolidate the planning, appraisal and evaluation of technical co-operation activities into a "comprehensive system of analysis and feedback".



1978-1982: The Administrator prepared a series of reports with proposals for further developing evaluation activities (DP/319, /448, /558). Related Governing Council decisions have supported further strengthening and actions to ensure effective operation of the evaluation system (decisions 25/8, 79/10, 79/48, 80/22, 81/21, and 82/15), all leading towards the proposals being made in 1983.

8. This brief overview indicates that a process which began with a comprehensive and orderly evaluation system development effort during the late 1960s and early 1970s somehow lost its momentum during the mid-1970s, leading to the current concerns with ensuring the effectiveness of the evaluation system and proposals to further develop and strengthen it. While many factors are of course involved, the Inspector believes that one key problem stands out: the gradual loss of a firm, specific central responsibility for maintenance and improvement of the UNDP evaluation system.

9. The activities of the Evaluation Division in the early 1970s established a basic overall framework for UNDP evaluation by 1975, and many evaluation activities were then being (and still are) carried out throughout the UNDP structure. But the Evaluation Division itself had been disbanded in 1973, and in the shift of responsibilities to the Programme Policy and Planning staff in 1973 and then to BPPE in 1976, evaluation staff resources gradually dwindled away and central evaluation responsibilities became more and more vague. Although the possible re-establishment of a small full-time evaluation staff was discussed in the Governing Council in 1978 (E/1978/53/Rev. 1), this was not acted upon. Subsequent evaluation activity in BPPE was essentially limited to participation by technical advisers in thematic evaluations and in project evaluations, and evaluation efforts in the regional bureaus were also limited.

10. Since 1978, a BPPE technical adviser in trade and international finance matters has been designated as a part-time evaluation officer. He and his division Director have recently spent much of their time in developing various proposals for strengthening evaluation activities. In general, however, the sustained efforts needed to effectively maintain, further develop and oversee operations of the UNDP evaluation system have been crowded out by other work and treated on an ad hoc and informal basis. The "system" has thus largely been left to struggle along on its own with a widely-dispersed and ambiguous operational structure and activities in the field, in the regional bureaus, and in BPPE. In order to correct this situation and ensure that the evaluation system will operate smoothly and effectively, new system management arrangements are needed.

11. The 1981 JIU second report on evaluation in the United Nations system (81/6) stressed the importance of central evaluation units as "focal points" for internal evaluation systems, and their role as a central oversight, supportive and coordinative "balance-wheel" to ensure the quality and performance of the overall system. The Inspector believes that the re-establishment of a distinct central evaluation unit in UNDP, much like the one which existed from 1967-1973, is an urgent priority.

12. This step would be much more than just a new bureaucratic arrangement. UNDP policy statements over the years, as outlined above, have emphasized the importance of a coherent and fully effective evaluation system and have also stressed results and effectiveness. The UNDP evaluation system and its activities should be a dynamic force within UNDP operations, continually assisting UNDP and its partners to achieve established project and programme objectives with the highest possible quality. To better realize these goals, the Inspector believes a new central unit, a re-vitalized network of evaluation responsibilities, and a co-ordinated strengthening of the components of the evaluation system is required.

### III. CENTRAL EVALUATION UNIT

13. The new central evaluation unit of UNDP should be established as the focal point and leader of a network of clear evaluation responsibilities and activities assigned throughout the organization and within the tripartite system. The unit should be small, but with sufficient highly-qualified staff to handle the important functions assigned to it. It should possess the appropriate degree of "independence" and a suitable location within the headquarters structure. These aspects are discussed in the following sections.

#### A. Evaluation network and responsibilities

14. In order to realize the guidance of the Consensus that evaluation should be a basic phase of the development co-operation cycle, responsibilities for evaluation need to be clearly established at all UNDP operating levels, and carefully organized as a co-ordinated and complementary network to ensure effective implementation of the programme and to improve its results.

15. Field offices Within UNDP's highly decentralized, worldwide management system, primary responsibility for programming and implementation, monitoring and review, reporting, and oversight of project formulation and appraisal rests with the field offices. They have in particular a very important role to play in carrying out tripartite reviews, and they are also important in initiating in-depth project evaluations. Resident representatives and their staffs have responsibility not only to carry out these substantive functions, but to help lead and co-ordinate them as well: General Assembly resolution 34/213 charges United Nations system resident co-ordinators, almost all of whom are UNDP resident representatives, with evolving, in accord with the governments concerned, a multidisciplinary dimension in the programming, implementation and evaluation of sectoral development assistance programmes.

16. In recent years, however, UNDP monitoring and evaluation responsibilities in the field have become rather unclear. There is a need to make these responsibilities a more explicit and significant part of the basic job description of resident representatives and their programme officers, and to review their performance in providing "quality control" of their programmes as an important element in assessing their overall performance. In the largest offices, an evaluation officer should be designated, and in all field offices the monitoring and evaluation function should be made a more specific responsibility. To facilitate and support this field level work, however, increased clarification and acceptance of monitoring and evaluation responsibilities is needed among other system participants as well.

17. Governments and executing agencies In UNDP's tripartite evaluation system, recipient governments and executing agencies have partnership responsibilities for the effective implementation of the programmes. This shared responsibility has tended to blur evaluation actions, use and follow-up in the past. Evaluation linkages and responsibilities between UNDP and its partners therefore need to be clarified and more continuously maintained, as discussed further in Chapter V.

18. Headquarters bureaus UNDP regional bureaus provide a direct link between the Administrator and the resident representatives, and have an important share of the general responsibility for tripartite reviews and in-depth project evaluations. At present there is a wide diversity of monitoring and evaluation methods, initiatives and activities among the regional bureaus, many of which are quite constructive. However, even these activities tend to be ad hoc, and specific regional bureau responsibilities are sometimes rather unclear.

19. This situation could be better organized and the overall evaluation system strengthened if each regional bureau designated a full-time evaluation officer, probably within the programme support unit which each has in some form. These officers could maintain an overview of monitoring, design and evaluation work in their regions, oversee its quality, provide advice and support to operating and field staff, organize bureau activities in this area, serve a liaison function, and provide reporting and feedback. Other UNDP units and special-purpose funds should develop similar "contact point" responsibilities, with the extent of the functions adjusted to unit size and programme nature.

20. Other staff To ensure that evaluation and its results emphasis is an integral part of UNDP operations, other qualified headquarters staff and senior field staff between assignments should also participate in evaluation work. In particular, they could help staff individual project evaluation missions and thematic evaluation work. Consultants could also be a significant source for this work.

21. Central evaluation unit The central unit would have the critical overall responsibility for oversight, support, leadership and quality control of the UNDP evaluation system, with direct links to each of the other elements above. As stated previously, it would serve as the "focal point" and "balance wheel" of this network. By pulling together the results of the work of the other components in the network, the central unit would also greatly facilitate the exercise of the Administrator's accountability and responsibility to the Governing Council for implementation of all phases of the programme, as well as the Council's overall responsibility for ensuring that programme resources are employed with maximum effectiveness in assisting the development of the developing countries.

#### B. Size and staffing

22. The actual size of the central evaluation unit would of course depend on the specific tasks and responsibilities assigned to it. These functions are discussed in more detail in the next four Chapters (which concern basic elements of the evaluation system, key linkages, system operational services, and reporting activities) and are summarized in Recommendation 3 in the final Chapter. However, there are three main "clusters" of these functions which will determine the unit's eventual size and which should also determine its work priorities.

23. The first and most essential central unit function should be to strengthen and "manage" the overall evaluation system by providing leadership, guidelines, training, planning, co-ordination, oversight, support and liaison services and activities on a continuous basis. This entails actions to further develop and improve the evaluation system to ensure that it operates smoothly and effectively, and to encourage and sustain the results emphasis throughout the UNDP programme. The Inspector believes that this heavy workload would require three to four full-time professional staff. In addition, it would hardly be possible to accomplish all the necessary tasks immediately: they should be gradually implemented by the unit on a phased but coherent basis.

24. The second important function is reporting, in conjunction with the designated evaluation officers in the regional bureaus and other units: analyzing the findings produced by the evaluation system and reporting the results, lessons learned and actions taken to the Administrator and through him to the Governing Council on a regular basis. This function (discussed further in Chapter VII) would require at least another one to two full-time professional staff in the central unit.

25. The third function - direct participation in evaluation work - is a necessary one. It should, however, be limited so that the central staff can concentrate on the critical system management and reporting functions which they alone can best carry out rather than their becoming bogged down in conducting individual evaluation studies. The Inspector believes that the central unit should be involved in efforts to assist evaluation by governments (see Chapter V.B), should help develop a strategy for and oversee the quality of thematic evaluations (see Chapter IV.D.), and should participate selectively in tripartite reviews and in-depth project evaluations to help ensure their further development and quality.

26. The need for any additional central unit staff in this third area would depend on the decisions of the Administrator and the Governing Council as to how many thematic and other special evaluation studies, including ex post evaluations, UNDP should undertake. Relevant considerations, in addition to the danger of diversion of central staff time, would include the coverage desired and feasible, the additional costs involved, and the emphasis on closely-controlled evaluation of the Consensus. This function might thus require no additional or several central unit staff, and/or provision for a certain number of consultant staff-years.

27. The central evaluation unit would thus require an absolute minimum of four to six full-time professional staff for its basic system management, improvement and reporting functions, plus a unit head and appropriate support staff. Other professional staff might be added to the unit initially or gradually, depending on the amount of further reporting, direct evaluation work, or other new tasks the unit is assigned. To maintain the essential perspective on evaluation as a normal and integral management activity which is carried on throughout the UNDP system, however, the Inspector believes that the central evaluation unit should remain a relatively small one.

28. Staff selection for evaluation is also very important. Staff members and consultants who participate in project and thematic evaluations should have good substantive backgrounds and experience with evaluation methods and work. The staff selected for the central evaluation unit itself should be highly-qualified people with well-developed skills in evaluation and in management systems development. The head of the unit, in particular, should be a person of considerable evaluation stature and experience, given his heavy responsibilities for assisting the Administrator in maintaining and expanding the overall effectiveness of the UNDP programme through leadership, co-ordination, and support for the evaluation system.

### C. Independence

29. In its 1981 report on evaluation status (81/6), the JIU stated that most organizations of the United Nations system were using "built-in self-evaluation" as the basic component of their evaluation systems. As the phrase indicates, this approach is not very "independent" (free of control, influence or affiliation) because it calls on managers to assess their own projects using an established format. Two other approaches, evaluation by staff from elsewhere in the organization or by a central evaluation unit, provide more independence since these people are not directly associated with the work being assessed. A fourth approach, evaluation by consultants or external evaluators, would be considered even more independent, since they are not a part of the organization at all.

30. The JIU report notes that the advantages of built-in self-evaluation which have led to its growing use are that it: provides widespread evaluation coverage of the organization's activities at relatively low cost, through its built-in nature; gives rapid feedback to managers who can best use it; helps integrate evaluation as a normal part of the management process; increases staff commit-

ment to and acceptance of evaluation through its participative character; and can be conveniently aggregated through its common format for systematic operational analysis and reporting. External independent evaluation, in contrast, would not provide these advantages, but would offer fresh perspectives, a more "in-depth" and sophisticated evaluation process, and greater objectivity. (These advantages, of course, are qualified by the recognition that outsiders too may have their own prejudices and preconceptions, lack familiarity with the operations in question, and be subject to pressures from a desire for re-employment or from other influences).

31. The 1981 report observes that organizations can combine the merits of internal and external approaches as they consider appropriate. The Inspector reviewed the discussion of independent evaluation needs which occurred during the twenty-ninth session of the Governing Council. He believes that the best approach for UNDP, as in other organizations, is to place primary emphasis on the strengthening and effective functioning of the internal monitoring and evaluation system throughout UNDP.

32. The proposed central evaluation unit could provide a relatively independent oversight and "testing" of compliance with and the quality of this basic internal system on a continuing basis, particularly if its terms of reference separate it from any direct operating responsibilities (except assistance to governments in evaluation, as mentioned above) and emphasize its objective and independent character. These precautions would create a unit which could interact with the rest of the internal evaluation system, while still providing the Administrator and the Governing Council with a relatively independent view of UNDP operations.

33. Further independent components can be added to this system from other sources. First, the Governing Council can request studies from JIU, as it did when JIU prepared the report on the Role of Experts in Development Co-operation (78/3). While the JIU annual work programmes must be responsive to the interests of the governing bodies and secretariats of all its participating organizations, they have included a considerable number of reports over the years which deal directly with or include UNDP operations, as evidenced particularly by the JIU reports issued in early 1983.

34. Second, in recent years UNDP has discussed with the Panel of External Auditors steps to standardize the format and contents of external audit reports, including comments on management issues and the review of management controls such as evaluation systems. The progress of these efforts has been reflected in Governing Council decisions 25/23, 79/47, 80/39, 81/41 and 82/37, and the Administrator is to report to the Council in 1983 on the additional costs involved in providing external audit reports with more observations on substantive matters.

35. In this connection, it should also be noted that the Division for Audit and Management Review in the Bureau for Finance and Administration of UNDP plans in 1983 to begin a programme of full-scale management audits, including reviews of field operations and project management, with internal reporting to help the Administrator carry out his accountability functions. Although this work cannot substitute for the evaluation activities discussed in the following Chapters, summary management audit reporting might provide yet another useful source of relatively independent information on operations to the Governing Council.

36. Third, and most flexibly and directly responsive to a Governing Council need for independent operational information, is the possibility of ad hoc consultant evaluations of specific topics for the Council. For example, in decision 79/10, the Council requested an evaluation report on the global programme which was prepared by an independent consultant and submitted to the Council in

1980 (DP/456). This alternative, for which backstopping could be provided by the central evaluation unit, would provide the Council with a mechanism for independent reporting on the Programme which could be easily adjusted and used according to Council needs and funding availability.

37. Finally, there was some discussion at the twenty-ninth session of the Governing Council of the possibility of an independent evaluation unit working directly for the Council. This is of course a matter for the Council to decide. At present there is no external evaluation unit among the United Nations system organizations reporting directly to a single governing body, except for that found in several development banks whose systems of governance differ markedly from those of UNDP. An independent unit under the Governing Council would raise some complex questions of organization, procedure, relationships and usage.

38. The Inspector would note that, in determining the appropriate "mixture" of internal and external evaluation responsibilities, external evaluators and the central evaluation unit itself cannot and should not attempt to supplant the widespread activities of the internal evaluation system at the field and bureau levels. Instead, they should oversee, test and enhance the operations and the quality of this internal system. Before considering establishing an external unit, the Inspector believes the Administrator and the Council should consider how best to use and co-ordinate the many alternate channels for independent reporting already available to the Council as outlined above. This consideration is particularly important in the light of the concerns expressed in the Capacity Study and the Consensus that evaluation in UNDP be carefully co-ordinated and highly selective. This issue is discussed further in terms of evaluation planning and reporting in the following Chapters.

#### D. Location

39. The 1981 JIU status report notes that most central evaluation units in United Nations system organizations are located in programming divisions for feedback purposes, while others are attached to executive heads and the remaining few are combined with administrative and financial units. The programming link cannot be as clear-cut in UNDP since programme formulation and review responsibilities are decentralized to field offices and regional bureaus rather than in a central unit. However, BPPE serves this function to some extent with its central programme support role and its basic responsibility for formulation and revision of UNDP's substantive policies for technical co-operation.

40. The choice of location should be based on considerations of independence, stature and good linkages to the rest of the programme management system. If the central evaluation unit were directly under the Administrator, it would have greater visibility and more direct links to various central staff units. If the unit were to remain in BPPE, it would have more direct links to programme policy development.

41. The Administrator has announced that the central evaluation unit should be a part of BPPE, and this is certainly an acceptable location alternative. However, it would be necessary to define clearly the unit's terms of reference and work programme in order to ensure its ability to concentrate on its principal tasks and that these tasks would not be crowded out by other BPPE duties as has occurred in the past. It would also be essential to ensure that the unit is able to work with a high degree of objectivity and is independent of pressure arising on political grounds or from the perceived interests of central or programme management. The head of the unit should also have direct access to the Administrator and Deputy Administrator on key issues when this is needed under special circumstances.

#### IV. BASIC SYSTEM ELEMENTS

42. The establishment of a central evaluation unit is an essential step for improving evaluation in UNDP. In addition, however, other system elements, linkages and operating and reporting responsibilities need to be further developed in a coherent and co-ordinated way to firmly integrate evaluation within the UNDP management system and better utilize its continuous emphasis on programme results and improvement. The following Chapters identify these other areas and UNDP actions underway, and suggest further improvement needed, with particular attention to the focal point role of the proposed central evaluation unit.

43. As in other United Nations system organizations, UNDP has four basic evaluation system elements, although their nature differs somewhat in UNDP because of its role as a funding agency and its tripartite responsibilities. Tripartite reviews could be the widespread "built-in self-evaluation" component of the UNDP system if they were given a firm results-orientation and standard format. In-depth project evaluations provide the second element, but they need to be better controlled. "Programme evaluation" has proven more difficult to establish in UNDP because the programming process is widely dispersed at the country level and is a complex evaluation challenge. Finally, special evaluation studies have been embodied since 1978 in the continuing series of thematic evaluations.

##### A. Tripartite reviews

44. UNDP launched its tripartite review system in 1973 to provide a periodic, field-level review of all large-scale projects. The primary purposes were to examine the progress being made by the project, to identify factors enhancing or diminishing project effectiveness, and to lead towards appropriate corrective actions.

45. UNDP has often cited tripartite reviews as a central element in integrated project and programme management at the field level. In contrast to individual project evaluations, which are selective and limited in coverage, tripartite reviews are intended to cover the majority of the UNDP projects on a systematic basis. Current guidance requires tripartite reviews once a year for each project with a budget of \$US400,000 or more (including cost sharing). Formal tripartite reviews may be held for smaller projects as well when this is requested or considered justified. Thus, tripartite reviews are mandatory for about 2,300 of the some 4,600 UNDP-supported projects now operational, plus those done as needed for smaller projects.

46. In addition, tripartite reviews, as the name implies, are a joint process for the project partners. They bring together, under government leadership, government officials, UNDP field staff, executing agency project personnel, and sometimes headquarters representatives as well to review project progress. When well-conducted, tripartite reviews provide those directly responsible for the project with a joint forum for carefully examining progress towards achievement of objectives and an opportunity to take direct action to improve the project while it is underway. They also provide an important opportunity for the literally thousands of government, UNDP and agency staff involved to participate directly and meaningfully in evaluation work.

47. Tripartite reviews, however, have not yet lived up to these potentials, as discussed in several recent reports of the Administrator (especially DP/558 of February 1981). The major problem has been that too many tripartite reviews have concentrated on delivery of inputs and administrative matters, rather than on the extent to which the project's objectives are being achieved. In addition, only part of the tripartites required to be held have in fact been held, and the meetings have not always been carefully prepared.

48. Three major steps seem needed to allow tripartites to become the operational "backbone" of the UNDP evaluation system. First, there is a need to develop and issue clear and specific guidelines for tripartite reviews and then ensure that they are applied. These guidelines should establish a simple but systematic and logical format for critically examining whether the intended outputs and results of the project are being achieved, the factors including original project design which may be impeding achievement of the objectives, and actions which therefore need to be taken. The guidelines should stress the specific responsibilities for tripartite reviews, their operational importance, and provide "how to" guidance rather than mere procedural requirements. The central evaluation unit should play the major role in developing these guidelines.

49. Second, the importance of tripartite reviews as an integral "building block" of the evaluation system should be emphasized by firmly linking them with the other evaluation system elements discussed in the following Chapters. New UNDP interim evaluation guidance requires that tripartite reviews decide explicitly whether a project evaluation is needed or not. The emphasis on verifiable project outputs and achievements in the new project design process which UNDP is testing should help make tripartite reviews more substantive. But there is also a strong need to systematically analyse general tripartite review findings and patterns to feed back into operations; to use them to help streamline internal project reporting and make it more substantive; and to establish clear responsibilities for their management by resident representatives and for oversight of their quality by regional bureau and central evaluation unit staff. There is also much potential for closer integration of revised and strengthened tripartite reviews with the built-in self-evaluation processes developed in the executing agencies in recent years.

50. Third, the guidelines should emphasize the timing of tripartite reviews to coincide with key project decision points, so that they are action-oriented meetings rather than mere periodic rituals. Within the once-a-year limitation for major projects or the "as needed" guidance for smaller ones, tripartite reviews should be scheduled to consider "milestones" at which the achievement of critical interim outputs is expected in the project work plan; prior to the release of significant new funding segments; in conjunction with major budgetary revision or project re-scheduling decisions; to deal with major unexpected changes which may occur in the critical external factors or assumptions which relate to the project; or at the end of a project in conjunction with a terminal assessment.

51. Over the years, tripartite reviews have become an ambiguous concept, variously referred to as tripartite "monitoring", "reviews", or "evaluations". As conducted in the past, they have in fact been monitoring exercises: that is, they have been concerned predominantly with the delivery of inputs and with implementation problems. If UNDP develops and applies new guidelines and a format which require systematic assessment of emerging project outputs and achievements, emphasizes their essential "building block" linkage with other evaluation system components, and continuously monitors and insists on their decision- and action-oriented nature, they could become the built-in self-evaluation component of the UNDP system. The Capacity Study and the early 1970s UNDP evaluation framework envisioned this widespread, action-oriented type of evaluation at the country level as the first basic component in the overall evaluation system. When restructured, it could be joined effectively with the second basic component: the more in-depth, "outside" and selective attention provided by individual project evaluations.

#### B. In-depth project evaluations

52. UNDP project evaluation is currently defined as a critical examination of an ongoing or completed project's design, experience, results, and actual or



potential effectiveness in contributing to achievement of the project's development objectives. It is considered to be a much more in-depth and independent examination than that provided by a tripartite review. It is also a tripartite responsibility, however, to be carried out by the government, the executing agency and UNDP. Provision for evaluation is usually included as a budgetary line item chargeable to the project and estimated on a pro forma basis at about \$US 10,000. Any of the three partners may suggest an evaluation, but it may be deferred or not undertaken if the partners agree.

53. Project evaluations have been the established centrepiece of UNDP evaluation activities over the years. However, the actual quantity and quality of these evaluations has not been very clear, and in the past few years they have been overshadowed by thematic evaluations and efforts to improve project design. Among the few reviews of project evaluation coverage made over the years, the Administrator reported in 1974 (DP/48) that more than 100 in-depth evaluations were undertaken during 1973. In 1981, he reported (DP/558) that a sampling of evaluations of large-scale projects for the 1976-1978 period showed that only one-third of the evaluations required at that time were being done, but he gave no specific figures.

54. An informal survey by BPPE staff in 1982 indicated that approximately 122 project evaluations (of 97 country projects and 25 regional, inter-regional or global projects) were performed from July 1981 through June 1982, out of a total of about 220 to 360 which should have been performed under existing criteria. The figures are "approximate" because UNDP does not consider it always possible to distinguish between a true in-depth project evaluation and an appraisal mission for a project which is essentially a follow-up phase to a previous project. Thus, at present, about three per cent of the approximately 4,600 total active UNDP-supported projects are subject to an in-depth evaluation in any given year. This figure should of course be placed in perspective by the recognition that the annual figure is higher for larger projects (about 11 per cent of the 1,100 operational projects over \$US1,000,000) and that many projects are too small for in-depth evaluation to be useful; that a substantial increase in the number of such evaluations would place a very heavy burden on the UNDP management system; and that the Capacity Study and the Consensus state that such evaluations should be controlled and highly selective.

55. In decisions 79/10 and 80/22 the Governing Council requested the Administrator to collaborate with the executing agencies in examining ways of systematizing project evaluation and the cost of more systematic project evaluation, and to ensure compliance with policies and procedures for project evaluation and monitoring and revise them where appropriate. The Administrator's reports on these topics (DP/448 and DP/558) reviewed past experience and proposed new criteria for selecting projects for evaluation. The earlier requirement to evaluate each project with a UNDP input of \$US150,000 or more was found to be unrealistic, mainly due to inflationary factors. Guidance was revised on an interim basis in 1982 to provide at least one evaluation during the life of each project which has a budgeted cost (including cost sharing) of \$US1,000,000 or more; which is innovative, critical, very complex, or otherwise special or unusual; where a substantive project revision would put the total budget over \$US1,000,000 or add \$US400,000 or more of UNDP inputs; or where project review action determines that an evaluation is required.

56. The Inspector believes that further action to specify and clarify responsibilities is needed to make UNDP project evaluation more effective. The guidelines for project evaluation issued in 1975 are rather outdated and largely procedural: they need to be revised in a simple and concise form and re-issued. In particular, these guidelines should determine who within the tripartite system is responsible for initiating project evaluations, who conducts them and how, and who the intended and appropriate users are.

57. In addition, there is a strong need to establish firm oversight of the project evaluation process, which should now be much easier because the computerized Country Programme Management Plan (CPMP) system can be used. Project evaluation quality should be carefully and continuously monitored. Findings should be analyzed, fed back into operations, and acted upon in a systematic way at the field level and at headquarters. These steps have not been taken in the past, but the proposed central evaluation unit and regional bureau evaluation officers should now take the lead in all such improvement actions. However, the executing agencies should be fully consulted so that the Governing Council's call in decision 79/10 for a collaborative examination to systematize project evaluation and ensure compliance can be given full effect on a continuing basis.

### C. Evaluation in the country programming process

58. Evaluation in most organizations takes place at both the project and the programme levels. The project level can be effectively handled in UNDP by applying the improved tripartite review and in-depth project evaluation functions discussed above, but the programme level is much more difficult. While other organizations have a central programming process with medium-term plans and programme budgets and a field programme in a relatively well-defined area, the UNDP programming process is widely dispersed among some 150 country programmes around the world.

59. Even within a country, UNDP country programme evaluation would be difficult. Each programme is itself spread widely across many economic and social sectors, and includes many of the UNDP executing agencies. Since each country programme is based on the national development plans and objectives of the government, their nature, mixture and processes also vary widely. The country programme is the government's, but it provides only a small proportion of the government's total development efforts and thus its specific impact is hard to determine. The UNDP-supported inputs themselves are technical co-operation projects, whose catalytic impact and long-term results are much more difficult to determine than for capital projects. Finally, the overall responsibility for supporting this heavy evaluation responsibility would fall on the resident representative and his small staff, who are already overburdened with many other substantive and administrative responsibilities.

60. A strong country programming process has been a major concern of the Administrator and the Governing Council over the years. As far as the evaluation aspects are concerned, a tentative set of guidelines for evaluation of country programmes was developed in the early 1970s and a few country-wide evaluations were carried out, with rather indecisive results. In the mid-1970s, experience with the first and second country programming cycle indicated the need for simpler and more flexible processes and a concept of continuous programming. However, it also indicated that the new dimensions emphasis on results, and the Consensus emphasis on periodic reviews to adjust country programmes, were important to assess country programme progress and improve the quality of programme performance.

61. In a 1980 review for the third country programming cycle (DP/454), the Administrator identified the need to improve the country programming approval and implementation process and make it more systematic. Periodic reviews were cited as an important means both to assess the ongoing programme and to provide an integral, forward-looking component of continuous country programming itself. However, the report concluded that such responsive reviews were "a rare feature" of country programming experience. The report and a 1981 report (DP/518) proposed a strengthened process of country programming monitoring and review, both continuous and periodic. The Governing Council, in decisions 80/7 and 81/15, endorsed these proposals and further requested annual progress reports on programme implementation in each region.

62. The Inspector strongly supports the Administrator's plans to better utilize existing monitoring and review processes in the country programming process. He believes that revised UNDP evaluation system guidelines should require that field and regional bureau staff responsible for assessing country programmes systematically consider not only the relevant tripartite project reviews but also relevant project evaluations. This would provide an important two-way integration of evaluation into the overall UNDP management system: it would strengthen country programming reviews by utilizing evaluation findings from projects, and would strengthen tripartite reviews and project evaluations by providing another specific point at which they are required to be used in improving operations.

63. While this compilation and use of project-level evaluation findings is valuable, JIU has noted in several past reports the lack of specific evaluation processes at the country programme level. The Administrator has also stated that annual country programme reviews should not be merely an exercise in project monitoring and evaluation (DP/111), and that project evaluations in "watertight compartments" need to be widened to cover country programme impact in the broader development sense (DP/261). However, the revised UNDP country programming procedures do not really address this issue. The Inspector recognizes that in-depth country programme evaluation would be very difficult and time-consuming (for the reasons discussed in paragraphs 58 and 59 above). He nevertheless believes that the new central evaluation unit should examine what type of evaluative activities, however modest, could be developed and introduced on a tripartite basis to provide a more specific results and effectiveness emphasis within the country programming process.

#### D. Thematic evaluations

64. Special evaluation studies have been an element of the UNDP evaluation system since the early years. First called "sectoral evaluations", then briefly (and misleadingly) labelled "programme evaluations", they have been performed in recent years as a series of "thematic evaluations".

65. In 1976 the Administrator reported (DP/184) that UNDP evaluation activities had largely completed efforts to improve and institutionalize the proper concepts and processes of technical co-operation in UNDP operations, and would henceforth make a "major shift" to focus on substantive studies of specific areas in collaboration with the executing agencies. Subsequent reports by the Administrator led to the establishment in 1978 (DP/319 and Add. 1) of a joint UNDP/Agency programme of 13 joint evaluation studies for 1978-1979. In accord with the Governing Council's instructions that UNDP and the agencies increasingly develop planning, appraisal and evaluation functions and consolidate them into a comprehensive system of analysis and feedback, the thematic evaluation programme was conceived of as a dynamic process of learning from past experience to build a comprehensive institutional memory, provide feedback to directly improve operational activities, and explore new technical co-operation approaches.

66. These studies have since been carried out on a continuing basis. The most recent published status list (in DP/515 in 1981) showed a total of 18 studies completed or underway (although two were to be deleted since they had been overtaken by events). The studies are of two types, substantive studies of particular technical co-operation areas and process studies. Each study is conducted in four main stages: preparatory; desk review and formulation; field visits; and synthesis of findings and conclusions in a general report. While UNDP staff at various levels participate, primary UNDP responsibility for conducting them has rested with BPPE technical advisers. UNDP's share of the costs of this programme were estimated at about \$US370,000 for 1978-79, \$US800,000 for 1980-81, and \$US800,000 for 1982-83. However, because of limited UNDP staff and in view of specialized agency expertise, most of the staff time and technical inputs to the studies are provided by the executing agencies.

67. The thematic evaluation studies which have been completed and published appear to have been generally well-received, and the Governing Council has encouraged their continuance. However, there have been some problems. Rather than the 18 months originally foreseen, it has taken three to five years to complete, publish and issue programme guidance on many of the studies, because of co-ordination difficulties, unavailability of and changes in key staff, and other complications. Thus, feedback from the studies risks being out-of-date. The studies have also been more costly than originally anticipated because of their scope and complexity, particularly for the staff time which specialized agencies have had to invest in some of them.

68. The findings and conclusions of some of the thematic studies have been criticized as too general and already well-known, in contrast to the significant feedback and exploration of new approaches that was intended. This appears to be due to a desire to derive widely-applicable findings rather than to carefully identify and assess critical effectiveness aspects in the specific field studied. It is also not clear that the particular set of 18 studies chosen reflects a carefully co-ordinated set of priority subjects whose assessment complements other evaluation work and significantly enhances overall programme effectiveness.

69. Most importantly, the basic emphasis on effective feedback of thematic evaluation findings into operations has not yet been realized, as recognized in several discussions of this issue in reports by the Administrator. Developing additional specific feedback mechanisms, for one thing, would add considerably to thematic evaluation costs. However, the primary feedback channel, published reports, is a very imprecise one: without careful targeting and follow-up it is uncertain whether such reports are actually read and acted upon. A second channel - programme advisory guidance - has been used by UNDP but risks being lost among the large volume of other guidance currently issued to field staff, while parallel use by executing agencies seems also very uneven. A few thematic evaluations appear to have been fairly widely used in training courses, workshops and meetings, but this has been limited, in part because UNDP programme management training activities are quite modest (see Chapter VI).

70. The Inspector believes that thematic evaluations are a significant and useful part of the overall UNDP evaluation system, although they should not be over-emphasized to the detriment of other basic evaluation efforts. However, they need to be more closely managed and controlled, a function which the new central evaluation unit would be well-placed to assist in. It should help the Administrator to develop a clear overall strategy and standards to ensure that the thematic evaluations fit in with other evaluation system work. The strategy should include provisions for careful estimation of the full cost and staff time required from each participant and for each study, agreement on tight but realistic implementation schedules, and oversight to ensure timely completion. The strategy should focus the studies on significant findings and new approaches which can have a direct impact on improved operations. Finally, it should carefully determine in advance who the intended study "users" are and what feedback mechanisms will best reach them, and then emphasize effective follow-up to ensure that the study's findings are disseminated and applied.

## V. KEY LINKAGES

71. Evaluation must be a normal and integral part of UNDP operations in order to be effective. In his consideration of programme effectiveness issues in 1977 (DP/261), the Administrator stressed the need for a more integrated system of analysis and feedback, with systematic linkages between the basic stages and involving governments, executing agencies and all levels of UNDP. This section discusses three key UNDP evaluation linkages: with project design, with governments, and with executing agencies. The important related processes of internal analysis and feedback and external reporting are discussed separately in Chapters VI.C and VII.

### A. Project design

72. UNDP has taken steps over the past six years to improve the project design process. In a series of reports from 1977-1979 (DP/261, 380, 402) the Administrator cited the importance of sound design for effective project implementation, recognition among United Nations system agencies of the need for improvements, and the need to link design and evaluation and to build evaluative measurement into project documents to permit better assessments of progress and achievement. The Governing Council, in decision 79/48, requested the Administrator to improve the quality of project design so that objectives, outputs and prerequisites are properly identified, the appropriate functional orientation is emphasized, and the work plan is realistic and up-to-date.

73. An internal UNDP working group reviewed project design quality and determined that many project designs were vague in describing objectives and outputs, confused means and ends, lacked basic measurement data and targets, and focussed on administrative rather than substantive project actions. The group recommended that UNDP and the agencies improve this situation, and UNDP therefore began a revision process in 1979 (DP/448). In 1981 it decided (DP/558) to test a simplified and clarified format, with project work plans serving as the main project formulation and monitoring document and containing output "milestones" as targets against which progress could be verified.

74. After further consultations and refinement, UNDP decided to test a new project formulation checklist, short-form project document, and work-plan format during 1983 in all field offices for a trial period of one year. The central feature of the new formats is the concentration on verifiable quantitative and qualitative factors to determine objectives, inputs and achievements in a clear and concise matrix form. The new format is intended not only to facilitate project monitoring and evaluation and an increased emphasis on outputs in reporting, but also to provide the first basic step in streamlining other elements of the project cycle.

75. This latter point of overall strengthening is of course an essential one. As the Administrator stressed in 1977 when the design improvement process began (DP/261), UNDP needs an integrated system with systematic linkages between all cycle elements and among the tripartite partners. The evaluation system improvement efforts discussed throughout this report therefore need to be closely co-ordinated with completion of the new project design trial period.

76. The new design efforts themselves could benefit greatly from a parallel strengthening of evaluation processes: while good project design is often argued to be a key prerequisite for evaluation, UNDP documents have pointed out that project and thematic evaluation findings concerning poor project design were in fact an important stimulus to the current design improvement efforts. System-wide project design will also be much stronger if the new UNDP design format is blended as harmoniously as possible with the design and evaluation formats and

practices which the executing agencies have developed themselves in the past few years (see section C. following). The proposed project design system should therefore also be carefully reviewed in consultation with the executing agencies before it is established in final form.

77. The critical second step for the new project design approach will be to implement it effectively. This will require oversight of quality, new guidelines, training activities, and information feedback processes. Each of these design support activities would be more effective if combined with actions to strengthen evaluation. The Inspector believes that the regional bureaus and central evaluation unit staff have a particularly important role to play in quality control of project design. They should have a specific responsibility for periodically reviewing and advising on the technical quality, logic, clarity and "evaluability" - but not the substantive content - of new project designs, to ensure that they will facilitate improved programme implementation, monitoring and evaluation.

#### B. Supporting evaluation by governments

78. Within the UNDP tripartite system, operations are centred at the country level and all projects are undertakings of the recipient governments to which UNDP and the agencies contribute. The Consensus and basic UNDP guidance (as summarized in DP/334/Add.1), give governments leadership responsibilities for country programmes and all phases of the development co-operation cycle, including implementation, monitoring and follow-up actions. Evaluation too is a tripartite undertaking with the consent of the government.

79. The Governing Council decision on the new dimensions of 1975 requested the Administrator to ensure in carrying out the Programme that the basic purpose of technical co-operation should be the promotion of self-reliance in developing countries by building up, inter alia, their productive capability and indigenous resources and by increasing the availability of the managerial, technical, administrative and research capabilities required in the development process. In subsequent reports, the Administrator has emphasized the need for sustained efforts to build self-reliant managerial infrastructures and to promote use of national capabilities in the project management cycle.

80. Evaluation has been slow to develop as an integral element of governments' development management activities, but a new JIU report on United Nations System Co-operation in Developing Evaluation by Governments (82/12) indicates that this situation is changing. Past process problems, constraints on governments, and "donor-centred" evaluation are giving way to increased understanding, use and co-operative efforts to realize evaluation's ability to improve programme and project results and quality. Recent United Nations system policy guidance much more explicitly recognizes the importance of and need for support to develop governments' evaluation capabilities. Most United Nations system organizations now have varying types of co-operative evaluation activities underway at the project, sectoral, central and international information-exchange levels, and there are growing governmental, bilateral, non-governmental and other international organization initiatives as well.

81. The JIU report concludes that UNDP in particular has a strong potential leadership role in gradually supporting and strengthening evaluation by governments. Its tripartite review and in-depth project evaluation activities have great potential for developing the evaluation skills of the thousands of governmental, agency and UNDP staff who participate in them. It provides funding for evaluation work in its projects and is considering alternative funding, service and support possibilities for additional monitoring, review and evaluation work and to encourage government project execution. In addition, the UNDP worldwide

network of field offices could be a very significant development resource, on both a formal and an informal day-by-day basis, for working contacts and support to government evaluation units.

82. The JIU report recommends that each United Nations system organization, and particularly its central unit: ensure that its internal evaluation system maximizes government participation and facilitates governments' own evaluation efforts; better co-ordinate evaluation activities; seek opportunities for technical co-operation projects in evaluation; develop data on evaluation needs and resources; use national institutions in its evaluation work; help develop international information-sharing; identify co-operative training possibilities; and ensure the importance of evaluation ideas and practice as an integral part of its development co-operation policies and guidance. The report also recommends that the Administrative Committee on Co-ordination consider specific mechanisms for encouraging joint activities in support of evaluation by governments, and that governing bodies consider a policy statement on the value of supporting governmental evaluation, resources for this task, and periodic reports on actions the organization is taking.

83. The Inspector believes that UNDP field offices, regional bureaus, and the proposed central evaluation unit should include among their evaluation responsibilities a specific emphasis on their role in encouraging and supporting evaluation by governments, responsive to the above considerations. At each of these levels, the operating links of UNDP staff with agencies and governments could provide a significant stimulus to facilitate the exchange of information, ideas and experience and to develop greater evaluation co-ordination and co-operative activities.

84. The new central unit, in particular, could be a very important focal point and "data bank" to gather, lead, and report on all these activities on an orderly basis. The current UNDP effort to update a list of government central evaluation authorities worldwide is a promising first step. Such a supportive UNDP role would not only encourage growing action in this relatively "new" and challenging development co-operation field: it would also pay direct dividends by helping to strengthen the evaluation capabilities of UNDP's governmental partners and thereby the effectiveness of the UNDP evaluation system and its Programme overall.

### C. Inter-agency activities

85. The third major group of participants in UNDP operations is composed of some 27 United Nations system organizations and regional development banks or funds. As participating and executing agencies, they are a partner of the governments, accountable to the Administrator for their performance, and responsible as well to their own executive heads and governing bodies. They share responsibility for efficient and effective management of the projects in which they participate, including tripartite monitoring and evaluation functions.

86. The importance of coherent evaluation frameworks and activities in the United Nations system has long been recognized, and from 1966 to 1972 an Inter-Agency Study Group on Evaluation existed under the Administrative Committee on Co-ordination (ACC). While agreeing that each agency and programme should develop its own evaluation techniques and processes for assessing its programmes and projects, it also urged the need for a variety of co-ordinative and inter-agency functions. In 1972 the Group discussed and endorsed the UNDP draft guidelines for evaluation of country programmes and individual projects and decided to meet again when sufficient experience had been gained in applying the guidelines to review the results. However, the draft guidelines were not issued and the Study Group disappeared.

87. During the mid-1970s, an Inter-Agency Consultative Board and a Programme Working Group reviewed broad policy and operational issues on a system-wide basis. The Group also began a study in 1976 of the scope, approach and effectiveness of the evaluation activities within the system with a view to improving coherence and co-ordination, but this effort was never completed. In 1977 (DP/255 and 261) the Administrator cited the continuing need to preserve and promote coherence of the system, the lack of a systematic overall evaluation approach, and the leadership which the UNDP integrated project cycle framework and methodology could provide. This emphasis on a systematic, collaborative approach was incorporated in Governing Council decisions which called for work with the agencies to further develop planning, appraisal and evaluation functions into a comprehensive system of analysis and feedback (77/47), strengthen programme evaluation and the country programming process and develop an institutional memory (25/8), and to develop more systematic project evaluation (79/10).

88. A permanent Inter-Agency Task Force was established at UNDP headquarters in 1978 and considerable inter-agency work was subsequently done on country programming, financial and accounting system practices, and broader operational policy issues. Efforts to improve system-wide evaluation activities, however, received much less attention. Since 1979, UNDP has held a few ad hoc meetings with agency evaluation officers to discuss proposed changes in UNDP evaluation processes and a meeting on the new project design format. Except for a meeting of an ACC subsidiary body in 1980 and regular informal evaluation meetings convened by JIU, however, there has been no regular inter-agency evaluation consultation.

89. During the past few years, two significant changes have occurred which increase the need for inter-agency evaluation activities. First, while the UNDP evaluation system is still based on the processes and procedures established in 1975, many new evaluation initiatives have appeared in the rest of the United Nations system. The 1977 JIU status report found that only two United Nations system organizations had some type of internal evaluation system and five were developing one, while the 1981 report discussed 12 organizations which had established such systems and five more which had them under development. These organizations have generally attempted to relate their own evaluation policies and procedures for technical co-operation to those of UNDP. However, problems of compliance, interpretation and harmonization of concepts have arisen among the various systems which need to be resolved, particularly for built-in self-evaluation (in relation to tripartite reviews), in-depth project evaluation, and project design. The need for inter-agency co-ordination is particularly urgent since UNDP is now ready to revise the framework to which the other organizations have sought to adapt.

90. Second, there has been considerable recent emphasis in the United Nations system on the need to simplify and harmonize operational procedures for development co-operation. UNDP has reported on its leadership responsibilities and the need for co-operative actions to streamline these procedures and make them more flexible to improve implementation (DP/468). The ACC concluded in its annual overview report for 1981-1982 that improved co-ordination and more systematic evaluation processes may be significant considerations in efforts to confirm the effectiveness of multilateral development co-operation activities (E/1982/4). The Director-General for Development and International Economic Co-operation, in his 1982 report on operational activities for development (A/37/445), emphasized the need for greater uniformity, harmonization and improvement in project cycle procedures and for fuller use and strengthening of evaluation as an integrated element of the project cycle. These problems, however, have not yet really been addressed in the evaluation area.



91. The Inspector believes that an inter-agency working group on UNDP technical co-operation evaluation activities, composed of the new UNDP central evaluation unit staff and evaluation officers of the other organizations, should be established as soon as possible. This group should not only consider how best to harmonize the design and evaluation improvements UNDP is now considering with those of the agencies, but should also serve as a continuing forum to develop more coherent and systematic United Nations system evaluation policies and processes in this area. Such a firm and explicit linkage of UNDP and agency evaluation staff would help realize the emphasis in the Consensus (paragraph 59) on mechanisms for more rational, effective and collaborative evaluation and follow-up activities. It would also facilitate much more rapid joint progress towards the comprehensive system of analysis and feedback which the Governing Council called for in decision 79/47.

## VI. OPERATIONAL RESPONSIBILITIES

92. A careful structuring of the basic elements and linkages is very important to improve the overall UNDP evaluation system, but establishment and carrying out of specific operational responsibilities is the key to ensuring system effectiveness. Implementing, supporting, overseeing and further developing an organizational evaluation system is a challenging full-time process which requires continuous attention. This has been the "missing link" in the UNDP evaluation system over the past few years, a problem which the proposed new operating network and central evaluation unit could greatly help to overcome. This section summarizes three main pairs of operating responsibilities: evaluation planning and oversight; guidelines and training; and internal analysis and feedback.

### A. Evaluation planning and oversight

93. The 1981 JIU status report observed that evaluation system coverage and further development is still a rather vague and uncertain process in many organizations. The report stated that evaluation activities should be guided by the same process of objectives and work plans applied to other programme activities. It recommended that each organization prepare evaluation plans for its governing bodies, linked to programme budgeting cycles and stating which activities will be covered by evaluation; the extent and coherence of such coverage; the types of evaluation to be done; who will perform the evaluations; how they will be reported on; and what feedback and follow-up processes will be used.

94. UNDP needs such a plan, in conjunction with its biennial budget submissions, to better clarify and co-ordinate its evaluation system activities. As discussed in previous sections, UNDP currently supports some 4,600 operational projects, and the evaluation system annually provides some 2,300 tripartite reviews of the large projects (plus an unknown number for smaller projects), 120 individual project evaluations, half-a-dozen thematic evaluations underway in various stages, and some special evaluation activities in a few regional bureaus, special funds and other units. This "picture" is a very rough and approximate one which needs to be filled out. The process is now considerably facilitated by the UNDP Country Programme Management Plans (CPMPs). Fully computerized in 1981, these documents provide rapid feedback on annual field work plans, updated on a rolling six-month basis, which include a schedule of planned project management actions (and changes) such as evaluations.

95. As the CPMP process makes clear, specific planning of evaluation activities must take place at the country level, maintaining the necessary flexibility and selectivity to respond to needs and changing circumstances and to apply scarce evaluation resources in the best possible way. At the same time, however, a central perspective, in the form of an overall evaluation plan prepared by the central unit and the bureau evaluation officers, would be very useful. It would provide clear data on intended patterns of evaluation activity. It would allow better co-ordination and a better mix, balance and coverage of the various types of evaluation activities. It would also allow UNDP top management and the Governing Council to assess and control the overall patterns and amount of evaluation, and to make necessary adjustments.

96. This UNDP evaluation plan could also be a significant starting point in making United Nations system and even overall development co-operation evaluation activities more coherent and systematic. At present, for instance, it is not clear how many evaluations of UNDP-supported projects are made independently by the executing agencies under their own evaluation programmes. A UNDP evaluation plan could help avoid overlap and ambiguity and lead the agencies to develop and exchange their own evaluation plans to harmonize United Nations system coverage, both at the country level and on an overall basis. This foundation could be gradually expanded to take account of planned evaluation work by governments, and perhaps by bilateral, other multilateral and non-governmental development agencies. This would help make evaluation a more effective part of development management, and would also stimulate the co-operative efforts needed to further develop evaluation by governments and harmonize evaluation methods and actions.

97. An evaluation plan is a starting point, but it must be joined with firm oversight of implementation. The UNDP sampling of evaluation activities of the late 1970s (DP/558) found that only one-third of the tripartite reviews and evaluations required under the procedures in force at that time were actually being conducted. A further sampling by BPPE staff and in a regional bureau in 1982 using CPMP data showed that this problem continues.

98. The Administrator and the Governing Council have increasingly emphasized the need to ensure compliance with the effectiveness of tripartite reviews and evaluation processes, as in decisions 79/48 and 80/22. Because the bureaus' responsibilities in this area have not been very clear or consistent and BPPE staff have been pressured by other work, however, the evaluation system has largely been left to run on an "automatic" basis.

99. While an evaluation plan and the CPMPs will help considerably in assessing quantity and coverage, the quality of evaluation activity is not really known at present and has been little tested. BPPE staff agreed that this function needs more emphasis, and regional bureau and field staff efforts in this area seem also to have been only ad hoc and informal.

100. The Inspector believes that oversight and "quality control" of evaluation work must be firmly established as UNDP operating responsibilities. New evaluation guidelines and training are needed to establish proper standards and develop staff capabilities, and better analysis and feedback processes are necessary to use evaluation information, as discussed in the following two sections. In addition, however, the designated evaluation officers in the bureaus and the central evaluation unit should oversee the process and test and analyze the quality of evaluation activities on a regular and systematic basis. Field and operating staff who perform evaluation activities should be made more clearly aware of their specific responsibilities, and provided with continuing feedback from evaluation staff which recognizes and rewards effective performance and provides prompt support and improvement action where performance is sub-standard.

## B. Guidelines and training

101. In a highly decentralized and tripartite system such as UNDP's, guidelines and training are very important to establish norms, criteria, and procedures to ensure that worldwide operations are coherent and effective. In 1975, UNDP issued a comprehensive Policies and Procedures Manual (PPM), incorporating in one volume basic guidance for the programming of assistance and project preparation, implementation and evaluation (DP/184). The PPM was viewed as a "first step" towards a consolidated system of policies and procedures, to be completed with issuance of a series of functional handbooks, "How to" guidelines, and technical advisory notes containing specialized operational knowledge.

102. While procedural activities have subsequently progressed in other areas, however, evaluation guidelines have remained at the 1975 stage. In 1979 and 1980 (DP/402 and 448), the Administrator stressed the need to completely revise and simplify the chapters of the PPM dealing with the project cycle, including concise guidelines for project formulation, appraisal, monitoring and evaluation, and he discussed work that was underway on this task.

103. However, in part because BPPE staff and the staff in the Bureau of Finance and Administration responsible for co-ordinating PPM revision have concentrated on other work, and in part because of the lengthy process of consideration and consultation on possible revisions, the overall PPM revision has not yet been done. Progress has been made with the new design guidelines now being tested, and some interim guidance and technical advisory notes have also been issued on evaluation activities. Nevertheless, the existing guidance on the project cycle and evaluation is at present rather cumbersome and out-of-date.

104. The Inspector believes that issuance of new evaluation guidelines must be a high priority in revising the UNDP evaluation system, and that the new central evaluation unit should play the main substantive role in preparing them. It is important that such guidelines be prepared on an integrated and comprehensive basis, closely related to revised guidance for project design, project work plans, reporting, and the CPMP and other internal information systems. The guideline preparation process should include detailed consultation with the executing agencies through the proposed inter-agency working group on evaluation, to harmonize approaches insofar as possible. The new evaluation guidelines should also include "how to" guidance as foreseen when the PPM was issued in 1975, and norms establishing the expected quality. In addition, the guidelines should be as simple and concise as possible to meet current system-wide concerns with streamlining and harmonizing operational procedures for development co-operation. Finally, the central unit should keep the new guidelines under review and supplement and improve them as necessary in the future.

105. New evaluation guidelines will have to be accompanied by a systematic training programme, to enable UNDP operating staff to develop the skills needed to effectively perform their evaluation responsibilities. This training should include guidance on how to conduct evaluation studies and on how to use evaluation information, and should eventually be integrated as part of overall programme management training. The training programme should also serve as an important feedback channel for keeping staff informed of evaluation findings for use in improving operations.

106. As in most United Nations system organizations, however, the UNDP training programme is very modest. Most of the approximately \$US1.1 million budget is used for special seminars, external training, and programme and administrative management courses. The only organized programme management course, including evaluation, is a two-week workshop for field staff, primarily at the Assistant Resident Representative level, which has been held 13 times since 1979. In 1982 the

Administrator reported (DP/1982/20) that this course concentrated heavily for the first time on all aspects of the project management cycle, including the use of two thematic evaluation studies. However, only about 22 of UNDP's some 680 professional staff can be reached through each course. Normal staff turnover, changing circumstances, and changing policies accentuate this problem of reaching all concerned staff with up-to-date training.

107. Because of these constraints, UNDP evaluation training will have to become more innovative. A project design and formulation course was begun in 1981 to "train UNDP trainers" who could in turn run project design courses at the sub-regional level in the field for agency, UNDP and government staff. This strategy might be used for evaluation training as well. Another promising approach would be for UNDP to develop joint training programmes, particularly with those executing agencies who already have design and evaluation training programmes established. In addition, evaluation training components might be incorporated in internal field office training programmes, and in regular meetings such as those among UNDP resident representatives.

108. As these considerations imply, UNDP needs to develop an evaluation and programme management training strategy to ensure that the people who need such training receive it, that the training is well-prepared and of a high quality, and that co-operative training opportunities with its tripartite partners are sought out and mutually developed. The new central evaluation unit should work with the UNDP Training Section to develop and carry out such a training strategy.

#### C. Analysis and feedback

109. Evaluation is wasted if it is not used to improve operations. In its analysis of the phases of the project cycle, the Capacity Study concluded that follow-up should be the decisive phase of the programme and provide the ultimate evidence of its effectiveness, but that it often proved to be the weakest link. The Study recommended that basic country-level analysis and feedback responsibilities should be emphasized, that regional bureaus should assess results and feed information back into operations, and that the central inspection and evaluation staff should analyze and report to the Administrator on overall performance.

110. In the early 1970s, the need for the central evaluation unit to provide continual analysis of programme effectiveness from the flow of evaluation information, feed it back into operations for improvement, and develop a memory bank were recognized as specific and important functions (DP/48). In 1975, however, during the UNDP liquidity crisis and as the central unit disappeared, the Administrator began major steps to improve UNDP management information flows and tighten financial and operational controls. An Integrated Systems Improvement Project (ISIP) was established in 1977 to develop a system-wide financial and programme information network. Preliminary work led to a decision to implement eight systems, dealing with accounting, budgeting, personnel and financial forecasting processes (DP/378).

111. One of these systems, the Programme and Project Management System (PPMS), was eventually divided into four integrated sub-systems (DP/471): a project budget system; a project expenditure system; a project institutional memory; and a country programming management system, all joined in an underlying data base management system. The PPMS was given high priority for implementation, and the Administrator reported that it would provide more accessible, complete and timely records for financial management of the programme, for project monitoring in more detail, and for planning and evaluation at the programme and project level.

112. While the ISIP and the PPMS were thus a major financial and administrative management effort with some side benefits in the form of better records for evaluation, evaluation analysis and feedback efforts were moving in a different - and separate - direction. In setting forth the management information improvement steps of 1975 (DP/184), the Administrator also stated that assessments of programme effectiveness would be provided through a "major shift" of emphasis towards joint programmes of evaluation of groups of projects (which developed into the "thematic evaluations").

113. In 1977 the Administrator cited the need to further develop evaluation capacity and review and to feed back all programme experience (DP/261). While he included other evaluation elements in the "learning from experience" effort and emphasized the need to use "every conceivable" mechanism for feedback, this proposal also appeared to place primary feedback responsibility on the thematic evaluations. The Governing Council endorsed the Administrator's proposals, calling in decision 77/47 for him to work with the agencies to further develop existing functions of planning, appraisal and evaluation and to consolidate them into a comprehensive system of analysis and feedback to maximize the effectiveness of operations.

114. This proposed system of analysis and feedback has since made little progress. The feedback from thematic evaluations has been quite uncertain (as discussed in Chapter IV. D.) and even at best could not carry the full responsibility for assessing UNDP results. Yet other analytical and feedback efforts have also been lacking because of the vague evaluation responsibilities and other workload pressures of BPPE, the regional bureaus, and other units. UNDP reports have continued to emphasize the importance of further developing evaluation feedback (as in DP/448), but JIU interviews and analysis of activities with BPPE, the regional bureaus, and other UNDP units confirmed that any such analysis and feedback is presently done on only a sporadic and informal basis.

115. The Inspector agrees with the emphasis of the Capacity Study on the critical importance of using evaluation information to assess effectiveness and improve operations. He believes that the proposed central evaluation unit and designated evaluation officers in the bureaus are essential to progress in this area, and that strong action to develop and activate evaluation analysis and feedback activities should be a top priority of these staff once they are established.

116. UNDP needs improvement in three broad areas to better analyze and use the considerable volume of evaluation information which already exists. First, there must be an integrated structure of responsibilities, mechanisms and processes for this function. At the field level, resident representatives and their staffs should take actions to ensure decision- and action-oriented tripartite reviews, effective follow-up to in-depth project evaluations, careful oversight of project design processes, and assessment and use of information from all these elements in periodic country programme reviews. The designated evaluation officers in the regional bureaus and other units should regularly review and analyze patterns of relevant evaluation activities and ensure that they are fed back into operations. The central evaluation unit should oversee these activities and provide a general analysis and assessment of lessons learned. It should also help to identify key users and develop specific channels to feed these findings efficiently and effectively back into UNDP operations, including feedback to governments and executing agencies.

117. Second, the analysis and feedback of evaluation information needs to be much more closely integrated with other internal reporting. UNDP presently has a series of required project progress reports, tripartite review reports, and terminal reports, but there is concern that these reports have too often become

routine bureaucratic requirements that concentrate on administrative details. As JIU observed in its 1981 evaluation status report, the evaluation network, with its basic emphasis on results and effectiveness, could well be used to help streamline such reports into a more dynamic and coherent internal reporting system which concentrates on what results are being achieved, what changes are needed, and what actions should be taken.

118. Third, evaluation analysis and feedback should not be artificially separated from financial and administrative management information flows, as implied by the ISIP and PPMS systems on the one hand and the "comprehensive system" called for in Governing Council decision 77/47 on the other. The Capacity Study emphasized that "operational control" and "assessment of results" are both processes concerned with progress towards objectives and the improvement of operations. The new central unit should work to ensure that evaluation activities and processes are fully integrated with the ISIP and PPMS systems within the overall UNDP programme management cycle.

119. One important link between these processes is the Project Institutional Memory (PIM) of the PPMS. UNDP has long considered developing a "memory bank" to store experience to facilitate analysis to improve the programme. The PIM effort was undertaken in 1979 to collect and computerize descriptive information on past and current UNDP projects.

120. A group of consultants and temporary staff in BPPE has developed a PIM framework, data base and thesaurus. PIM now contains data on approximately 20,000 projects active since country programming began in 1972, and covering about 95 per cent of current UNDP-managed operational funds. The initial development process is now essentially complete, and PIM functions as an information centre providing data to a variety of users through on-line and ad hoc enquiries. PIM provides both keyword and descriptor information on approved projects and summary description data on reports received at UNDP headquarters.

121. Now that PIM is operational, a decision is needed to determine how it can be effectively applied to strengthen the analytical, feedback, and planning functions of the evaluation system. Considerations include whether to expand PIM coverage, add free-text and qualitative information including output data (which would entail substantial extra costs), use PIM for internal surveys of operational performance, and integrate it more directly into the UNDP feedback and reporting system. The Inspector believes that PIM has significant potential as an institutional memory within UNDP and for the United Nations system, and that its status and future use should be clearly established.

## VII. REPORTING TO THE GOVERNING COUNCIL

122. The Capacity Study emphasized the importance of controlled evaluation to maintain the accountability of the Administrator for effective use of all resources contributed to UNDP, and to ensure an integrated managerial approach. It also recommended that the Inspection and Evaluation staff have a major role in helping the Administrator to exercise his accountability through managerial control over operations and reporting on achievements in relation to objectives. The Consensus

of 1970 made the Administrator fully responsible and accountable to the Governing Council for all phases and aspects of Programme implementation, and gave the Council overall responsibility for ensuring maximum efficiency and effectiveness of Programme resource use in assisting the development of the developing countries.

123. In the early 1970s the Administrator's reports to the Council cited the importance of evaluation findings in measuring the effectiveness of UNDP operations and providing a continuing flow of intelligence and advice to management for Programme improvement. During the 1973-1976 period his Annual Reports provided considerable assessment of UNDP operations, problems, and improvements. Coincident with the gradual disappearance of the central evaluation unit from 1973 on, however, these reports became more and more general reviews, with diminishing reference to evaluation findings and results.

124. In 1976 the Governing Council requested the Administrator to suggest how the Council could more frequently and thoroughly consider the effectiveness of the field programme and lessons learned, including more systematic evaluation. He proposed in 1977 (DP/261) that evaluation should assume enhanced importance as a systematic and integral element in the continuing process of learning by experience. The Council endorsed the development of the "comprehensive system of analysis and feedback" to maximize the effectiveness of operations, and requested organizational provisions to enable it to discuss selected topics based on inputs from both on-going evaluation and thematic evaluations.

125. The concern with improved reporting and greater use of evaluation information for the Governing Council has continued in recent years. In 1978 the Council called for regular and continuing programme evaluation with co-ordination of evaluation reports and full use of material already available (decision 25/8), and a biennial budget containing regular evaluation reporting (DP/318 and decision 25/19). In 1979 the Council requested that consideration of programme planning and implementation matters be given greater consolidated attention and that the related documents be concise and comprehensive (decisions 79/8, 79/33).

126. In 1981 the Council endorsed the Administrator's proposals for annual progress reports on programme implementation and significant developments in the country programmes in each region (81/15). It decided to devote a well-defined part of its deliberations in future sessions to a review of main operational policy issues for immediate action and to include programme implementation as another main agenda item for each session (81/37). In 1982 the Council also welcomed the Administrator's intent to revise and update the Programme's data base for annual reports to better reflect the quality output orientation of the programme (82/6).

127. In reviewing the reports on Programme operations which the UNDP Secretariat has submitted to the Governing Council over the past twelve years, the Inspector found some very positive aspects. Much of the reporting, particularly during the mid-1970s, appears to have done a good job of frankly analyzing operational problems, suggesting significant directions for the future, and making reasonable proposals for improvement. The document citations throughout this report are evidence that UNDP has long recognized its various operating needs and problems and developed constructive ideas for the Governing Council in dealing with them.

128. The twelve years of documentation, however, also shows reporting problems which support the Administrator's and Governing Council's concerns with the need for improvement. The good reports have been counterbalanced by others which merely describe activities rather than progress made and results obtained. Although the Administrator's annual reports have often given a concise overview of programme operations, problems, and needs, in the past few years the operational reports seem to have become more and more fragmented and difficult to

interrelate. Programme data also gives much detail on inputs and certain activities, but not much material on outputs and results (as recognized in decision 82/6 above). Most importantly, evaluation findings - except for thematic evaluations - seem to have become less and less of an explicit component in reporting on operations over the years. Rather than a systematic flow of evaluation findings as the basis for assessing operational results, most recent evaluation discussion has been limited to the proposals for improving the evaluation process.

129. The Inspector believes that re-establishment of the central evaluation unit and the designation of evaluation officers in the bureaus is the key to correcting this situation. If the various evaluation system elements and linkages discussed in this report are improved in a coherent way, and particularly if the comprehensive system of analysis and feedback is developed, these evaluation officers can become the "focal points" at which all the evaluation information flows come together. They would thus be very well-placed for consolidating and analyzing this information for overall and special reports for the Administrator and the Governing Council.

130. This assignment of reporting responsibilities could clarify and stabilize overall UNDP operational reporting responsibilities, which now seem to be vaguely split among the Division of Information, BPPE and other central bureaus and units, and which have contributed to the uneven quality of past operational reports. The consolidation, analysis, and reporting functions could also allow the central unit and the bureaus to develop more effective evaluation plans and oversight, as discussed in Chapter VI. Finally, these reporting functions could provide the "core" of operational reporting to the Governing Council, with other independent reports (as discussed in Chapter III.C) from the JIU, the external and internal auditors, and consultants added as the Administrator and Governing Council wish.

131. The Administrator has observed that three agenda items - strengthening the role of the Council, the use of evaluation, and understanding of UNDP - which the Council's Intersessional Committee of the Whole discussed during late 1982-early 1983 are very closely interrelated. The Inspector also believes that improved understanding of the role, activities and resource needs of UNDP, and a strengthened role of the Council and its participating governments in programme planning and review, will require more comprehensive and concise reporting based on a strengthened and coherent evaluation system which assesses programme effectiveness and results. To strengthen the evaluation system, it is necessary to establish a central evaluation unit and to designate bureau evaluation officers who can give the Administrator the expert central staff support he needs to maintain firm operational accountability to the Governing Council.

#### VIII. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

132. UNDP has a very important leadership role to play in assessing the results and improving the effectiveness of international technical co-operation activities, because of its tripartite partnership with governments and executing agencies, its status as a financing agency with country programming activities in all development sectors, and its worldwide network of field offices.



133. Since its inception, UNDP has engaged in many evaluation activities, but in recent years its overall evaluation system has not operated as productively and cohesively as it should. New system management arrangements are needed. During the past few years, UNDP has analyzed its evaluation efforts and has developed proposals for further improvement. What is required now is firm action to strengthen the evaluation system on a co-ordinated and integrated basis with, above all, the re-establishment of a central evaluation unit.

134. UNDP evaluation activities should be a dynamic force in the development co-operation cycle, continuously focusing the attention of managers on results being obtained in the light of objectives in order to improve the programme. Since the early 1970s, this essential role of the evaluation system has become rather blurred (paragraphs 7-12).

#### RECOMMENDATION 1

The Administrator should ensure that future UNDP terms of reference and guidance for evaluation clearly define the purposes, functions and role of the UNDP tripartite evaluation system. This should include emphasis on evaluation as an essential element within an integrated management system, as a systematic process of continuously learning from experience, and as a fundamental means for achieving the "new dimensions" emphasis on technical co-operation outputs or results rather than inputs.

135. The responsibilities for evaluation in UNDP, particularly for overall management, support, oversight and improvement of the evaluation system, need to be clarified and then activated. This would help greatly to ensure that the overall evaluation system functions smoothly and effectively.

#### RECOMMENDATION 2

The Administrator should clearly designate evaluation responsibilities among UNDP field offices, governments and executing agencies, and headquarters bureaus and other staff. Above all and most urgently, he should re-establish a small but highly-qualified central evaluation unit staff. This unit should provide overall management, leadership, support and oversight of the evaluation system and stimulate its progressive improvement. The work of the unit could be supplemented by such other independent evaluation and reporting activities as he and the Governing Council decide (paragraphs 8-41).

136. The evaluation network and especially the central evaluation unit need to further develop evaluation system elements, linkages and operating and reporting responsibilities into a coherent system to better improve Programme effectiveness.

#### RECOMMENDATION 3

The Administrator should entrust the new central evaluation unit, and other components of the evaluation network as appropriate, with responsibility for the following actions, in a phased but integrated process of evaluation system development and improvement.

##### (a) Basic system elements

(i) Tripartite reviews: New results-oriented guidance and formats should be developed, issued and used in order to establish tripartite reviews as the operational "backbone" and "built-in self-evaluation" component of the UNDP evaluation system. Tripartite reviews should be firmly linked with other evaluation system elements, and they should be timed wherever possible to coincide with key project decision points (paragraphs 44-51).

(ii) In-depth project evaluations: Streamlined, revised guidelines and clarification of responsibilities are needed, both for the conduct of project evaluations and for oversight of their use and quality (paragraphs 52-57).

(iii) Evaluation in the country programming process: Project evaluation findings should be systematically used in periodic country programme reviews, and possibilities for adding a specific evaluation component in the country programming process should be explored and developed (paragraphs 58-63).

(iv) Thematic evaluations: The programme of thematic evaluation studies needs to be more tightly managed and controlled, with particular attention to developing timely and specific feedback mechanisms so that findings are actively and effectively used to improve operations (paragraphs 64-70).

(b) Key linkages

(i) Project design: The new project design process now being tested should be closely reviewed and integrated with other changes in the evaluation system and with related executing agency design guidance before it is finalized. Evaluation staff should also have responsibilities for reviewing and advising on the technical quality ("evaluability") of new project designs (paragraphs 72-77).

(ii) Supporting evaluation by governments: The strong potential leadership role which UNDP could play in encouraging and supporting evaluation by governments, both at the field and central levels, should be further explored and developed through information exchanges, co-operative and co-ordinative actions, and project development and reporting activities to further stimulate this relatively "new" development field (paragraphs 78-84).

(iii) Inter-agency activities: An inter-agency working group of evaluation officers should be established as soon as possible to more systematically harmonize and strengthen the evaluation policies and procedures for technical co-operation of the various agencies (paragraphs 85-91).

(c) Operational responsibilities

(i) Evaluation planning and oversight: An overall periodic evaluation plan should be developed to clarify and co-ordinate evaluation system activities, and oversight functions assigned to ensure smooth system operation and "quality control" (paragraphs 93-100).

(ii) Guidelines and training: A comprehensive and systematic revision of evaluation guidelines should be made, integrated with overall project cycle guidance and accompanied by systematic staff training in evaluation which makes the best possible use of scarce UNDP training resources (paragraphs 101-108).

(iii) Analysis and feedback: To ensure that evaluation is used, responsibilities and processes for providing careful and comprehensive analysis of evaluation findings and orderly feedback to key operational users should be established as a high priority, and integrated with other internal reporting and operational control information. In addition, the future development and use of the Project Institutional Memory (PIM), which provides a base for a UNDP and system-wide "memory bank", should be decided upon (paragraphs 109-121).

(d) Reporting to the Governing Council: The co-ordination and consolidation of all the evaluation elements and information flows within the central evaluation unit and in the bureaux should be utilized by assigning them a basic responsibility for reporting on Programme operations to the Administrator and the Governing Council (paragraphs 122-131).

