Capacity-Building Supported by the United Nations Some Evaluations and Some Lessons

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Some Evaluations and Some Lessons

Preface

This publication is the first of its kind from the Department for Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations. It covers the related subjects of impact evaluation and capacity-building and is based on the pioneering evaluations conducted within the context of the triennial comprehensive policy review of the operational activities for development of the United Nations system. These evaluations were mandated by the General Assembly in its resolution 50/120. Chapter 1 covers some of the evaluation issues raised, while Chapter 2 provides an overview of the lessons learned about capacity building. Chapters 3 through 8 reproduce the six country mission reports.

While the immediate audience of the evaluations were delegations to the Economic and Social Council in 1998 and to the current session of the General Assembly, their nature and scope makes them of interest to a wider audience. This is particularly true in view of the fact that the evaluations were never intended as an end by themselves, but rather as an important step in the learning process required to adapt operational activities for development to new and ever-changing requirements of developing countries.

The range of issues brought out by the evaluations reflects the variety of contexts in which capacity-building supported by the United Nations system takes place, and the commensurate need to provide practical and up-to-date guidance to persons engaged in the design and implementation of development programmes. The initial lessons learned are being translated into norms and standards that can be applied by the officials of the United Nations system, and their partners, particularly national colleagues. The task of learning through evaluation, and thus creating stronger capacity building activities, is continuing and more impact evaluations are being undertaken over the course of the next three years. It is expected that further such publications will be made available to interested readers.

The evaluations were carried out by the Development Cooperation Policy Branch, within the Division for ECOSOC Support and Coordination of this Department. The overall responsibility for the preparation of the triennial comprehensive policy review was borne by the Chief of the Branch, Mr. Alfred R. Haemmerli.

These impact evaluations, which were initiated by the Assembly in its resolution 50/120 on the basis of a recommendation by the Secretary-General, were co-ordinated and managed by Mr. Roger Maconick, as was the preparation of this publication. The views expressed by the authors in this publication are their own and do not necessarily reflect those of the United Nations. Reactions of the reader are invited. Contact e-mail address is maconick@un.org.

The impact evaluations are designed to strengthen the substantive support provided to member states at ECOSOC and the General Assembly. In good part, as a result of the quality of the work done by senior individuals possessing wide experience and high standing in the field, this goal is being achieved, as evidenced by the most recent action by the General Assembly in its resolution 53/192. An added, but essential value is to contribute to the stock of knowledge of development practitioners within and outside the United Nations system. It is the sincere hope of the Department that this publication is a contribution in this sense.

<center>Chapter 1</center>

<center>**Evaluating the Impact of Operational activities:**
Some observations on the Evaluation issues</center>

<center>**By Roger Maconick**</center>

A. Origins and context

The origin of these evaluations lies in the decision by the UN General Assembly (GA), on the occasion of the 1995 triennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities, to call for an evaluation of the impact of those activities, as part of the 1998 review. This decision ensured that the report of the Secretary General for the 1998 triennial review would be based on empirical evidence of impact.

The scope of these triennial reviews covers virtually all of the development work and some of the emergency related work of the UN system. The operational activities of the UN system in question involve expenditures of around $4.5 billion per annum. Since the review of the GA results in policy guidance to the UN system from its support to developing countries in the economic, social and cultural areas, it became essential to provide better and more fully documented reports.

In 1995, the report drew in part on external evaluations, which had been carried out during the previous four years of five UN entities, including the principal sources of funding for operational activities[1]. The evaluations were carried out under different auspices. Some were done by consultants, commissioned and paid by a group of member states; others were done by distinguished persons, recruited by the UN entity concerned.

Each evaluation contained a wide variety of important substantive and managerial conclusions and recommendations. However, examining them all together did not give an indication that they were evaluations of parts of a single system with some shared and common purposes. More importantly, it is not possible, after reviewing all the five evaluations, to make an overall assessment of the effectiveness and impact of the operational activities[2] carried out by the UN system as a whole. The conclusion was therefore that the various evaluations then being done of individual UN entities, even when viewed collectively, were insufficient to support judgements on the overall performance of UN operational activities. Nor were there other sources that supported a similar level of aggregate analysis.

The triennial policy review must have, as its basis, an analysis of the overall performance of the UN development system in order to arrive at policies, which give the UN system and to member states guidance on how best to orient operational activities of the UN system, in the face of a range of challenges. The absence of an overall judgement on performance posed a problem.

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[1] *UNDP, UNICEF, UNFPA & WFP*
[2] *Operational activities cover the development work of the UN system. In effect they are composed of the expenditures of UNDP UNFPA, UNICEF and about 1/3 of WFP's, plus about $½ billion from the regular budgets of the various UN specialised agencies most notably WHO.*

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As the concepts of results-based and output oriented programming and management have taken hold at the level of the GA and ECOSOC, the United Nations was asked by its member states to show evidence of impact of the development cooperation being carried out by the United Nations system. Given the decentralized nature of the United Nations system, and given a structure of organizations and programmes spread over the range of all sectors and major development issues, the collection of systematic data on performance of the system posed considerable difficulties.

The traditional method employed for the preparation of previous triennial policy reviews by the General Assembly consisted of questionnaires addressed to four categories of partners in operational activities for development: recipient countries, donor countries, headquarters of UN system organizations (about 30 organizations), and country representatives of the United Nations system, usually through the resident coordinator. This method was supplemented by in-depth country reviews conducted by UN staff along policy directives laid down by previous legislation. This information was to be supplemented by evaluation studies conducted by the various organizations of the system.

While this approach permitted an assessment of current views by various partners, it did not permit an objective and empirically verifiable set of conclusions. More importantly, it did not address the question of impact and results. It was thus decided to complement the traditional method, with impact evaluations that would look at the substantive results, or lack thereof achieved by the UN system as a whole at the country level. It was clear from the start that this would be a pilot exercise, which would require testing and adaptation in the light of experience. This publication reports on the results achieved during the pilot exercise, some issues raised, some lessons learned and further directions being pursued.

B.   What was done

The topic chosen for the pilot evaluation of impact was capacity building. This was in line with guidance from previous GA resolutions, A broad and overarching term, applicable to a wide variety of activities that the UN system supports at the country level, it provided considerable flexibility. Beginning in April 1997 a preliminary analysis was made of the availability of data. The UN teams in some thirty-eight countries, representing all regions, were asked to produce monographs, indicating their knowledge of the capacities the building of which the UN system had supported from 1980-1995. Following the analysis of these monographs four countries were chosen for evaluation[3]. Two other countries were chosen because other indicators suggested that they had experiences worth examining, ones from which the UN system could learn[4]

These six evaluations were carried out between October 1997 and March 1998[5]. Each evaluation was carried out by two senior independent consultants. In each team, one member came from the "South" and one from the "North". Each involved an initial briefing in NY and relevant UN agencies followed by 2-3 weeks work in country followed by 1 week to

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[3] *El Salvador, Mali, Pakistan, Uganda,*
[4] *Brazil and Zimbabwe*
[5] *The political mandate having been established, it was then necessary for the secretariat to obtain resources. As an unforeseen expenditure, there was no provision in the UN budget for such evaluations. Accordingly, some $250,000 was provided by member states as extrabudgetary resources and, on this basis, it was decided to go ahead with a pilot set of six impact evaluations.*

Follow up. The evaluations have been presented to, and discussed in, interagency fora within the UN system, with a view both to passing on findings and lessons learned and to stimulating similar initiatives within the UN system. In addition DESA, via this publication is putting out the reports in edited form along with an overview of the capacity building lessons learned and evaluation issues raised. It has also initiated workshops and seminars within the UN system, to produce practical programme guidance on capacity building, based on the lessons learned, and the experience and knowledge available within the UN system, for programme and project designers appraisers and managers.

It is expected that the findings of the evaluations will be reflected in new and improved guidance to all officials in the UN system dealing with development co-operation. This represents an effort to follow up the findings of the triennial policy review and the subsequent GA resolution in a systematic way.

C. Some evaluation issues

Evaluations organised in a multilateral and political context face many of the standard evaluation problems as well as some extra ones of their own. Essentially they relate to the context in which they are discussed and considered and the problems of observation and measurement.

The context. Discussions and debates within the Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly reflect the diversity of political and economic positions of member states. These debates frequently involve different interests of donors and recipients, but also still find areas of agreement that eventually produce consensus. Providing qualitative analysis and judgement to a body, which contains a wide distribution of viewpoints, requires that the analysis not only be technically sound but also be balanced and even handed and be seen to be balanced and even handed. Evaluations of operational activities funded by, and carried out on behalf of, member states have therefore to reflect political sensitivity and strict adherence to mandates. They can contribute to the better understanding by member states of current issues by providing objective and technically sound analysis that clarifies issues and helps to reduce the areas of disagreement between different viewpoints.

Evaluation is viewed and used differently in different countries, cultures and organisations. This fact needs to be reflected in the way the UN approaches such a task. Evaluation by external agencies, even from the UN system, is sometimes viewed with suspicion, hostility and seen as a waste of resources. There is a considerable potential in some countries for improving the perceived usefulness of evaluation, as a tool of good management of a society's resources. The secretariat, in carrying out these evaluations, was seeking to provide a product, which would be forward looking and useful for the deliberations of member states and would serve as an example of how such evaluations can contribute to enhancing any debate on the issues. The evaluations concentrated in particular on those issues, which the UN GA has a mandate to address directly, namely the

performance of the UN system. In looking at impact in these circumstances the focus was on the performance of the UN system in providing support to national efforts to improve the condition of their people via capacity building.

Impact. The secretariat had suggested, and the General Assembly had called for, evaluations of impact but without specifying what was meant by impact, in the context of operational activities. Evaluating 'development' impact had not been extensive within the UN development system. The complex problems addressed; the difficulties of observation and measurement; the absence of agreement on common standards, the issues involved in transcending the sectoral nature of the division of labour within the UN system and the tendency of many stakeholders in the UN system to focus particular attention on the management of inputs are some of the factors which explain this absence of impact evaluations.

There was a need to be useful in the largest sense of the word, but to be accurate and technically sound as well. There were also some wider dimensions to defining and looking at impact. As noted in the 1995 triennial review, which had proposed the evaluations of impact, there was a gap between what was sought by member states from the UN system's operational activities and the resources and capacities that were provided by member states to support them. The gap may have reflected a view among some of the UN system's stakeholders that the efficiency and long term effectiveness of operational activities were uncertain. If technically sound and credible judgements about impact could be established on a sufficiently broad scale, then the rationale for UN operational activities becomes greater. Providing the best analysis possible, given all the limitations, becomes something of a major undertaking. The UN system has been cautious about taking on this task in the past. Given the apparently growing uncertainty among some stakeholders, it was certainly timely to address the problem now.

Part of the problem for this pilot exercise was to use a definition of impact and an approach to its evaluation that was rigorous and therefore credible, but which would also lead to some lessons that would be of practical use to those providing guidance to a legislative body overseeing operational activities. One dictionary definition[9] of impact is "the effective action of one thing or person upon another; the effect of such action; influence; impression." The JIU[10] 1978 Evaluation Glossary defined impact, as an "expression of the changes produced in a situation as the result of an activity that has been undertaken". There was no specific guidance on the meaning of impact in the glossary or in the various manuals that different parts of the UN have put out on evaluation, or on institution and capacity building, over the last twenty-five years.[11]

This definition implies that the activity concerned has been completed and that any changes, 'caused' by the activity, which indicated impact, had to be clear cut and specific events that could easily be observed. It appeared to be unsuitable for an evaluation of

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[9] *Oxford English Dictionary 2nd edition 1992*
[10] *The Joint Inspection Unit is an independent oversight entity within the UN which contributed via its reports to some of the progress on evaluation made by the UN system during the 1980s*
[11] *UNDP provided its staff with guidelines for the formulation of Institution Building as long ago as 1972. However, there was limited content on indicators or success criteria and it is not clear that the guidance was heeded sufficiently.*

capacity building, which is composed of factors that are more difficult to quantify than to observe, and which operate in such a complex and evolving process. There are uncertainties inherent in any foreseeable programmes of operational activities because the "outputs" or "products" do not pass through a market or some other mechanism which provides a convenient and low cost measure permitting a disinterested observer to assess their value.

However these uncertainties do not justify making no effort to provide some kind of framework or approach for making qualitative observations if not measurement. This kind of uncertainty is an area which all social sciences find problematic. There are a variety of distinguished sociologists, historians, economists and management experts who are striving to improve on previous approaches to analysing complex processes where measurement is either impractical, impossible or both.[12] Taking inspiration from these and other similar efforts these pilot evaluations followed two approaches. They were intended as first steps in the right direction, which, while they were not fully satisfactory solutions, were seen as being slightly less bad than what had been tried in the past.

The first concerns how to define impact and the second how to observe and describe it, if not to measure it. The Terms of Reference for these evaluation missions used a practical definition, which took account of the continuous nature of many UN relationships and programmes and of the effects they set in motion. Impact was taken to include the changes or consequences that reached beyond the direct purpose, which the UN system was directly supporting. It was assumed that when examining the quality of capacity building, both individual and organisational capabilities, as well as wider capacities within a society, are best examined in terms of their dynamics. Consequently, an evaluation of the impact of capacity building was seen as requiring a judgement about the processes that had been set in motion and where they were likely to lead, within an overall context that was also evolving, rather than an assessment of the difference between capacity at the beginning and at the end of the relevant period.

While each evaluation team had its own implicit or explicit subtle variation on the definition of impact, reflecting their varied backgrounds, the experience of the pilot does support the view that to talk of impact in such circumstances, the analysis has to consider the processes *or changes* that have been set in motion. In estimating the lasting effects of any capacity building support, it appears that the calculation should be concerned not with whether one set of conditions is sustained from one time period to a later one, but rather whether the situation has been *perturbed positively and if so how much.*

The issue is what processes have been set in motion, are they positive ones and are they sufficient to keep up with the way that the whole environment is changing. It was assumed and the pilot exercise supports the view that "positive perturbability" might be a more appropriate term than sustainability. The evaluators were asked to look for such positive (or negative) changes being set in motion or at least prepared for, and to

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[12] *See for example "The Reflective Practioners, Donald Schon, Basic Books, 1983, or "Analysis Without Measurement", Donald Katzner, Cambridge University Press, June 1983 or "Evaluation for the 21st century, a handbook", Eleanor Chelimsky and William Shadish, editors. Sage, 1997.*

concentrate on indicators of such ongoing changes rather than discreet changes in the level of one indicator or another.

The "measurement" of impact. The problem of measurement, common to many of the activities that are supported by international community, becomes more complex, when dealing with capacity building for several reasons. First, there was at the time of the evaluations, no generally agreed definition of capacity building among the entities of the UN system. Second, the concept of capacity building, such as it was, had evolved from an earlier concept of institution building. Third, in most instances, governments and UN agencies had yet to establish even provisional baseline data and tentative indicators for capacity or institution building or the systems necessary to monitor changes in them, let alone to track processes of change. Fourth, there was a need to define more precisely or rather more operationally capacity building.

As part of its preparations for the 1995 and 1998 triennial reviews, the various agencies in the UN development system were asked to provide the lessons, which they had learned from their long support to institution building and capacity development in the past. There had also been efforts during the 1980s under the aegis of the Inter-Agency Working Group on Evaluation to collect and apply the principal lessons learned by the technical agencies. Neither attempt was very successful. Yet many specialised agencies had, in the 1960s, 70s and 80s, usually with UNDP funding, contributed to the establishment and strengthening of a wide variety of institutes, training centres and various planning and or implementation entities and so had experience to draw upon.

A number of countries had indeed set up or strengthened such organisations with support from the UN system. A decade or so later, a number of them no longer exist or do not function at the levels they used to. In these circumstances the concepts, which the UN system has been using in defining capacity building, as well as success in supporting it, have to be reviewed quite radically in the light of these experiences.[13]

As noted in one of the evaluations in the pilot phase, "For those involved at the field level in designing capacity development programmes, the term remains too all-encompassing and must be de-constructed into more manageable aspects…to acquire much relevance. For practitioners and managers, capacity development must then be linked to specific critical functions that people can do something about before it can be made operational"[14] in the absence of accepted measures, indicators and a comprehensive set of data..

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[13]. *"The difficulty of fundamentally altering paths is evident and suggest that the learning process by which we arrive at today's institutions constrains future choices. The institutional structure builds in a set of constraints, with respect to downstream changes that biases choices";* Douglass C North. *"Five propositions about institutional change", page 6. Washington University.St Louis. North here is talking about path dependence and about institutions, as the rules of the game for society rather than as organisations. But the point is still valid when applied to capacity building. The UN system needs to see why once successful organisations, which it helped to establish, no longer perform satisfactorily,*

14 *See An Evaluation of the United Nations' system Impact on Capacity Development in Basic Health and Education in Pakistan: 1980-1995, Chapter 6, page 127, by P. Morgan and S. Wanasinghe*

The lack of definite measures for success in a process such a capacity building sometimes leads to concerns as to its value as a discipline and doubts about any general principles being drawn from its experience. While caution is justified, there are some pointsthat need to be kept in mind. There are indeed few, if any, precise measures of many of the variables involved in capacity building. However, it involves human behaviour and the relevant issues may be well captured and illuminated by approaches that have some way of handling uncertainty and reducing it to manageable dimensions.

"Fuzzy logic" is a recognised field in computer science and some degree of imprecision, if acceptable, and possibly helpful, to professionals examining both the concept and implementation of capacity building, may be preferable to a precision, which has no practical use. In terms of an exercise such as these impact evaluations, this means that the best judgements on capacity building may come from seasoned professionals, who look at the way a capacity building activity is conceived and managed; what happened as a result of it, and see if it falls within reasonable norms for the circumstances.

Availability of relevant data. The evaluation missions all suffered from a shortage of relevant information particularly a lack of baseline data and information on progress. One factor was the absence of generally accepted definitions of capacity building and measures of impact for UN system support to capacity building. But the evaluations also confirm an inference, drawn initially from the preliminary monographs prepared by resident co-ordinator teams, that in most cases baseline studies were not undertaken at the outset of these programmes, nor was the feasibility of building an institution, or developing a capacity through operational activities examined in depth.

The paucity of the UN system resources available relative to the task is identified as one of the principal reasons for this. Another reason is that indicators of progress for institution building/capacity development had rarely been established and so could not be used either to design a programme or project, to monitor one systematically, or to evaluate its effectiveness during its lifetime, or its impact after its completion. The evaluators were thus asked to make judgements without much hard data.

This further explains the solution which we chose in these evaluations; to use the "judgement of the wise", rather than to attempt more "sophisticated" research evaluation designs. The desired profile of senior independent consultants was of individuals, who had either undertaken capacity building, or had used the output of capacity building by others in a similar position. It was assumed that as 'reflective professionals'[15] they would be best able to put together whatever data was available and seek out the relevant information and synthesise it all into intelligible and rational judgements. This solution was seen as the least bad alternative available.

Country level focus. The primary focus of analysis of operational activities has usually been the country level. The resources the UN system devotes to supporting efforts to build relevant capacity are directed principally to activities programmed and implemented at the individual country level. Any evaluation of the impact of UN efforts to support the building of capacity naturally reflects this distribution of resources and

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[15] See "The Reflective Practioners", Donald Schon, Basic Books 1983, op.cit. and the subsequent literature spawned by it.

concentrates principally on the country level activities. However one way to consider the activities of UN system is to divide them according to the role that is being played. Under one such taxonomy, the UN system has first a convening role, creating the preconditions and fora for suggesting and coming to agreement on global and regional norms. Second, it contributes to the setting of those global norms. Third, various parts of it undertake advocacy on behalf of those globally or regionally agreed norms and standards. Fourth, various parts of it undertake operations in support of those norms.

Any evaluation of the UN system support in any area should in theory cover all the efforts made, if it is to be comprehensive. The choice made for this pilot exercise was to limit attention to the country level. This was dictated by a combination of pragmatism and resource constraints. Serious consideration had been given to evaluating regional capacity building, however, the level of extra-budgetary contributions prevented following up this aspect of the question. It may be that future impact evaluations can examine this and other aspects.

The UN system as a system. Early on in the period, the system's approach to building capacity tended to be sectoral, creating organisations such as a meteorological authority or a soils institute with institutional and organisational relationships with the UN system on a similarly sectoral basis. With the evolution of the concept from institutional capacity building, in response both to experience and to a changing environment, a broader approach is seen more in terms of solving a particular problem or meeting a particular set of evolving needs. This requires the involvement of multiple entities with the country concerned and more than one entity within the UN system. Hence, in those areas where such a common approach is required, the need for a co-ordinated approach by the UN system has become much stronger. This has implications for the way that UN entities work together that go beyond how they collaborate in individual countries and therefore for development of a systematic UN approach. However this is one of the issues, which could not be examined fully in these pilot evaluations.

The terms of reference of each evaluation mission refer to the UN system as a whole working together as a system, notwithstanding the fact that much of the impulse for a more coherent approach has come progressively, and in response to guidance from the General Assembly in successive resolutions (44/211, 47/199 and 50/120) over the last nine years. A corollary of this is that the UN system is less likely to have acted as a system at the country level at the beginning of the period 1980-95, which was the period examined by the evaluations.

One question, which arose during the exercise, and remains partially unanswered, was whether there are "generic" lessons that can be learned about capacity building. Generic here means that they apply to almost all categories and to almost all circumstances, as opposed to others that are problem, region or country specific. Sorting out the generic from the specific and determining when they are and are not applicable would then become one of the most important tasks of those synthesising the results of the evaluations. Selecting some of these lessons and determining when they are and are not applicable is one of the tasks undertaken in the next chapter of this publication.

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D. The outcome

What has been done? To sum up, some independent evaluations containing some technically based analysis of the impact of some operational activities in six countries were presented to ECOSOC and the General Assembly for the first time in the context of the triennial comprehensive policy review of 1998. It was deemed useful, particularly in linking the normative and operational dimensions of UN development co-operation, and in injecting independent judgements on results.

The use of balanced evaluation teams with senior independent representatives from both "north" and "south" was the right approach. So was the use of a 'wise persons group' composed of highly respected individuals, with the standing and experience to command the credibility of their audience and to act as guarantors of the integrity of the process.

There is a variation in the scope and quality of the reports. This reflects the circumstances in which the teams worked, their respective backgrounds and in all cases, the insufficient time they had to complete their work. The variation matters because the sample is still small. Once resources available for such evaluations increase, permitting a larger number of countries and or topics to be examined, this should become less of a problem. Overall the most significant factor in determining the quality of the reports appears to have been the qualifications and the quality of the consultants. The second most important factor has been the degree that the UN community in the past in the countries visited have gathered and maintained data on their own performance. The use of the 'judgement of the wise' appears to have been justified as a palliative to the lack of measures and data. The wiser the combination of consultants the wiser was the resulting report.

What is left undone?

If the hypothesis, advanced earlier, that the UN development system, when performing at its best, can play at least four roles: - convening, norm setting, advocating and teaching by doing, is accepted, then much capacity building supported by the UN system has potential benefits that transcend the boundaries of the society concerned. For example, peace building and the capacity to promote enduring economic and social stability through development are a central concern not only for the countries in this small sample but also to their neighbours. UN system support to development of such capacities is therefore promoting an international or regional "public good".

In this connection it should be recalled that the work of the UNDP (and of the specialised agencies, to whom it was the central sources of funds in the 1960s and 1970s), was often seen as pre investment, preparing the ground for private public investment in national economies. The evolving nature of operational activities, which support capacity building, may prompt future analysis of the performance of UN system operational activities at least partially in terms of pre-investment for international public goods.

This and several other interesting topics could not be addressed, not only because of the lack of resources and, in many instances, the limitations of the data – but also because virtually of that data that was available was project related data. There is nothing inherently wrong with project level data. Most UN operational activities were delivered via projects –

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but it does make the connection between UN system performance and overall effectiveness and impact more difficult to analyse.

The professional literature on capacity building has addressed the question of whether there are preconditions, which have to be fulfilled before capacity building, can be successfully undertaken[16]. The answers from these evaluations are suggestive rather than conclusive on this point and highlight the view that capacity building is a broad umbrella covering a wide variety of possible interventions. The experience in El Salvador and Uganda does give some support to the thesis that there has to be order and stability within the society before work can be done to strengthen many of the institutions of a modern society and that the existence of such stability is a prerequisite for many types of capacity building.

The meaning of impact in the context of operational activities remains to be explored more fully. Similarly the concept of capacity building may need to be disaggregated somewhat if it is to be used as the theme of major evaluations. The practice of impact evaluation for operational activities needs similarly to become more rigorous. More attention needs to be paid to the cost effectiveness of the results achieved. The technique used in this instance was simply the least bad of those available and future exercises need to be responsive to any improvements in practice and lessons learned by others as and when they emerge.

There are no major surprises, indeed no major lessons emerging from these evaluations. Future exercises if sufficiently focussed and if they cover a sufficiently large sample may be able to draw more generally applicable lessons.

E. Conclusion

Impact evaluation, even as a pilot exercise has produced useful benefits and has the potential to do more. There is now a greater concern within the UN system for recording the results, and demonstrating the impact of operational activities than there was at the time of the previous triennial comprehensive policy review. This growth has at least coincided with, if not been caused by, the General Assembly's call for an evaluation of impact. While the methodology employed in this exercise has its limitations, it has been possible to produce some valid observations and judgements by independent professionals providing a step towards a more comprehensive picture of the overall performance of the system that was not available before.

Future impact evaluations will be more likely to reach the high expectations placed upon them by member states. The evaluations may have set in motion a process of improving the system's approach to capacity building and hopefully have acted as a catalyst to creative capacity building within the system. The principal lessons of the exercise with respect to capacity building can be found in the next chapter and the individual country reports follow in the six subsequent chapters. The evaluation lessons learned will be reflected in the planning and implementation of the next series of evaluations to be presented to the General Assembly in 2001.

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[16] see *Mary Hildebrand and Merilee Grindle, Building Sustainable Capacity, Challenges for the Public Sector, Harvard Institute for International Development, November 1994. Chapter 4*

Chapter 2

Some observations and lessons on Capacity Building
by Peter Morgan

1. INTRODUCTION

Capacity building as an international activity is not new[17]. Seen as an intervention or activity by an organization or group in one country to help those in another to improve their ability to carry out certain functions or achieve certain objectives, capacity building has been going on for centuries in fields such as the military, trade, architecture, religion, science, culture and education. In the early years of the modern era of international development cooperation beginning in the 1950s, efforts at capacity building were focused on two main areas: first, completing the basic institutional infrastructure in many countries including universities, planning commissions, telecommunications agencies, technical colleges and so on; and second, improving the ability of development organizations in a particular country to implement donor-funded projects. Such efforts at capacity building were seen as means to the achievement of much larger development policy ends.

Capacity issues began to take on an increasing importance in the late 1980s and early 1990s. The end of the Cold war had opened up new possibilities for governance and democratization. Countries in all parts of the world were rethinking the role of government. There was a better appreciation of the correlation between the quality and performance of a country's organizations and institutions and its overall level of developmental progress[18]. Central governments, for example, became engaged in large-scale efforts to improve their national health systems or to decentralize the delivery of public services such as education. The capacities of non-state actors in civil society and the private sector became a matter of national concern. The need for capacity retention and capacity utilization - making the most of what organizational resources and capabilities a country already had - was better understood. Increasingly, capacity building became a key part of the rationale for the whole idea of international development cooperation. If countries could not be explicitly helped to achieve some measure of institutional sustainability and performance, what then could be the longer-term value of international cooperation?

The United Nations system of programmes, funds and technical agencies played a

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17 The term 'capacity building' is not employed in some countries and international development organizations given its connotation of starting from the process of capacity building from scratch. Others prefer the terms 'capacity development' or 'capacity enhancement' to convey the sense of improving or utilizing what capacity already exists. In this chapter, the term 'capacity building' is retained given its common use in the United Nations General Assembly resolutions.

18 A 1998 World Bank study found that over the 30 years to 1994, countries with sound policies and capable and effective government institutions grew at 3% per capita per year while those with sound policies but weak institutions grew at only 1.4% per year.

major role in these international efforts at capacity building ranging from public sector reform to AIDS prevention to police reform and improvements to primary school systems[19]. In many instances, the UN system paid more attention to capacity issues, especially in the 1970s and '80s, than did many other international funding agencies. Most programmes involved capacity building either explicitly as in UNDP assistance to decentralization or else indirectly through the development of maternal and child health programmes. The Zimbabwe evaluation summarized later in this book estimated that the UN system spent over $150.0 million in that country during 1980-1995 on programmes and projects that included substantial amounts of capacity building.

In 1995, the General Assembly through Resolution 50/120 requested the United Nations Secretariat to undertake a system-wide evaluation of the operational activities of the United Nations at the field level. The theme of capacity building as a focus of the study was subsequently agreed upon with a view to determining if, and to what degree, the UN system had responded to the growing emphasis on capacity building. Six evaluations were carried out in the first half of 1998. Three evaluations (Pakistan, Mali, Uganda) focused on capacity-building in basic health and education; the other three (Zimbabwe, Brazil and El Salvador) looked at environment, technology/environment and peace-building respectively.

Specifically, the six evaluations were undertaken to address the following issues:

• the impact of the United Nations system support on capacity-building of national processes and organizations between 1980 and 1995

• the evolving ability of the United Nations system to develop common approaches to priority issues such as capacity building

• the learning of lessons on how issues of capacity building for development could be addressed

• the continuing need to refine evaluations and, where necessary, monitoring to serve the ever widening scope of operational activities.

This overview chapter brings together the results of these six evaluations. It first looks at the general concept of capacity building and puts forward some guidelines for judging the effectiveness of capacity building programmes and projects. Second, it looks briefly at the

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[19] *The term "UN system' is used in this report to describe the family of UN organizations that, individually and collectively, engage in some form of international development. For three of the evaluations (Pakistan, Mali, Uganda), the main UN actors were the United Nations Development Progra*mme UNDP), the United Nations Education, Social and cultural Organization (UNESCO), the United Nations Fund for Population activities (UNFPA), the United Nations Children's' Emergency Fund (UNICEF), the World Food Programme (WFP), and the World Health Organization (WHO). Other UN system organizations whose programmes appear in these evaluations include the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR), the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), the International Labour Organization (ILO), the International Telecommunications Union (ITU), the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), the United Nations Capital Development Fund (UNCDF).*

contexts within which the UN system programmes operated in the six countries. These ranged from a high technology sector in a rapidly industrializing country in South America to basic health improvements in a land-locked state in Africa. Third, the report looks at the results of the evaluations and tries to bring out common patterns, both positive and negative, that merit attention. Finally, it discusses some wider implications for the UN system that flow out of these results.

2. PERSPECTIVES ON CAPACITY BUILDING

Most discussions of capacity building, including those in these six evaluations, quickly bump up against differing, and in some cases, conflicting approaches to the term. The idea of capacity building remains both appealing and amorphous. The emerging international experience is slowly leading theorists and practitioners to an obvious conclusion. A common definition of, or approach to, capacity building is only possible at a high level of abstraction. Once people start to struggle with real-world problems and constraints to progress in situations as varied as telecommunications in Brazil or maternal and child care in Mali, they need to make use of a wide range of approaches to capacity building in much the same way that private entrepreneurs use different strategies to achieve commercial success in a variety of situations. In many cases, the constraints are political rather than technical. More money helps in some places: in others, it makes things worse. Strategies vary over time and according to the needs of different sectors and organizations. Market-driven strategies for organizational change can be key in some instances but not in others. Organizational restructuring matters here but not there. It all depends.

The perceptions of the international development community on capacity issues, both in the UN system and in partner counties, changed a good deal over the period 1980-1995. In the early and mid-1980s, the term 'institution building' or 'strengthening' referred to techniques and ideas that could loosely be described as organizational engineering. Attention focused on improvements to the internal structure, systems, strategy and skills of individual organizations, mainly in the public sector. Such interventions tended to be supply-driven, solution-driven and donor-driven and were aimed at reducing performance gaps that were seen to arise from a lack of technical or administrative abilities. Such techniques were also expert-driven and were transferred to developing countries mainly through training and technical assistance.

By the end of the 1980s, this approach was still seen as useful in certain circumstances. But it had proven, in most cases, to be far too limited in scope to deal with the emerging challenges involved in improving national abilities to choose and implement development objectives. A much broader concept - that of capacity building - came into use. As it emerged in the late 1980s and 1990s, it included a range of ideas that went beyond the more conventional approach to institutional strengthening. These included some of the following:

• The perspective on institutional change was expanded to the national level. Capacity issues thus began to take on a 'macro reform' as well as a 'micro improvement' significance. Countries needed to do more to create an effective organizational infrastructure. Specific capacity building programmes were aimed at improving policy and programme formulation, budgeting and financial management, development planning, programme implementation, coordination and performance monitoring and evaluation. From this

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perspective, the nation was to be seen as a rational problem solver intent on changing the role of the state, building the core capacities of government in economic, financial and human resources management and improving the quality and coverage of public services.

- More attention began to be paid to the influence of the broader environment in a country or a sector or a region in the building of capacity. The broader institutional and social patterns of a country - its legal systems, its political dynamics and centers of power, its state of governance, the rule of law, its ethics and attention to human rights - were the 'rules of the game' within which the 'players' (i.e. the formal organizations) had to function. Thus the administrative heritage of a country, the state of the economy or the general level of social capital could have a profound effect on the progress of capacity building. Many organizations in the public sector, for example, had never achieved any sense of legitimacy given their colonial origins. A sense of instability and fragility permeated much of the public sector. Capacity building frequently took place in an atmosphere of political struggle with protagonists trying to control the very organizations such as the courts or certain line agencies that international funding organizations were trying to assist. External interventions had to be much more attuned to the constraints and opportunities presented by the broader context.

- The emerging field of institutional economics provided insights into the persistent pattern of what might be called capacity building failure. Many government organizations had been structured as monopolies and given control over the delivery of public goods such as health, education, justice and defense. Groups within these organizations, together with their supporters, then proceeded to use this monopoly position to capture the benefits of these programmes and even to shape the governance structure within which they operated. Few checks and balances existed in the form of strict accountability, transparency of information, performance contracts, competition or monitorable outcomes. Participants responded to these inappropriate incentives in predictable ways either by building the 'wrong' capacity or else eroding the performance of existing structures. The continued provision of financial resources in an effort to make progress only served to worsen the problem. Traditional capacity building approaches such as training or organizational restructuring were largely irrelevant in such a context of dysfunctional incentives.

- Many development organizations such as health ministries or environmental agencies were no longer be seen solely as independent actors. Rather, they were interdependent actors whose activities were embedded in larger systems or networks that themselves needed improvement and reform. Too many efforts at performance improvements in the 1970s and '80s had narrowly focused on the symptoms of poor performance (e.g. low staff efficiency) in individual organizations and had ignored the deeper structures and patterns of organizing that perpetuated low levels of achievement. Approaches to capacity building in the 1980s and '90s slowly began to be more multi-sectoral and systemic. The idea of 'levels' of capacity began to appear including the 'micro' (i.e. the individual), the 'meso' (i.e, the organizational) and the 'macro' (i.e. the systems). The management of relationships amongst actors and between levels began to matter more. Greater efforts began to be made in areas such as partnerships, linkages, networks, stakeholder involvement, integrated planning and inter-organizational coordination. Capacity building thus began to deal with changes to large, chaotic, complex, human systems in activities such as urban development, HIV AIDS, poverty, improved maternal and child health and environmental

management.

- Others saw capacity building as a form of social mobilization with profound morale, ethical, social and political overtones. Participants needed to understand the causes of lack of capacity, most of which were rooted in inequities and unequal power relationships. Capacity building was not therefore not so much about the application of organizational techniques as it was about empowerment and social justice. People needed the chance to become more aware of their situation, to develop self-reliance and to shape the processes of change by helping to build responsive organizations and institutions. Capacity development was about giving people a much wider range of capabilities and choices. Progress seemed to be tied up with value systems and feelings of hope, vision, trust, fear, security, support, pride, identity, commitment, connectedness and collective memory.

- Capacity issues were thus seen to involve complex processes of human behavioral change whose influence governed the more technical considerations to do with organizational structure and systems. This stress on behavioral change led to the idea of capacity building as a dynamic or a process set in motion. In this sense, capacity began to be seen in some ways as a living organism that depended for its existence on many of the same qualities that energized human behavior. Norman Uphoff has invoked the image of capacity building as a river to capture the sense of flow and change inherent in the process[20]. Ideas to do with individual and organizational learning and innovation became more widely accepted. Participants, including international donors, began to use more open and inclusive approaches to organizational and social assessments, monitoring and evaluation. Interventions in support of capacity building needed to be more flexible, experimental and risk-embracing. Timing and catching 'windows of opportunity' mattered.

- Capacity building in the 1980s and 1990s came to be seen as an activity driven mainly by the skills, knowledge, energies and commitment of national participants. The process of capacity building had to be owned and driven by a coalition of national participants and had to be accepted by them as being in their own interests. Without that commitment and sense of control and ownership, capacity building, more than any other form of development activity, was simply not viable or sustainable. In most countries, these pools of national motivation, commitment, skills and even finances lay outside governments in the private sector, NGOs, communities and individuals. In the final analysis, external organizations such as international donors could do little more than supply additional resources, facilitation and access to outside learning.

- Finally, the range of organizational and institutional change strategies broadened in the 1980s and early '90s. Globally, a rethinking of governance and the traditional division of labor amongst government, the private sector, civil society and individual citizens took place. Market models for reforming government became fashionable. Others favored an evolution to what has been called the participatory state. A third broad school of thought pushed for a more flexible approach to public administration. And a fourth championed deregulated government as the best hope for sustainable governance. We can see aspects of all these philosophies influencing decision makers in all six countries covered by these evaluations.

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20 *See Norman Uphoff, Learning from Gal Oya: Possibilities for Participatory Development and post-Newtonian social science, 1992 ,*

Two other elements of the capacity building issue need highlighting at this point. First, building effective and sustainable capacity that produces value both for individual citizens and for countries as a whole is difficult, demanding, and in many cases, intractable work in any country and at any time. The best ways to build, or at least induce it, are usually unclear even to the most experienced participants. Why do public sector reform programmes that most participants seem to want end up producing so little? What is the best approach to making agency X more effective given the turbulent political conditions in which it operates? How can certain groups whose support is critical during implementation be prevented from capturing or blocking most of the benefits of reform programmes? What strategies of organizational and institutional change work best and under what circumstances and why? When can a final judgment be made about the impact of a particular capacity building programme? The point here is that capacity building is a risky, murky, messy business with unpredictable and unquantifiable outcomes, uncertain methodologies, contested objectives, many unintended consequences, little credit to its champions and long lag times. When thinking about capacity issues, the narrow clarity of the 1980s has slowly given way to a more sophisticated but less certain perspective in the 1990s.

Second, both international development agencies and most partner countries have had a long history of ambivalence about capacity issues and it is no accident that such issues have taken four decades to make their way up the ladder of development goals. For many, capacity building remains a rather ill-defined, cross cutting issue and an osmotic by-product that will result - hopefully - from the overall design and implementation of development programmes. Capacity building, from this perspective, is seen as a second-order means to first-order development ends such as better maternal and child health or higher agricultural productivity. When faced with such obvious needs, UN agencies tend to put themselves under pressure to 'get the job done' and to give less patient attention to capacity building.

From another perspective, however, capacity building can be seen as a development objective *in and of itself* that merits separate and explicit attention. As such, it should command its own resources, management attention and evaluation standards much along the lines of gender, poverty or the environment. Without this dedicated attention to capacity building, little sustained progress will be made. In some instances, development programme outcomes have to be traded off against the longer-term task of nurturing capacity.

The tension between these two perspectives runs through most efforts at development cooperation. The UN system approach to capacity building, in common with most international development agencies, contains both approaches. The agencies with the more technical mandates - WFP, UNESCO, UNFPA, WHO - tend to take the first view. The UNDP - the only UN agency with a specific unit dedicated to capacity issues - and lately UNICEF tend to take the second[21]. In practice, many of the participants and stakeholders that work in or with United Nations system agencies have mixed incentives with respect to capacity building for the following reasons:

- Many technical staff, both in governments and in United Nations organizations, are

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21 *See, for example, Monitoring and Evaluation of Capacity Building: guidance and tools, draft produced by UNICEF for field testing in 1999*

more interested in the analysis and promotion of substantive policy issues or the resolution of technical issues. Many are also more interested in programme planning, design approval and initiation. Most cannot persist for the long haul of implementation associated with capacity building.

   • Politicians and senior bureaucrats in partner countries want faster resource flows and less intrusive administrative interventions. But capacity building can introduce a good deal of political and organizational pain as reform programmes create winners and losers. In addition, participants at the community level, with little time or resources to spare, have little patience with capacity building programmes that deliver little in the way of substantive benefits in a reasonably short period of time.

   • Programme funders in donor countries demand evidence of short-term development progress and are skeptical of anecdotal and impressionistic descriptions of incremental gains in capacity. Capacity building appears to come with few tangible and tested indicators. Few are interested in discussions about improved processes.

   Stripped of all the developmental rhetoric, capacity building issues fit uneasily into the conventional incentive structure of most international funding agencies despite all the current enthusiasm. This is particularly the case if such a focus is seen to come at the expense of more definable and measurable programme results. This dilemma needs to be kept in mind in judging the performance of the UN system in 'mainstreaming' capacity building into its various field programmes.

3.   ASSESSING THE IMPACT OF UN SYSTEM CAPACITY BUILDING PROGRAMMES

   We need to be careful about coming to definitive judgments about the United Nations system work in capacity building based on the specific results of these six evaluations. This is so for the following reasons:

   • All these evaluations were carried out under tight time deadlines with little opportunity for a detailed empirical analysis of trends and events over the period 1980-1995. Most of the judgments in these reports are more qualitative impressions than they are quantitative estimates, a point made by virtually all the evaluators. As we shall also see, the evaluators looked at capacity issues across a wide range of quite different situations ranging from the rapid development of a high technology sector in Brazil to the gradual re-establishment of basic health posts in the rural areas Mali and Uganda. Despite common terms of reference, the evaluators still approached their task from different perspectives and in some cases, used different definitions of capacity and capacity building[22].

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22 *For example, the Uganda evaluation looked at capacity issues from the perspective of three dimensions - capacity to formulate a national goal or vision, capacity to formulate national development strategies and goals, capacity for the design, management, monitoring and evaluation of development programmes. It also takes into account five levels including the broad action environment, the institutional context, the task network, the organization and the human resources.*

- Few of the projects and programmes studied by the evaluators came with well-conceived indicators, budget allocations or even baseline information that could be used to compare capacity outcomes with some sort of starting point[23]. In practice, most programmes and projects reviewed for these evaluations were designed on the basis of the 'by-product' theory of capacity building as discussed above.

- There is no agreed standard of performance that can be applied to capacity building activities or programmes. In many cases, donors appear to act as if successful implementation was a consistently achievable objective. But such a level of success has never been achieved at any point in development cooperation. World-Bank financed projects with a demonstrable institutional impact
reached about a 30% during the period 1980-1995[24]. According to many estimates, the majority of the deliberate efforts at organizational change in both the public and private sectors in virtually all countries do not succeed or at least produce less than expected results[25]. One of the challenges for the evaluators was to come to a judgment as to what could reasonably be expected from UN efforts given the constraints and opportunities that existed during implementation.

- We also need to be careful about narrow measurements of the effectiveness of individual programmes and projects. Judgments on the success of capacity development projects do not center solely on their individual outcomes, particularly for a small donor such as the UN system. The real question is their impact on the broader system of which they are a part. Projects can be well-managed, produce substantive outcomes and have no lasting impact in terms of new knowledge or changed behavior. Or a project can fail in conventional terms but have a broad and lasting systemic impact. Spillover effects and other external impacts matter. The attribution issue is a constant problem in capacity evaluations.

- Both the Zimbabwe and, in different ways, the Mali evaluations address the special challenge involved in evaluating the impacts and performance of large-scale, complex, adaptive but chaotic organizational systems, a concept which covers most of the capacity building situations outlined in these evaluations. Making clear judgments about cause and effect is particularly problematic in complex organizational systems[26]. Vague discussions of 'results chains' are rarely relevant. The conventional notion - X causes Y - is virtually impossible to isolate as the Zimbabwe evaluation makes clear. Tiny events can produce huge unexpected effects which appear remote in time and place from the initial event. The phenomenon of 'clustering' needs to be understood, meaning that a whole series of factors and characteristics must be in place before a system can change. The Mali evaluation, for

[23] These gaps are true for most programmes. See World Bank, Tanzania: Assessment of the capacity Building Impact of the World Bank Portfolio, 1998
[24] See Assessing Aid: What Works, What Doesn't and Why, World Bank, 1998, p. 92
[25] For example, a good deal of the UN system assistance to improve the performance of primary schools in Pakistan in the 1980s was not effective. But the record of meager outcomes seems remarkably similar to the results of capacity building efforts in the United States (see Frederick Hess, Spinning Wheels, The Politics of Urban School Systems, Brookings Institution, 1998)
[26] See, for example, the discussion on this point in Fritjof Capra, The Web of Life: A New Scientific Understanding of Living Systems, 1996

example, puts forward the hypothesis that improvements in capacity at the community level in the 1990s would not have been possible without the investment at the central level in the 1980s, a phase conventionally viewed as being unproductive. Similarly, some of the gains in organizational performance in the 1990s were being held back by the slow pace of behavioral change in the wider public. Other factors quite unrelated to the efforts of an individual capacity building programme can shape its impact.

- The time scale factor introduces an additional complication. Many of the capacity building efforts in health and education depended for their impact on behavioral changes in the wider population, an uncertain scenario that could take one or two generations to unfold. The flow of benefits from most capacity building programmes was thus likely to be much longer than the attention span of most international funding agencies. And yet evaluating ten or fifteen years after the completion of a capacity building project or programme did lead to a loss of data, written records and participant memory as was clear from most of these evaluations.

- Finally, we need to bear in mind a sense of proportion when it come to the impact of UN system programmes. All six country programs involved in these evaluations experienced dramatic declines in funding levels during 1980-1995. By one rough estimate, the resources expended by the United Nations system in Brazil during the period 1980-1995 fell by over 85% compared to the period 1965-1985. By the end of the period, the United Nations system contributed only about 5% of total flows of concessional assistance in Pakistan and Mali and 10% in El Salvador (1992-1997)[27]. The latter figure represented the largest proportion of any of the countries participating in the evaluations. Simply put, the United Nations system was not a major player in a financial sense in any of the six countries and was not in a position to fund the costs of large-scale programmes in capacity building.

Despite these limitations, these evaluations and this summary chapter do make some overall judgments about the impact of the UN system efforts at capacity building. To do this, this chapter uses a simple framework to sort out the results of the evaluations. The somewhat linear and mechanistic 'input-output-outcome-impact' applied in many evaluations seems inappropriate to capture the dynamics of capacity building activities and in any case, was not used by most of the evaluations. This overview chapter therefore uses three slightly different standards to sort out its judgments.

First, what can be said about the effectiveness of the processes used by the United Nations system in support of capacity building?

By 'processes' here, we mean the activities, strategies, techniques, methodologies and behaviors used, by the United Nations organizations, in collaboration with national organizations, groups and/or individuals to help develop national capacity and abilities[28].

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27 To put the Mali case in more detail, from 1990-1994, education and health represented 5.62% and 8.11% of total aid disbursements. The combined contributions of the five agencies (UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF, UNESCO, WHO) to these two sectors amounted to 10.94% over the same period. These same agencies devoted about 26% of their resources in these two sectors.
28 The UNDP defines capacity building as "a process through which individuals, organizations, institutions and societies develop abilities, individually and collectively, to perform functions, solve problems and set and achieve objectives. Draft UNDP Policy Document on Capacity

Processes can include the management of organizational change, facilitation, learning, participation, reflection, confidence-building, awareness raising, protection and support, changes to incentives, conflict management and self-diagnosis. In this broader definition, we include advocacy and social marketing as essential parts of capacity building. Some of these processes may not lead directly to capacity but may help to create an enabling environment or remove constraints to improved performance.

Second, what was the evidence regarding the emergence or growth of new capacities?

We define 'capacities' here as the organizational and technical abilities, behaviors, relationships and values that enable organizations and groups to carry out functions and achieve their development objectives over time. Our definition applies to all sectors - public, NGO or private profit - and extends to a wide variety of examples ranging from improved public policy management within the core agencies of government (e.g. a better analytical ability within the Central Bureau of Statistics) to more effective forms of community management (e.g. better collaboration of small holders in local water management groups). It also applies at different levels of intervention or 'sites of action' where capacity building takes place ranging from the macro through the meso to the micro[29]. And we include in this categorization of capacity the idea of non-formal attributes such as confidence, trust or general awareness that appear to play a large part in that energizing collective action. Thus, we associate the term 'capacity' with the notion of performance, with the demonstrated ability to carry out critical functions and tasks and to sustain the ability to develop further capacity. As such, capacity is seen as an development outcome in and of itself and distinct from other programme outcomes.

Third, are there any plausible connections between the growth of this capacity and some desired developmental outcomes such as better health, improved levels of education or improvements to governance?

Even assuming that new or improved capacities are a developmental end, it is still useful to determine if such capacities led to real developmental progress for people. Is there some evidence in the evaluations that the processes and capacities developed in the UN system-supported programmes led to sustainable gains for people, predicted or otherwise? To what degree can these gains be traced back to UN system support? Were people or countries better off because of capacities built with UN system support?

In using these three categories, it is important not to overstate their causal and sequential relationships. In some cases, UN organizations appeared to have used supportive and constructive processes only to induce meager results in terms of new or improved capacities, at least in the short term. Capacities appeared to form, in the words of one observer, in "leaps, gaps and backlashes" and were frequently the outcome of country efforts

Development for Sustainable Human Development, p. 1.
[29] *One of the most familiar approaches in terms of 'levels' is the one originally developed by Grindle and Hildebrand which included the action environment, the public sector institutional context, the task network, the organization and the human resources. See M. Grindle and M. Hildebrand, Building Sustainable Capacity: Challenges for the Public Sector, 1996*

that overshadowed the work of the UN system[30]. At the other end of the spectrum, some programmes were designed to produce short-term results with little attention paid to the building of sustainable capacity. And in some instances, the reverse was true. For example, evidence of short-term results (e.g. access to clean water) generated an enthusiasm and hope that brought out further capacities in the form of motivated people, funds and public support. This 'process-capacity-developmental impact' framework is in no sense a linear transmission belt that unfolds according to a predetermined schedule or plan.

4. COUNTRY AND UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM CONTEXTS

Before analyzing the results of the evaluations using the 'process-capacity-developmental impact' framework outlined above, the developmental contexts of the six countries and the changing structure and policy direction of the United Nations system need to be briefly outlined. Obviously, all six countries discussed in these evaluations are unique given their different histories, demographics, culture, economic history, style of governance and so on. But it may be useful to set out some characteristics that will enable readers to place the countries on a rough spectrum. Briefly, the situations of the six countries can be summarized as follows:

- With the exception of Brazil, all the countries ranked in the bottom half of the 130 countries analyzed in the original Human Development Index of 1990[31]. Three (Mali, Uganda and Pakistan) ranked in the bottom third. Given its size and level of technological advancement, Brazil's economy was the least representative of the conventional structure of a developing county;

- Three of the countries - Uganda, El Salvador and Zimbabwe - had to deal with the legacy of internal conflict during the period 1980-1995. The war for liberation ended in Zimbabwe with the advent of independence in 1980. Uganda emerged from civil war with the establishment of the Government of President Joweri Museveni in 1986. The Peace Accords were signed in 1992 in El Salvador. In these three countries, many service delivery systems, including those in health and education, either collapsed or were severely disrupted. Capacity building entailed physical as well as organizational reconstruction. In El Salvador, the UN system engaged in non-traditional capacity building activities such as the promotion of 'days of tranquillity' which allowed the national vaccination campaign to expand its coverage.

- Most of the countries went through some dramatic change in governance, mainly towards more democratization. Brazil and Mali experienced coups in 1987 and 1991 respectively. The Museveni administration in Uganda took power in 1986. Mali went through elections for the first time in 1992. All moved incrementally, especially during the 1990s, towards new forms of political and economic governance. All instituted some form of

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[30] Deborah Eade, *Capacity-Building*, p. 149

31 In 1990, three countries ranked in the medium human development (Brazil #80, El Salvador #59, Zimbabwe #52) and three ranked in the low human development (Pakistan # 36, Uganda #28 and Mali # 2).

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national elections[32]. Some improvements at the institutional level - e.g. the application of the rule of law, more accountability and transparency, - made it easier to build capacity. But severe political conflicts shaped the direction of the capacity building efforts in countries such as El Salvador. In practice, the nature of those effects were not always clear. For some programmes such as the Uganda health services, a period of crisis and instability created opportunities for institutional reform. From this perspective, decision makers were likely to face more insistent pressures for change and were more willing to try new approaches. But the opposite trend was also true. Economic and political crises could narrow the reform options as individuals and groups focused on short-term survival as in the case of Pakistan. Key interest groups under pressure in such situations were even less likely to accept a shift in control and resources at their expense.

- The shape and role of the organizational infrastructure in all six countries changed during the period. Governments could no longer play the dominant role in financing and in service delivery that they had tried to do in the past. The growing scale of societal problems needed individuals, families, households, NGOs, private firms and community groups to take on the design and delivery of some key public functions. All six countries tried to decentralize the delivery of public services. All six experimented with varying degrees of privatization. State power and control were, in effect, shifting from the center both up to supranational levels and down to regions, municipalities and communities through programmes of privatization, decentralization and deregulation. In addition, new organizations and groups were appearing in all six countries including research units, private schools, various types of NGOs, ethnic clubs, cooperatives and many others. Development progress began to depend critically on the variety and effectiveness of, and the interconnections amongst, this kind of institutional diversity. In this sense, participants engaged in building capacity had to address a moving target during a period of instability and institutional fragility.

- Three of the evaluations - Pakistan, Mali and Uganda - looked at capacity building in education and health, sectors that presented severe constraints to rapid capacity building in virtually all countries. Such constraints included perennial underfunding, geographic dispersal, weak incentives for performance, uncertain political support, complex delivery systems and the need for behavioral change in the wider population. Social sectors such as health and education also took the brunt of cutbacks and downsizing under structural adjustment programmes in cases such as Mali[33]. The UN system was, in effect, trying to build capacity during a period of capacity erosion in the public sector.

- Most of the efforts at capacity building took place during an extended period of economic stagnation and decline in Zimbabwe, Uganda, Pakistan and Brazil. All four experienced declining incomes during 1980-1995. Only two of the countries - Mali and El Salvador - showed positive growth rates in the 1990s. Many of the countries also went through tremendous social and demographic changes including the rise of HIV/AIDS and

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[32] *The World Bank calculates that countries with civil liberties, freedom of expression and association have a much higher success rate for individual projects. See World Bank, Assessing Aid: What Works, What Doesn't and Why, 1998*
[33] *Many of the more experienced teachers left the Malian education system in the 1990s as part of a programme of government downsizing.*

internal migration to the cities.

We also need to be aware of four major changes to the structure and functioning of the United Nations system during the period 1980-1995. The various approaches to capacity building that the UN organizations applied over the period were shaped to an important degree by the interrelationships between changing field conditions and shifts in the structure and direction of the UN system.

- Most of the United Nations organizations made steady efforts to decentralize authority and resources to regional and country offices. By the end of the period in 1995, a number of United Nations organizations had become some of the more decentralized of all the international funding agencies.

- Greater inter-agency coordination became a UN priority in an attempt to reduce programme overlap and increase developmental impact. None of the six country programmes in this study were designated as official United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) sites but most were trying to induce greater coordination through the resident coordinator system.

- Neither capacity building nor good governance were priorities for the United Nations system in the early and mid-1980s. But the rise in international awareness of the need for effective institutions and the end of the Cold War brought both issues to the forefront of UN priorities. In an attempt to give more emphasis to capacity issues, most United Nations organizations shifted to some form of national execution in the late 1980s and early 1990s in an effort to increase national involvement and commitment.

- It is important to distinguish between capacity building in health and in education. The former tended to attract more attention from the international donor community in general and the UN system in particular. The conference on primary health care in Alma Ata, for example, preceded the Jomtien conference on basic education by over twenty years. UNFPA and UNICEF both commanded more resources within the UN system than did UNESCO.

- Finally, the role of international funding agencies in general changed during the 1990s as allocations declined and the flow of private sector funds increased. Donor governments demanded more value for money for development cooperation and began to insist on the establishment of more rigorous performance measurement systems. No less important, national capacities in many developing countries in the form of consultants, private firms and NGOs became increasingly able to take on a good deal of the design and implementation tasks previously carried out by donor staff and consultants. The challenge shifted to the UN became one of supplementing rather than simply building local capacity.

5. EVOLUTION OF THE UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM APPROACH TO CAPACITY BUILDING

In reviewing the work of the UN system in capacity building, it is useful to look first at its evolution over the period 1980-1995 which shows up in all the evaluations except that of Brazil. This evolution is not rigidly sequential. Some approaches to capacity building appear

regularly throughout the fifteen year period. Different agencies, for example, the WHO and the UNDP, had different perspectives on capacity building which shaped their own changing objectives. But in its main outlines, a UN system approach to capacity building did emerge and evolve steadily over the period through a series of phases.

The first phase, roughly covering the decade of the 1980s, included three aspects depending on the situation in the particular country. In some countries, the emphasis was on *reconstruction and emergency assistance* especially in countries such as Uganda and El Salvador which were recovering from the physical and human devastation of civil war[34]. UN organizations such as UNICEF, UNDP and WFP were involved in short-term reconstruction in the form of building health posts, paying staff salaries, training, providing emergency relief and improving the flow of basic services. Second, UNICEF and the WHO collaborated in the *establishment of vertical service delivery systems* in the areas of the Expanded Programme of Immunization (EPI) and the Control of Diarrhoeal Diseases (CDD). Most of these programmes were located outside the main structure of central departments and involved the design and implementation of a complex series of activities including long procurement chains, a good deal of staff training and the establishment of detailed record keeping and accounting procedures.

Third, UN organizations such as the UNDP and WHO engaged in the mid-1980s in the *institutional strengthening of central public agencies*. This included assistance to help improve the policy, planning and service delivery capacities of central government agencies and departments including health ministries, education departments, planning agencies, medical schools and university faculties[35]. In Mali, for example, the National Immunization Center, the Population Unit and the National Council for the Coordination of Population Programmes all received UN assistance, mainly from UNFPA and the UNDP. Training, systems improvement and organizational restructuring were the main approaches. In Pakistan, UNICEF, UNDP and UNESCO worked to improve the performance of the primary school system, the National Curriculum Center and the National Educational Management Information System.

The second main phase of the evolution in UN system capacity building, beginning roughly in the late 1980s, saw a shift away from support to central government units and programmes and towards more involvement with district administrations, municipalities, non-state actors such as NGOs and community groups. Part of this shift was based on the emerging thinking about capacity building including the needs for greater decentralization and delegation from the center, more involvement of civil society actors, much wider participation and the need for a more integrated approach to service delivery at the local level. In all six countries, the central agencies of government could clearly not fund and/or provide services to citizens on the scale required. Some form of 'bottom-up' approach involving community participation and funding was needed to reach the broader mass of citizens. The Government of Mali, for example, pushed through a major policy change in 1990 aimed at community involvement in health care. Examples described in the evaluations

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[34] *This phase can also be seen in Mali (Sahelian relief), Zimbabwe (recovery from the civil war) and Pakistan (general poverty).*
[35] *Specific examples would be FAO assistance to Makerere University,*

include the PRODERE programme in El Salvador funded by the UNDP[36], the Zimbabwe District Environmental Action Planning Process (DEAP), the Integrated District Population Programme in Uganda and the ACODEP and the regional and cercle planning capacity building programme in Mali. All these programmes were based on principles now well-known in international development - decentralization, delegation, the value of community management and financing and many others.

The inception of the third phase varied amongst the six countries but seems to have begun around the mid-1990s. Capacity building was clearly understood to be a complex phenomenon that needed both 'bottom up' involvement and energy and 'top-down' support as in the case of HIV/AIDS . The key institutions and governance patterns - the rule of law, democratization, greater accountability and transparency, the control of corruption, more participatory processes - needed to be strengthened. The deeper constraints to capacity building were seen arising as much from poor governance as from a lack of systems or human skills. Enabling environments needed to be encouraged that could provide the space, protection, legitimacy, trust and collaboration to allow national skills and commitment to make a difference.

The above description gives a sense of the changing conceptions about the 'entry-point' for UN system efforts in capacity building. An early approach was that of the *individual* as the key entry point. Many training schemes, for example, were designed to improve individual skills. WFP Food for Work programmes in El Salvador and Pakistan were designed to change the behavior of individual parents and students with respect to girls' education. Throughout the period, UN organizations also focused on *the organization* as the key entry-point. The Zimbabwe report, for example, estimates that about 80% of the UN programmes aimed at capacity building were targeted at improvements to single organizations. This approach applied to organizations at all levels of the society including large central agencies, municipal governments and NGOs. In the late 1980s and early 1990s, the range of entry-points broadened considerably. Policy dialogue, focused research, national, regional and global workshops began to be used more regularly.

As the importance of participation and local control became recognized, *the community* began to be seen as a principal agent of change on the assumption that collaborative behavior within and amongst groups of citizens and clients could lead to capacity improvements. UNICEF, for example, began to focus at the community and district level in Uganda in 1990. Toward the end of the period, *the system* began to be the new entry point with UN programmes increasingly focused on improvements to the performance of systemic, multi-actor functions and capacities. The case of the National Health Information System in Zimbabwe was an example as were some of the UNDP efforts in governance and decentralization. And finally, *the environment*, meaning the wider context of capacity building efforts became an entry-point in the 1990s. The trend here was for the UN system to help create supportive contextual conditions within which programmes could take place. In the Brazil case, for example, much of the UN system work in the environmental sector was hampered by lack of organizational mandates, lack of legislative guidelines, an on-going attempt at public sector down sizing and a lack of public awareness and support.

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[36] *PRODERE involved 225 NGOs from El Salvador*

6. THE IMPACT OF UN SYSTEM SUPPORT ON CAPACITY BUILDING

This section synthesizes the results of the six evaluations according to the framework set out earlier. The emphasis here is on broader patterns and conclusions. Those wishing more specific details about the progress in individual countries can consult the evaluation later in this report.

PROCESS - What do the evaluations reveal about the processes used by the UN system in support of capacity building?

Much of the current debate about assessing development cooperation focuses on outcomes and impact. There remains little enthusiasm for paying sustained attention to inputs or activities or processes on the grounds that these do not constitute results or measurable performance. And yet process issues - i.e. how the participants tried to induce changes in behavior, abilities and attitudes - remains a key part of any effort at capacity building.

We can look at the process issue from a number of perspectives including the following.

- Can we see evidence of new approaches to programme design and implementation?
  - Did the UN system encourage greater country participation and commitment?
  - Was the UN system a promoter of new ideas for national participants?
  - How did the UN system deal with training and technical assistance?

In general, the evaluations suggest that the UN organizations made steady progress during 1980-1995 on changing the way it addressed capacity issues in response to the changing field conditions. Two trends in particular stand out. First, the UN system went further than many international funding agencies in rethinking the assumptions underlying its capacity work. Numerous examples of the incorporation of the ideas discussed in Section 2. above can be found in the six evaluations. Second, the UN system did make sustained efforts to alter its relationships with partner countries. At the start of the 1980s as has been described earlier, the emphasis was on institution building and what might be called the transfer of organizational technology through training and technical assistance. Steadily throughout the fifteen years, the UN organizations shifted to an approach to capacity building which relied much more on partnerships, country ownership, country skills and ideas and national execution. This changing approach to process took different forms at different levels for different UN organizations but became more consistent in the 1990s.

Programme design and implementation

The UN system approach to capacity building design and implementation evolved in the following ways:

- UN programmes with major capacity building components did not always lend themselves to the conventional 'blueprint' approach typical of the project era. Such

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programmes could not gain effectiveness using preset formulas and detailed, sequential planning. Most required experimentation, flexibility, learning and adaptation. Programmes proceeded in fits and starts as participants, both in the UN and in the country, struggled to overcome the constraints in particular situations, to forge coalitions for collaborative action and to create the incentives to encourage staff and other participants to commit. UN capacity building programmes began to be seen by the UN system itself more as social, political and organizational processes. Many shifted from a 'top-down' approach using hierarchical, vertical and bureaucratic structures to a more 'bottom-up' philosophy using horizontal, participatory, networked structures. UN programmes adopted a wide range of design techniques ranging from comprehensive planning to design 'by groping along'[37].

- In general, the evaluations show a trend to smaller programmes and projects in most of the six countries. Part of the reason behind this trend was the decline in financial allocations available to the UN system. Part appears to have been the need to enter into manageable partnerships with smaller organizations such as NGOs and other non-state actors. And part had to do with the wish to experiment with different approaches to capacity building before trying to scale up.

- Much of the experience in programme design and implementation in the six countries confirmed the need for patience and a long-term perspective. Most programmes that tried to build capacity needed at least a decade or more to make a serious contribution. Those programmes such as the National Education Management Information Service in Pakistan that were rushed to a conclusion did not prove to be sustainable.

- The evaluations do not shed much light on the evolving strategies of organizational and institutional change used by the UN system programmes. The Brazil evaluation makes the point that the quality of UN system diagnoses of the capacity issues embedded in larger sectoral programmes was weak on occasion. The earlier approach in the 1980s to institutional strengthening had depended on improvements to the structure, systems and staff of public sector organizations and agencies. In the 1990s, change efforts called for a far wider range of strategies including more market-based approaches for reforming government using competition and incentives, increasing access to information and community' voice', providing for greater transparency of decisions, encouraging political reforms and many others. The evaluations do not speculate a great deal on which change strategies worked best and under what circumstances. Nor do they devote much analysis to issues such as scaling up, replicating results and integrating experimental approaches into mainstream

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37 *This tend to a range of design techniques is now a common one. "...planning and groping are both important ways to make innovations but public servants should know when to plan and when to grope. Integrity in innovation demands that one plan when it is desirable and possible to plan, but when it is not possible to plan, one experiments and learns from one's experiments. ...large capital investments, programs that involve the coordination of a large number of organizations and theory-driven programs are more likely to require planning. Planning is more likely to be required when the impetus for innovation comes from the political system. .. groping is more likely to be acceptable in the absence of large capital investments ......groping is also more appropriate for new programs, for organizations tat have new leadership, and for innovations initiated by public servants. cited in Sandford Borins, Innovating with Integrity: How Local Heroes are Transforming American Government, 1998, pp.64-65*

organizations.

Encouraging country participation and commitment

The evaluations discuss in some detail the UN system's shift to more participatory approaches to capacity building. The reasons underlying this trend varied to some degree from country to country but generally included the following factors. First, the development benefits to be gained from greater participation had become part of mainstream development thinking by the late 1980s. Citizen involvement, for example, had come to be seen as a critical part of capacity building in health care and education systems. Without a broader understanding of, and involvement in, new kinds of service delivery by citizens or 'clients', such systems tended to perform poorly or languish for lack of legitimacy and resources. Several of the Governments struggling to emerge from the effects of civil war including those of El Salvador and Zimbabwe took longer to accept participatory approaches. But by 1993, all six countries had begun to experiment, with UN system support, with a variety of approaches to greater participation and decentralization.

Second, many new participatory techniques had become available for use including participatory rural appraisal, the community sentinel approach, social assessments, participatory action research and poverty assessments, process consultancy, social and community mapping, focus groups, survey techniques and so on. By the early to mid-1990s, many of these had begun to enter the mainstream of UN system work. Even the traditional management studies of agencies in the public sector had begun to be supplemented by a greater emphasis on consultative techniques such as workshops, retreats and search conferences.

Third, all six countries, by the 1990s, had a greater stock of non-state actors in both the private sector and civil society which could, in turn, carry out functions needed for a more participatory approach. These included research organizations, intermediary NGOs, public/private partnerships, community groups such as parent-teacher organizations and municipal governments. These groups could also help to create more 'demand' for capacity building in addition to assisting with the 'supply'.

But a general acceptance of the principles of national ownership and participation does not offer much in the way of operational guidance. Conflicts amongst the participants on complex projects can drain away commitment. Should programmes be 'owned' by established, less effective older organizations or should newer, more energetic actors be given a chance to achieve better and faster results? Can the various accountabilities of funders and partner countries, especially for financial resources, be fitted together into a coherent management approach? How can a sense of national ownership be sustained for long-term programmes in the face of high staff turnover, policy shifts and economic disruptions? How can programme design and management processes be structured to encourage national commitment and support? How can outside participants spot pockets of commitment and ownership? How much does timing and catching 'windows of opportunity' with respect to commitment matter?

The evaluations show a variety of UN experiences with the issue of country

commitment and ownership.

- Countries with strong, committed political leadership seemed to infuse similar qualities in lower levels of the government. In the six evaluations, Uganda, Mali, and to some degree El Salvador, were described as countries with a growing sense of commitment and determination which boosted commitment at the programme level.

- Commitment could also be generated at the organizational level. The Brazilian telecommunications agency, TELBRAS had a clear sense of its own organizational interests and the capacity to extract value from UN system experience. In Pakistan, the commitment and motivation of the staff of the Ali Institute of Education showed in its consistent performance and urgency. Such organizations seemed to have the capacity, autonomy and resources to accept external assistance, internalize new knowledge relatively quickly while still retaining their ability to set the pace and direction of such outside interventions.

- In the case of Pakistan institutional strengthening, the UNDP helped to induce and nurture a sense of commitment and urgency in the Government of Pakistan over a period of years through a process of persuasion, demonstration, discussion and advocacy. The issue for UN organizations was not only to spot pockets of commitment but also to nurture and sustain it in the midst of changes in both people and policies.

- In environments characterized by conflict and political polarization such as El Salvador in the 1990s, the UN system used its credibility to encourage negotiations and consensus building. This involved the UN design of a 'minimum plan' regarding a particular activity which would then be reviewed and agreed to by both members of the international donor community and the central Government. This approach tended to create a sense of security around certain issues within which ownership could take hold.

- The evaluations show instances were undue commitment, in terms of domestic political pressure for immediate results, was not conducive to useful programme outcomes. The Brazil case, for example, contrasts the progress of capacity building in the telecommunications sector with that in the environment. In the latter, political pressure focused on short-term programme outputs at the expense of gains in longer-term capacity.

- In both the Uganda and the Zimbabwe cases, some UN agencies found it difficult to surrender their control over, and ownership of, certain development programmes given their perceived needs for management control and organizational identity. In addition, some of the same agencies (in common with many other international development organizations) found it difficult to transfer ownership of programmes for which they continued to be held accountable by external stakeholders. The issue of commitment then ran both ways in terms of UN commitment to country preferences and decisions.

- In all the cases, the content and management of two key sets of relationships - between the UN system and the national participants and second, amongst the national participants and organizations themselves - had a crucial effect on commitment and ownership. Helping to manage these relationships and working to increase trust, communication, mutual accountability and collaboration was a key task of UN system field staff. Projects in which UN staff functioned more as facilitators than as administrators seemed to do better.

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- On a few occasions, the UN system became too concerned with supplying a solution rather than clearly understanding the problem. In the Brazil environment case, the organizational homelessness of ABAMA badly affected programme outcomes. The UN was, in effect, pushing a product, i,e, state forestry action plans, for which there was no real demand and hence no commitment.

- In a number of cases, leadership and commitment were more important at the 'bottom' than the 'top'. UN agencies looked for pockets of leadership and energy at the group, community and organizational levels that could be nurtured and protected much like as 'start-up' venture in a growing industry. Most of the UN country programmes, particularly those in Mali, Pakistan, Uganda, El Salvador and Zimbabwe, tried to encourage this kind of capacity entrepreneurialism.

This shift in thinking and approach by the UN system to greater participation, national ownership and empowerment accelerated during the 1990s and remains one of the more encouraging themes in the evaluations.

Policy advocacy, social marketing and the promotion of new ideas

In most of the countries, the effectiveness of UN organizations in advancing and sponsoring new ideas and policies, appears to have played a key role in the broader process of capacity building. Ideas and their promotion, not the supply of money or equipment, proved to be one of the key comparative advantages of the UN system. In many cases, such advocacy aided reform groups within the country to gain credibility for their own arguments. Its effect was increased when the UN system played a supportive role in bringing together groups within the country to help create a consensus around particular policies. The provision of the technical arguments was rarely sufficient to make policy advocacy effective. The creation, or at least reinforcement of, a domestic constituency for capacity building in a particular activity was key. The UN seems to have had reasonable success in countries such as Pakistan in combining research/analytic work and policy advocacy into a program of what might be called policy communications. The evaluations show the following examples:

- The influence of the various United Nations global conferences persisted long after their completion. For public health groups in Pakistan, Uganda and El Salvador, the principles enunciated at the United Nations Conference on Primary Health Care (PHC) in Alma Ata in 1979 still motivated their behavior in the 1990s. The same can be said of the results of the Jomtien Conference on Universal Primary Education (UPE) which were influential in the design of a vision and goals for education policy in Mali and Uganda.

- Several examples exist in the evaluations of UN organizations working effectively over the medium term to help create a commitment and a demand for capacity. In Mali, Uganda, Pakistan and Zimbabwe, UNFPA worked to build a governmental and popular acceptance of family planning. In Pakistan, the UNDP succeeded in building constituencies both within the central government and in the donor community for more attention to governance and management issues. In a number of the countries, the influence of the Human

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Development Report was noticeable and influenced governments to pay more attention to human and social issues.

- In a number of countries such as Mali, the UN organizations such as UNESCO, helped to build policy planning units in education. But some of this experience showed the pitfalls of bureaucratic turbulence with a number of the units being eliminated as different personnel and policies rose and fell in favor.

- In some cases, policy advocacy went beyond supporting particular ideas within government. UN organizations, particularly WHO, UNICEF and UNFPA, also supported campaigns through the media and other forms of communication to reach broader segments of the population whose collaboration and social mobilization was critical to improve programme performance. The UN role in the stimulation of public debate was important. In Uganda, for example, the School Health Education Project and the Adult Literacy Project were part of a broader effort at social marketing and mobilization.

- A number of the evaluations also indicate another and broader aspect of the UN system's role. As far back as the 1950s and '60s, the UN system had a special interest in issues to do with technical assistance and public sector management. In the 1980s, this legacy paved the way for the UN system to begin advocating more globally for more attention to institutional and capacity issues, both with partner governments and within the international donor community.

In some cases in Uganda and Mali, UN organizations managed to help create the beginnings of a virtuous cycle. More effective development organizations facilitated the production, spread and absorption of new ideas and knowledge. And, in turn, new knowledge led to the creation or improvement of effective organizations. But it is also important not to overstate the point. From time to time, UN organizations assumed that the simple exposure of people to new ideas, insights and ways of thinking would lead inexorably to a process of institutional and social change once the exposure has taken place. The Uganda evaluation shows that a number of financial, political and logistical constraints still had to be overcome to allow people and organizations to benefit from new ideas. Health information, by itself, was not sufficient to have a decisive impact on people's behavior.

Training and technical assistance

The UN approach to training broadened during the period. In some cases, conventional approaches to formal training remained as part of the UN's attempt to address one of the key capacity gaps - that of a lack of technical and organizational skills. Training courses could be quickly targeted at individuals and they could create a critical mass of country personnel who could function in a variety of other organizations and work situations. Provided trained people could be induced to stay in the county, training added to the basic national stock of skills and capacities. Training worked well, for example, when the acquired skills could be quickly fitted into the structure and operations of the receiving organization or group. The WHO provided formal training to staff who later became senior officials in the ministries of health in Pakistan, Mali and Uganda. In the Brazil case, over 7000 technicians in the 1980s benefited from a variety of training opportunities including workshops, on-the-job mentoring

and formal short courses that, by all accounts, raised the technical capacity of TELEBRAS, the Brazilian telecommunications agency. TELEBRAS, at both its individual and organizational levels, had the capacity within itself to absorb technical training and then to change and innovate using the leverage of these new knowledge and skills. The same pattern held in the UNDP support to Brazil's computer industry in the 1980s.

In a number of the countries, the UN system changed its training emphasis to one more concerned with adult learning and self-organization, especially in organizations beyond the central agencies of government. UNESCO shifted from formal academic training to sub-regional workshops and seminars in the three African countries. UNICEF and UNFPA had good success with the training of field level health workers in Uganda. In general, the UN organizations switched a good deal of their training programmes from Europe or North America to the partner countries as part of their emphasis on more national control and participation. Increasingly, training programmes focused more at the organizational level in the late 1980s and 1990s compared with the individual focus of the early 1980s.

The evaluations also contain examples of the ineffectiveness, and occasionally, the ill-effects, of poorly-designed training. When programmes were not well matched to the needs and absorptive capability of the participating organization as was occasionally the case in Uganda and Mali , the results were wasted resources and organizational weakening as disgruntled staff used the leverage of their new skills to exit their organizations[38]. An undue focus on training, as a sole remedy for a capacity gap, also served to distract attention away from deeper organizational problems and more systemic solutions. The TELEBRAS experience contrasts with that of the other major training intervention in Brazil, that of the environmental agency IBAMA. As in the TELEBRAS case, IBAMA received various types of training for over 3000 staff in the 1980s. Unlike the TELEBRAS case, however, the acquired skills were poorly applied. Staff motivation declined and eventually led to a leakage out of the organization leaving IBAMA worse off than before. In the case of Zimbabwe, a disenabling environment for training suppressed most of the potential gains from training. In Mali, years of donor investment in formal training appeared to have little sustainable and cumulative effect at the organization level.

The results of the evaluations thus reinforce a basic conclusion about the value of training as a capacity building strategy. Attempts to change people's organizational behavior and performance by improving their knowledge and skills was usually only effective when the incentives, support structures and organizational context acted in the same direction. By itself, training was not always an effective process in support of capacity building.

The UN system approach to technical assistance also evolved during the period. The evaluations confirm many of the findings about technical assistance (TA) that emerged in a series of reviews in the late 1980s[39]. Indeed, it was the UN system, led by the UNDP, that had questioned the overuse of external and had pointed out the suppressing effect such outside interventions could have on national skills and ownership.

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38 *Low salaries and poor working conditions are the most widely-cited type of a poor incentive structure.*
39 *See UNDP, Rethinking Technical Cooperation: Reforms for Capacity Building In Africa, 1993*

The six evaluations indicate that TA was productive in certain specific instances where it could be readily absorbed. In the Brazil case, TELEBRAS managed to create a critical mass of staff with advanced technical skills by getting access to advanced thinking and technology through the use of short and long-term international consultants[40]. But in general, the evaluations trace out the declining use of conventional technical assistance in the form of longer-term, international experts[41]. In countries such as Brazil, Uganda and Pakistan, its effectiveness for capacity building was limited by the familiar constraints that affected progress on training including poor absorptive capacity, lack of incentives, internal organizational conflict and many others.

Three trends with respect to TA seemed pervasive across the six countries:

- The use of national consultants for providing support and advice to capacity building programmes increased at all levels and especially at the district and community levels. The use of technical knowledge that already existed inside the country became more widespread. International TA began to be used mainly for advising on more specific issues and providing evaluation and monitoring support.

- UN system staff, either in country or regional offices, began to play a greater role in providing technical and organizational support to national partners. UN staff carried out key parts of the policy advocacy and facilitation needed for capacity building.

- International electronic networks established and managed by UN organizations began to provide country participants with access to the latest international thinking or to put them in touch with practitioners in other countries that had experience in the same kinds of technical and organizational issues. Examples include the Sustainable Development, the Africa-2000 and the Management and Governance networks.

In summary, the evaluations bring out the transition of the UN organizations with respect to the process of capacity building. Increasingly, UN efforts provided what might be called the 'intangibles' - strategic support and protection, objectivity and neutrality, access to global learning, policy advocacy, the willingness to mediate, investments in promising experiments and the nurturing of those that showed promise.

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[40] *About 120 short and long-term experts and consultants participated in the programme over a 15 year period.*
[41] *The use of technical assistance on the Pakistan programme, for example, dropped 75% over the period.*

Patterns of success at the process level

Were there recurring patterns at the process level that led to effective performance and the creation or improvement of capacity? In brief, the following characteristics seem to be present in most or all of the more successful projects.

- Country energy, commitment and ownership
- A sense of experimentation, openness and organizational learning
- An immediate environment which provided field participants with a sense of security and organizational autonomy
- The channeling of UN system support and technical knowledge through an engaged field system
- The choice of recipient organizations with the ability to generate high performance[42]

NEW CAPACITIES - Was there evidence of the emergence or growth of some new capacities or abilities as a result of United Nations support?

It may be useful at this stage to repeat the definition of 'capacity' that was outlined earlier in Section 3, namely the abilities, behaviors, relationships and values that enable individuals, groups and organizations at any level of society to carry out functions or tasks and to achieve their development objectives over time.

The following questions then present themselves when reviewing the six evaluations.

- Can we detect new organizational capacities or abilities?
- Are there examples new or improved non-organizational capacities?
- Did the UN system support have a detrimental effect on capacity building?
- What can be said about the sustainability of these new or improved capacities?

In general, the evaluations present a mixed picture with respect to new or strengthened capacities. We return here to the point about the standards to be used in judging the overall effectiveness of capacity building programmes. Any judgment depends on the nature of the expectations, the degree of patience and a realistic sense of possibilities and risks. The experience to date of all international agencies is that progress in achieving new capacity is slow and incremental and appears in fits and starts. Some efforts fail completely. Most do not achieve their preset objectives. Few organizations or institutions are

reshaped quickly. The majority of capacity building efforts make some progress but leave many issues unresolved. The results of these evaluation suggest that this pattern repeated itself on the UN programmes in the six countries. Five of the six evaluations, on balance, come out with mixed to positive judgments about the capacity results. The evaluations do not come up with an aggregated estimate of the 'success rate' of these capacity building activities.

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42 *Many of the these characteristics have been captured by Merilee Grindle in Building Sustainable capacity: Challenges for the Public Sector, UNDP, 1996*

Formal organizational capacities

All six evaluations present examples of new organizational capacities arising, in whole or in part, from UN efforts. Mali's abilities in population planning improved in the late 1980s and early 1990s. UNFPA worked steadily with the Population Unit in the Ministry of Planning and then with CONACOPP in an effort to build national capacity for formulating demographic policies and coordinating population programmes. According to the Mali evaluation, a remarkable change of outlook occurred in the Malian organization over the reference period leading to a genuine growth in technical capacity.. In Brazil, mention has already been made of the positive experience of TELEBRAS in building up its technical capacity for telecommunications systems design and management. Organizations such as TELEBRAS that lent themselves to rapid improvement were characterized by an effective and accepted technology (e.g. telecommunications or vaccinations), clear objectives and tangible outcomes.(e.g. a certain per centime of vaccination coverage), minimal conflict over objectives, some degree of citizen participation, the promise of quick and demonstrable results and training programmes that could be easily applied[43]. Many of the separate vertical programmes in areas such as UCI also proved good candidates for capacity building.

The Uganda reports sets out a number of examples of improved capacities including the Expanded Programme of Immunization (EPI) and Immunization and Oral Rehydration (ORT) from the mid - 1980s, the Health Education Network (HEN) and the School Health Education Project (SHEP), both from the period 1987-1995, the Adult Literacy Programmes that began in 1990 and the Uganda AIDS Commission. UNICEF also helped to establish the Ugandan Community-Based Health Care Association which brought together over 130 Ugandan NGOs for collaborative action. In the El Salvador case, the UNDP appears to have made genuine progress in helping to build governance structures such as Ombudsman's Office and the upgrading of the judicial, electoral and legislative systems including the Supreme Electoral Tribunal and the Electoral Oversight Committee. The UNDP also helped to build the capacity and the legitimacy of the National Police Force.

The findings of the evaluations are generally more encouraging about UN capacity outcomes in the 1990s, particularly those that focused on NGO and community development. This trend toward greater progress may have been due to the availability of better information on the more recent programmes as well as a growing understanding on the part of all the participants of the importance of factors such as participation and country ownership. Another explanation may relate to the effects of greater political stability in the participating countries combined with, as is argued in the Mali report, the effects of previous UN investments at the central level in the 1980s providing the foundation for further institutional growth in the 1990s.

Non-formal capacity

Most analytical attention is usually focused on the growth of formal organizational capacity that can be more easily identified or measured. But it also appears to be the case that external efforts at capacity building can have positive psychological effects that go beyond

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[43] *Much of this same pattern can be found in Arturo Israel, Institutional Development, The World Bank, 1987*

formal organizations[44]. In a number of the cases outlined in the evaluations, UN system support provided individuals and groups with critical support and reinforcement whose value transcended the specific organizational and programmatic benefits. In Uganda, Zimbabwe and El Salvador, UN system support helped to consolidate a sense of progress and confidence as all three countries emerged from long periods of civil war. In Pakistan, UN capacity building assistance encouraged a new generation of leaders, especially in the NGO community, to establish the organizations that would be needed to help meet educational and social demands in the medium and long term. The difficulty here is in capturing this more subjective progress - the spread of knowledge, greater awareness, increased personal confidence, the value of added debate, the energizing of other organizations not part of the UN programme - in formal evaluations.

Unsatisfactory performance

The evaluations record a number of examples of programmes that did not achieve their capacity objectives. Not surprisingly, UN efforts in the 1980s to change established public sector agencies such as ministries of health and education showed meager results particularly in a environment of modest political support, weak demand and a lack of internal incentives. This applied in particular to attempts at organizational restructuring and service delivery improvements. Other reasons for this lack of progress included the blocking power of vested interests in large public sector organizations and the sheer complexity and difficulty of the task. Focusing on narrow organizational improvements to public agencies from the top-down proved to be one of the least promising approaches to capacity building in the UN system. In many cases, progress was more evident in cases where newer organizations such as NGOs or community groups used the UN system for financial, technical or moral support.

A second pattern of unsatisfactory performance seems to have arisen from the continuing incentives both for UN system organizations and for host governments to produce short-term results at the expense of capacity building. The pressure for immunization coverage for example, may have limited the opportunities to move earlier towards integrated primary health case at the district and community levels. The ability of the UN system to attract good national staff away from government agencies may also have served to weaken agencies that needed strengthening.

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44 *For an analysis of this issue of the 'subjective' effects of assistance, see Thomas Carothers, Assessing Democracy Assistance: The Case of Romania, p. 95-97*

The building of sustainable capacity

The evaluations show a decidedly mixed pattern with respect to the sustainability of organizations developed in cooperation with UN system support. In addressing this topic, it may be more useful to talk about the capacity of a country or a society or a region or a community to perform a certain function effectively over time and with minimal external assistance. In this sense, sustainability refers to a broader concept of self-organization rather than a narrower sense of preserving the sustainability of a particular organization. Sustainable capacity also appears to be a systems issue, the result of a complex web of factors including the political, managerial, financial, cultural and technical. It involves an evolving balance of supply and demand. Organizations that show promise and expand rapidly become overextended and lose performance. Those with efficient management processes and capable staff in good times show a surprising lack of resilience and durability in an environment of civil strife and financial cut backs as in some of the Zimbabwe programmes. Some seem able to acquire the loyalty of key stakeholders who sustain their operations. Their roots into the political and social fabric of a country or a region keep them going. Other high performers favored by external funders never seem to generate the local support that they need to achieve a certain level of stability.

Based on the results of the evaluations, the UN system, as might be expected, had a mixed record with respect to organizational sustainability.

• Some that the UN worked with in the early part of the 1980s such as planning commissions and planning directorates in line ministries lost support a decade later and were eliminated. Others such as the Office of the Ombudsmen in El Salvador struggled to survive in an environment of political conflict. A number of ministries of health and education were clearly sustainable but largely unproductive. Other partner organizations such as the Health Education Network in Uganda achieved a degree of stakeholder support and legitimacy and took root after the termination of UN system support.

• The UN system struggled at times to focus on the issue of sustainability. Most UN organizations were motivated and rewarded by substantive programme achievements such as immunization coverage. The pursuit of time-bound targets frequently conflicted with the slower task of capacity building.

• The UN system seemed to have developed little consensus about the achievement of sustainability as an explicit goal. Most acted on the assumption that the encouragement of national participation and commitment were the most effective ways to induce sustainability. Approaches to cost recovery and financial sustainability also seemed to vary greatly with different UN organizations. Running throughout the evaluations are various UN experiments with funding arrangements including fees and service charges, government grants and others.

Those instances in which both sustainability and performance were achieved appear to have fallen into two distinct categories - programmes or organizations in the public sector that were set up outside the main structure of government or which had their own operating

space[45]. And second, those non-state actors such as NGOs that were characterized by a committed and energized leadership.

DEVELOPMENT IMPACT - Was there a connection or some sort of causal link between the growth of capacity and some desired developmental outcomes?

Of all the issues to analyze in these evaluations, the impact or the actual developmental performance was the most difficult to trace in a causal sense with any degree of certainty. And it is not addressed in this overview in great detail given this lack of rigorous evidence in the evaluation reports. Improved capacity and sustainable development performance are likely to be linked in the long run but not necessarily in the short. The attribution question comes into play here. Programmes can make real progress in developing capacity only to have forces in the domestic and international environment - political, climatic, financial, economic - delay or wipe out any signs of development performance. Efforts to improve primary education systems in three of the countries , for example, generated programme but not broader national benefits. Few of the countries e.g. Mali, can demonstrate any real change in broad health conditions as a result of UN capacity building interventions. Many of the efforts in the 1980s to build the capacity of line agencies in health and education in Mali and Pakistan, for example, produced little of enduring value. But a number of new vertical delivery programme organizations produced tangible gains in health and education and proved to be sustainable well into the next decade. The Brazil case shows significant progress in telecommunications and a poor performance in the environment. The Zimbabwe evaluation is the least encouraging in its view that few tangible developmental outcomes can be shown arising out of the capacity building efforts from the period 1980-1995.

In general, the pattern of developmental impacts can be broken down as follows:

• The establishment of the vertical programmes in the 1980s did lead to tangible gains in health in Pakistan, Uganda and Mali. All three countries managed to sustain into the 1990s the delivery organizations built in the 1980s and to keep the coverage rate up to about 80%.

• Progress in activities such as child literacy are hard to document in the aggregate. In Pakistan, for example, there is little evidence of sustained national progress in child literacy over the fifteen year period despite UN system investments in basic education. A good part of the explanation can be found in the comparatively small UN contribution compared to Pakistani need and a host of other constraints ranging from politicization of the educational system to the absolute growth in numbers of students. Similarly, the evidence was mixed in both Uganda (e.g. child nutrition) or Mali (e.g. child literacy). Several indicators in the Uganda programme pointed to improvements in the situation of children due to improvements in the delivery of basic services for immunization, infant mortality, oral rehydration therapy, water and sanitation. The direct connection to the contribution of the UN system was, however, harder to establish.

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45 This finding largely fits with that of a previous UNDP/World Bank study in the mid -1990s. See Merilee Grindle and Mary Hildebrand, "Building Sustainable Capacity in the public sector: What can be done"? Public Administration and Development, vol. 15, 1995

7. IMPLICATIONS FOR THE UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM

Given the results of these evaluations, what are the emerging implications for the UN system? If capacity building is as important to development effectiveness as some now claim, what should the UN system do to improve its own performance, in effect, to build its own capacity to do capacity development?

The role of the United Nations system in promoting capacity building

Some of the most valuable insights coming out of the six evaluations have to do with the evolution of the role of the UN system with respect to capacity building. By the end of the period in 1995, the UN system was facing the following set of conditions in almost all the six countries:

- An increasing recognition of the importance of capacity issues

- A growing institutional complexity in partner countries

- A continuing legitimacy for UN organizations based on a combination of their technical expertise and their reputation for objectivity and responsiveness

As the UN system evolved through the four main approaches to capacity building set out in Section 5 above, its emphasis shifted slowly to give more importance to catalytic action and facilitation. In most of the evaluations, the UN system became less an organizational engineer helping to build capacity and more a facilitator, supporter, policy advocate and even mediator. A theme that showed up strongly in four of the evaluations (Uganda, Pakistan, Brazil, El Salvador) was that of the United Nations as an objective, impartial and widely-trusted actor particularly with respect to sensitive policy issues such as population and governance. The UN was also relied upon in certain turbulent stages such as post-conflict stabilization. UN technical expertise was still needed in many instances but was no longer the main contribution to capacity building.

In a number of cases, UN organizations functioned as a sort of investment banker when it came to capacity issues. Capacity development, much like commercial opportunities, seemed to need a combination of circumstances to take root. These included dedication, some measure of political protection or at least a champion, a secure operating space, some basic technical and organizational skills, an ability to attract financial resources, a pressing need, a relevant technology or strategy and so on. UN organizations worked to develop their own capacity to spot and support emerging pockets of local energy and initiative that showed promise. This need, in turn, led to some of the UN system organizations trying to build their own skills in facilitation and advocacy, negotiation and communication, partnerships and networking.

This question of an appropriate role for the UN system with respect to capacity building is part of a bigger issue. The international aid community seems to be simultaneously fragmenting into more specialized units *and* coming together to tackle more complex, multi-faceted problems. If the UN system does have a comparative advantage in capacity building based on its history, structure, culture and skills, it needs to both deepen its

skills in that area and also work to collaborate more with other funding agencies who can in turn, provide their own specialized skills to joint programmes.

The United Nations field structure

The involvement of international development organizations such as the UN system in capacity building needs to be supported by a certain organizational structure and way of working. In that sense, structure should support strategy. Capacity building requires the cultivation of trust and collaboration between overseas staff and national participants. A knowledge of the national context and entry points for capacity development interventions is critical. Such programmes require regular monitoring and learning. These demands lead, in turn, to the need for a decentralized structure that has the required decision making authority and access to resources including professional expertise.

For the most part, the evaluations indicate that the UN system structure moved in that direction during the period under review. The less encouraging examples of continuing centralization such as the UNESCO approval system in Uganda seemed increasingly to be the exception. In short, the results of these evaluations support the general direction of the UN system reform at the field level.

Several other insights about the field structure emerge from the evaluations:

- The demands on UN field staff to provide careful and intensive liaison and facilitation in support of capacity building increased despite the decline in the levels of financial support. UN system support of capacity issues could not all be farmed out to contractors and consultants. More emphasis on capacity issues will have implications for field staffing. The incentive system inside the UN system needs to reward personal and organizational learning, experimentation, negotiation and facilitation skills. Traditional project and programme management skills will become less necessary.

- As the UN system increasingly involved itself in multi-component programmes with major capacity building implications, the need for more effective UN system coordination increased. In Pakistan, for example, virtually all the UN organizations worked on some form of health and education issues at the district and the community levels. The Zimbabwe programme had a number of UN agencies with programmes in community participation including IUCN/UNDP District Environmental Action Planning Process, the FAO/UNDP Irrigation Scheme Project, the UNICEF/WHO Africa 2000 and the UNICEF Drought Preparedness Programme. In some countries such as Uganda, this pattern of activity in areas such as HIV/AIDS has led Ugandan officials to seek more coherence in UN system programmes.

- Many of the country participants saw the UN system at the field level as a potential access point to global contacts, contacts and expertise. Such an expectation from its partners has clear implications for the UN system's approach to knowledge management, organizational learning, staff roles and global communication systems.

Performance monitoring and evaluation of capacity building

Most of the evaluations pointed to both the conceptual and operational constraints involved in monitoring and evaluating capacity building. As has already been mentioned, the indicators of performance included in the design of most projects or programmes during the fifteen year period focused on developmental outcomes rather than process and capacity. During the period, no tested menu of indicators emerged to assess the effectiveness of capacity building programmes.

The UN system, in common with other international development organizations, is facing a particular challenge in this area. On the one hand, UN constituencies in many countries - donor and national governments, international foundations, private interest groups - are demanding more explicit evidence of performance, including that related to capacity building. Effective tools, processes and techniques for monitoring and assessing capacity building and capacity are needed to both demonstrate and improve performance. Participants and funding agencies cannot learn if they cannot make serious judgments on outcomes and performance.

But as most of these evaluations reveal, putting in place an effective performance monitoring and evaluation for capacity building requires is not easy. It has to meet three key tests:

- It must balance the needs for accountability and reporting, programme learning and capacity building itself. A steady demand exists to meet the first need. But international organizations must make special efforts to deal with the second and the third.

- Any assessment system or set of indicators for capacity building must go beyond the application of the narrow, reductionist, somewhat mechanistic measurement systems that are sometimes in evidence in the international development community. Inappropriate monitoring systems can twist programme design and management out of shape and can damage the very performance that most participants are seeking.

- Any approach to monitoring and evaluation must be have legitimacy and use for those whose performance is being assessed. It must be largely based on participant experience and expectations. Participatory and survey methodologies have to be combined with those of results-based management and technical evaluation to produce and effective approach. Much is now being written on participatory monitoring and

evaluation and these ideas need to be incorporated into UN system work[46].

A common capacity building framework for the UN system

The United Nations General Assembly has expressed the view that "the United Nations development system should continue to work on promoting a common understanding and the operationalization of capacity building concepts as well as on ways of enhancing the sustainability of capacity building". Based on the results of these evaluations, the UN system can charitably be said to be at the early stages of arriving at such a common

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[46] *See, for example, E.T. Jackson and Yusuf Kassam, Knowledge Shared: Participatory Evaluation in Development Cooperation, 1998*

understanding. The mandates of the different UN agencies, funds and programmes and their approaches to capacity building (e.g. UNHCR and the WHO on the one hand as opposed to the UNDP or the ITU on the other) vary greatly. Not surprisingly, the debate about a common capacity building framework mirrors the larger debate about UN system integration.

- Different UN organizations and agencies accord capacity building varying degrees of importance as can be seen in these evaluations. For the UNDP, attention to capacity issues has been much more easily mainstreamed into regular operations. Capacity building is more easily seen as a separate and distinct end in itself much like gender or the environment and as such, merits dedicated attention and resources. For other specialized agencies and programmes, capacity building remains an ancillary issue or one of many means to the achievement of more technical or policy ends.

- The nature of such a common understanding is likely to evolve slowly. The ' international development community has developed a number of capacity building frameworks in the 1990s[47]. These supplement a long list of techniques designed to assess and analyze individual organizations, map political contexts and stakeholder configurations and general environments. While not yet in widespread use, such frameworks can provide some help to practitioners, both in donor agencies and in country organizations.

- What may also be useful for the UN system would be a more systematic approach to learning about capacity building including case studies. Efforts could also be made to develop a common vocabulary about the topic and to address certain specific issues such as community ownership, replication or scaling up that pervaded many of the projects reviewed for the six evaluations. Part of this approach could be based ontechniques the UN system already uses including structured learning, action research and workshops[48].

If it decides to focus more on capacity issues, the UN system will be facing an perennial issue in public agencies: how to mainstream attention to a particular issue into the regular policy decisions and programme operations of an established organization. When it comes to capacity building, this may require a number of support systems that are normally in short supply in international funding agencies including training, new policies and procedures and new incentive systems. Field staff are usually clearer about the broad concepts but puzzled about how a complex new approach is to be made operational on a wide scale.

National execution

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47 *The most familiar can be found in the following publications: Principles for Capacity Development for the Environment by the OECD, 1994, Building Sustainable Capacity: Challenges for the Public Sector, UNDP, 1996. Also the UNDP, Capacity assessment and Development in a Systems and Strategic Management Context, Technical Advisory Paper # 3, January 1998*

48 *See, for example, Structured Learning in Practice: Lessons from Sri Lanka on Community Water Supply and Sanitation, UNDP-World Bank Water and Sanitation Program, 1998*

The findings of these evaluations are mixed on the impact of the policy of national execution (NEX) on the progress of capacity building[49]. All the evaluations support the intent of the policy and see its potential value in terms of inducing greater country involvement, commitment and resources. But some of the varied approaches to the actual implementation of the NEX policy troubled a number of the evaluation teams particularly those who looked at UN system activities in Uganda and Mali. The basis of the unease was the tendency of both partner countries and UN organizations to circumvent the main structures of government in an effort to make programme delivery faster and more efficient: in effect, shielding UN-sided programmes from capacity weaknesses in public agencies. The end result in some cases was the ongoing loss of capacity building opportunities in key government agencies and the creation of ad hoc parallel structures that had little chance of sustainability. This debate is a continuation of the discussion in the 1980s about special project implementation units.

Examples from the evaluations were the following:

- The Government of Brazil used the auspices of the NEX to hire the UNDP directly to implement programmes for which Brazil itself provided the financial support.

- In Uganda, the Government created The National Execution Unit of the External Aid Coordination Department of the Ministry of Planning[50]

- In Mali, UN assistance helped to create planning and implementation structures - 'le groupe ad hoc' - outside the directorate for public health, some of which are now preparing Mali's ten-year health plan (1998-2007).

The conflicting incentives surrounding capacity building in the UN system appeared to be most in evidence when it came to implementing national execution. In some cases, the pressure to achieve programme results led both partner governments and UN system organizations to set up parallel structures or implementation units that may have a better chance of performing. Yet this policy of circumvention may have worked against the longer-term goal of building national capacity. It is important, however, not to overstate this issue. The evaluations contain many examples of NEX implementation that led to genuine gains in capacity. Compared to many other international agencies, the UN system progress on shifting control and accountability to national partners was noticeable. The evaluations also record a relatively smooth transition from UN agency to national execution, a trend for which the UN system should take some credit.

UN system impact on overall aid coordination

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[49] *The General Assembly Resolutions 44/211 and 47/199 stressed the need for the UNITED NATIONS system to give priority to assisting recipient countries in building and/or enhancing the capacity to undertake national execution.*
[50] *In Uganda, the UNDP has funded 40 projects through the NEX Unit almost all paid by the UNDP which is the only international funding agency supporting the Unit.*

The evaluations do not focus on the perennial topic of aid coordination for capacity development amongst the major donors and lenders. Most international organizations still have to overcome limited incentives and a variety of different accountabilities in their efforts to induce better aid coordination. And efforts to improve the capacity of partner governments to carry out this activity were mixed with noticeable progress in El Salvador and less success in Zimbabwe. But it seems clear that many of the development challenges that the UN system faced in the six countries, particularly those required a systems approach, required a more intensive efforts at aid coordination that extended even beyond the UN system. The constraints to social development in Pakistan, for example, or health improvements in Uganda appeared to be so pervasive and so interconnected as to require a systems response from the international funding community.

In the evaluations, three factors appear to have worked in favor of improved aid coordination in support of capacity building.

• A partner government determined to induce international funding agencies to collaborate was key. None of the six governments exerted that kind of overall pressure but there were instances in which governments encouraged the UN system and other agencies to collaborate in population and district health issues.

• Coordination was fostered by a group of donor officials at the field level who, for whatever reasons, saw it as a critical contribution to the achievement of their own objectives. The case of the UNDP effort to promote institutional development within the Government of Pakistan was such a case.

• The evaluations discuss examples of issues of such importance, urgency, complexity and systemic force that they simply had to be addressed in a coherent way. The work of UNAIDS in Uganda involving UNICEF, UNDP, UNFPA, UNESCO, WHO and the World Bank was a sustained effort at a longer-term solution that went beyond the normal project-by-project approach.

Organizational learning in the UN system

The UN system, in general, gets poor marks from the evaluations for organizational learning about capacity building. Evidence existed in all the programmes of individual field officers learning on-the-job. They appeared to position themselves as a 'co-learner' along with the national participants. In UN field offices with good track records on programme coordination at the field level, some learning did take place on topics such as public sector reform and decentralization through committees and working groups. The UNDP, for example, managed to induce some operational learning within the Government of Pakistan on a number of institutional issues. Certain UN organizations such as UNICEF were making determined efforts to learn more about specific topics such as participation[51]. UNICEF also initiated the practice of circulating brief summaries on particular topics related to capacity issues. But, as described in these evaluations, the UN system was still at the early stage of

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[51] *See UNICEF, Workshop on Strengthening Participatory Attitudes in Communication and Development: Facilitators Manual, Programme Communication and Social Mobilization Section, September 1996*

inducing systematic learning between headquarters and field units and more important, between headquarters units. There was little evidence, for example, of other UN organizations making much effort to access UNDP expertise on capacity building.

The reasons behind these constraints to organizational learning were the following:
- In terms of logistics, few of the programmes had adequate records covering the period under review. In a number of cases, key documents were missing. These gaps combined with regular staff turnover made it difficult to reconstruct assumptions and baselines underlying any of the programmes.

- The technical specializations within the UN system created organizational, psychological and cultural boundaries that limited the flow of knowledge and insight. Within the UN system, few units worked directly on capacity issues. The result was an absence of a capacity 'community' within the UN system that could transmit and adapt learning across and within the organizational boundaries. The links between the research, normative and operational activities were missing. In many cases, the UN system lacked a common vocabulary, a frame of reference or any testable hypotheses to use in discussing capacity building.

- As mentioned earlier, the UN organizations accorded different weight to the issue of capacity building. For some, it was crucial. For others, it was simply one of many issues clamoring for attention and resources. This unevenness of treatment limited organizational learning.

- The breadth and elusiveness of the capacity issues made it difficult to provide frameworks for learning and discussion. As mentioned earlier in this report, capacity building had intangible outcomes, uncertain and complex strategies and a varied demand. It did not lend itself to technical formula that could be easily shared and learned. Experiences were contextually-driven and not easily understood or replicated.

- The pressure of work at all levels of the UN system reduced the space for learning at both the personal and organizational levels. Staff appeared to have little time to reflect more broadly, to document their experiences or even to read those of others[52]. Organizational incentives for learning were weak.

These comments need to be put in perspective. The constraints to organizational learning within the UN system mirror those that can be found in virtually all other international development agencies. Many of the UN organizations also appeared aware of both their learning disabilities and the importance of overcoming them in the medium and longer term.

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[52] *The same issue appears in other UN reports. "...the daily workload of a programme officer is fragmented and involves a constant stream of meetings, internal information requests, directives from above and in-try paper work. This encourages a form of conditioned stimulus and response behavior that precludes the time and attention span need to assist pilot environmental initiatives that often require intensive monitoring support.." Environmental Programmes in Latin America and the Caribbean: An Assessment of UNDP Experience, 1997, p. 32*

8. SUMMARY

The results of these six evaluations point to three main conclusions. First, the UN system did make significant progress in altering the way it approached capacity issues. In particular, the fifteen year period between 1980 and 1995 shows a steady evolution with respect to programme design and implementation and the incorporation of more participatory approaches. In addition, the UN system did a good deal to bring the whole issue of capacity development and its strategic importance as a development issue to the forefront of discussion and debate. Second, the mixed pattern of results in the form of sustainable capacity points to both the challenges inherent in the work of capacity building and also the issues still left for the UN system to address in its efforts to further improve its performance in this field. Third, the results point to the need for the international development community, including the UN system, to focus more intently on capacity issues in order to induce a legacy of sustainable performance.

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Chapter 3

UNITED NATIONS CAPACITY-BUILDING IN BRAZIL

John Pielemeier and Alberto D.R. Salinas-Goytía

This chapter reports on the findings and conclusions of a mission to evaluate the capacity-building impact of selected United Nations activities in Brazil in the sectors of science and technology and forestry and environment between 1980 and 1995. The team focused its efforts on two science and technology subsectors (telecommunication and informatics) and on four projects in the forestry/environment sector.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

UN capacity-building support to the Brazilian telecommunications parastatal, Telebras, was extremely successful. Technical cooperation, training and technology transfer activities were carried out efficiently and had measurable impact in a milieu that was highly technological and professionally competitive. Telebras was chosen because of its strategic importance. It also furnished Brazilian counterparts to work with International Telecommunication Union (ITU) advisors. It had an organizational vision with strong and consistent leadership and the financial capacity to carry out the recommendations of advisors and consultants.

By contrast, UN capacity-building support during the same period for the forestry sector in northeastern Brazil had less impact. It sought to develop forestry management systems and capacity in the nation's poorest region. The project team often had to change institutions in search of support; the programme lacked political backing and had no broader advocacy strategy. Capacity built under this programme is beginning to be utilized, primarily because of new environment (rather than forestry) programmes funded by the private sector and donors, which include incentives and funding for state participation.

Brazil began creating environmental institutions and programmes very recently, in the early 1990s. The UN system provided major support from the beginning. Capacity-building elements of these initial UN-supported environment programmes had only modest success. The mandate of federal government environmental institutions was uncertain and changing. The leadership of these institutions was in almost constant flux. Basic legislation and technical guidelines were not yet in place, and government capacity to execute programmes was extremely limited, in part due to an effort to downsize government bureaucracy. Under these circumstance, the traditional approach of trying to build government capacity was inefficient, given that these were very young institutions. The most successful capacity-building elements were introduction of high technology and establishment of an institutional relationship between Brazilian fire-fighting brigades and the United States Forest Service (USFS).

The UN system focused all its capacity-building efforts in the environment sector on new federal government environmental institutions and programmes. Initially, the UN did not seek to address the capacity-building needs of non-governmental organization (NGO) partners.

Recently, however, there has been a more balanced approach, with successful UN system support for NGOs (which by in large have had continuity of leadership since 1990) and private sector institutions.

In Brazil, traditional projects with long-term technical support from UN agencies, such as the northeast forestry project, ceased in the early 1990s to be an effective modality for capacity-building. They have been replaced by the UN taking a growing role in supporting national execution of projects funded by multilateral institutions (World Bank and Inter-American Development Bank (IDB)) or by the Brazilian Government itself. As a favoured executing agent for nationally executed projects, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) is praised for its administrative competence and its ability to get things done (often by using UN rather than normal government regulations).

Detractors argue that this UN role focuses more on hiring temporary Brazilian capacity to implement projects than on building long-term capacity. Our findings indicate that the UN has built capacity but that it could provide more value added by using state-of-the-art analytical techniques (such as institutional assessments and situational analyses) in the design of these projects. It could also assure continuing technical input and oversight during programme execution. This is especially valuable in the fast-moving science and technology and environment sectors, where global skills and knowledge are critical. This evaluation shows that in both the informatics and environment sectors, UN access to global technology, its acceptance as a neutral international organization and its administrative flexibility give it a comparative advantage that is attractive to Brazilian NGOs as well as government entities.

Capacity-building appears to have been a second- or third-tier objective in project design and implementation and has not been systematic. Most UN project documents are relatively unsophisticated. Problems to be addressed are not well defined or quantitatively linked to project outputs. This makes monitoring and evaluation exceedingly difficult, since neither objectively verifiable indicators of project successes nor milestones of progress are provided. Newer UN documentation shows some improvement in the project design process. The entry points for UN involvement in the projects evaluated were at the very beginning of Brazilian involvement, which demonstrates UN leadership and foresight, as well as government confidence in the UN.

Many of the enabling conditions essential to successful capacity-building were not present in Brazil during the 1980-1995 period. Environmental institutions and leadership were in almost constant flux; state and municipal governments were uncertain of their responsibilities and sometimes wary of accepting them (in the absence of additional funding); basic legislation and technical guidelines were not yet in place; and government capacity to execute programmes was extremely limited. This hampered UN programme success. Nevertheless, a reasonable amount of capacity-building did occur, especially in the Projects for Decentralized Action (PED) programme, where capital resources, technical support and well-designed programme conditionality were integrated into a packaged programme.

Capacity-Building: Conceptual Basis

Capacity-building refers to the national combined ability to identify, carry out and readjust the policies, programmes and projects required for integrated, effective and sustainable

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development. The concept of capacity-building is not necessarily different from concepts such as institution-building, institutional strengthening, development management and others. It is, however, important to highlight a possible significant difference between institution-building and capacity- building concepts vis-à-vis our evaluation exercise and developments in Brazil. Institution-building emphasizes the sustainability of an institution as an indicator of success. Capacity-building, in our view, emphasizes the creation or strengthening of capacity for programme execution, independent of the permanence of an institution. This is the case in Brazil. Telebras may disappear as it becomes privatized, but its installed and available capacity will remain. Private companies can and will utilize and further develop installed and available capability built with UN system support.

The Country Context

Many important socioeconomic and political changes occurred in Brazil during the 15 years addressed by this evaluation. Some of these changes had significant impacts on the UN programme approach and content in Brazil. The 1960s and 1970s were years of dynamic economic growth in Brazil, fueled in part by heavy external borrowing. Although extreme disparities in income distribution continued, the middle class expanded and job creation gave hope to the poor. The oil shocks of 1973 and 1979 and a rapid rise in real interest rates on foreign borrowing, however, sent the Brazilian economy reeling in the early 1980s. Some economists call the 1980-1995 period in Brazil "the lost years of economic growth". Government investment ground to a halt. The poor suffered the most from the continuing economic downturn and the country's social cohesion was put to the test at the same time, as the country was moving from military to democratic rule.

Major regional differences in wealth persisted. Brazil's south, southeast and eastern central regions boasted almost European-level average incomes. The northern and western regions of Brazil were less well off, and the northeast region experienced extreme poverty. High inflation was a fact of life throughout the period, benefiting the upper and middle classes and causing the poor to suffer. The Plano Real, an economic plan designed in mid-1994, succeeded in lowering inflation rates as high as 45 percent to less than 5 per cent by 1997.

Other major economic changes occurred during this period. By the late 1980s, Brazil began to move away from a carefully planned, import substitution economic model towards trade liberalization, World Bank- and International Monetary Fund (IMF)-supported economic restructuring, privatization and, eventually, downsizing of the federal government.

Cooperation between the United Nations and Brazil began in 1950. Levels of UN funding gradually have decreased since 1972, while Brazilian cost-sharing contributions have increased. The major increase in funding since 1992 is due largely to the role of UNDP as executing agent for World Bank and IDB loans to the Government and for smaller projects fully funded by the Government (termed "100 per cent cost-sharing" projects).

During the military regime (until 1986), the Government, through a well organized Ministry of Planning Technical Cooperation Office, asked the UN system (especially the UN technical agencies) to concentrate on science and technology and related human resources development projects. This helped Brazil develop world-class technologies and technical systems to produce goods and services within the Brazilian import-substitution economy and

eventually to compete with developed nations on the international market. Areas of programme focus included, inter alia, civil aviation, telecommunications, nuclear power, industrial technology, establishment of a National Standards Institute, food technology and agricultural research.

The return to democracy in 1986 led to a shift in government priorities for UN cooperation. Social sector programmes gained increasing prominence. During the past 10 years, more resources have been requested for institutional strengthening, social mobilization, modernization of the state and meeting global targets such as health and education for all by the year 2000. The UN agencies participating in this cooperation effort are primarily UNDP and the technical agencies that focus on the social sectors.

I. UN CAPACITY-BULDING IN SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

Telecommunications

ITU and UNDP, jointly and separately, have supported the research and development efforts of Brazil in telecommunications since the early 1970s. This support, which covered the entire 1980-1995 period, was and continues to be implemented through various technical cooperation projects:

Operation of a Telecommunications Technological Centre, with Embratel as the Government's cooperating agency. Project assistance focused on support to the technology and science system in the telecommunication sector, with government, university and private sector support, through the participation of foreign experts in research and development (R&D) projects and international training of technicians;

Establishment of an infrastructure for the Centre for Research and Development of the state-owned Telebras, contributing substantially to the training of professional staff and the start-up of R&D activities;

Assistance to the Centre for Research and Development in acquiring competence in several telecommunications fields;

Human resources telecommunications training and the creation of the National Training Centre. This project assisted in the creation of the centre's physical infrastructure in Brasilia and in advances in the development of instructional techniques, which contributed substantially to the training of Telebras system employees and technicians from countries in Latin America and Portuguese-speaking African countries;

Institution-building in the field of applied telecommunications technology, making the sector less dependent on imported components, materials, equipment, services and engineering design. This resulted in a concentration of R&D efforts in the development of technology for domestic applications, with a potential for export; and

Modernization of the Telebras system, through the incorporation of new management techniques, with the objective of improving system performance (quality, diversity, price and customer satisfaction) in order to work in a newly competitive environment.

Findings. Public telecommunication services have been a monopoly since 1972, through a concession granted to Telebras and its 28 operating companies. Telecommunication

services thus developed outside a competitive environment, which has at times affected quality, diversity, quantity and cost. It has been difficult to meet the demand for telephone lines, provide the required quality for long-distance calls and discharge all the duties of a public utility.

More than 370 Telebras technicians have been trained abroad through participation in courses, seminars, study tours and internships involving more than 100 organizations. More than 100 international consultants from renowned institutions or telecommunication companies, mainly in developed countries, have come to Brazil for short-term missions. They have transferred knowledge and experience and developed joint projects with more than 1,600 Telebras technicians, 530 students and 135 professionals from the industry. To promote the modernization of the telecommunication sector in developing countries, the project has also fostered experience sharing. For example, four courses in technical fields, such as digital networking, were provided for 80 technicians from Latin America and Portuguese-speaking African countries.

Impacts. Impacts are disproportionate to the amount of the UN system support. But as key people within and outside of the Brazilian telecommunications agencies state, those impacts could not have been realized without UN system interventions. Those interventions leveraged national efforts, harnessed joint endeavours and, in this sense, brought about the major achievements and impacts described below. It is worth mentioning that, as far as we know, there have not been external actors other than those who cooperated through the UN system agencies.

With UN system support, the number of telephone lines increased from 9.2 to 13 million; the busy rate for long-distance calls diminished from 21 per cent to 9.5 per cent; the number of towns providing telephone service went from 14,500 to 18,400 (responding to the social requirement to serve remote areas); the number of employees per 1,000 telephone lines went from 9.1 to 6.3. Internally, the rate of return on investment improved from -1.4 per cent to 2.9 per cent between 1991 and 1995, and profits doubled. Telebras now provides a variety of telecommunication services that extend beyond basic telephone services, such as: inductive card-operated public telephones; data, videotext, telex and telegraph transmission; cellular mobile, toll-free and paid services; and direct connection to foreign operators. In major urban areas, Telebras also offers other services based on digital technology, such as video conferencing, facsimile transmission, speed dialing, voice mail, message handling and home-shopping services.

The company offers better and cheaper services—especially for low-income groups—and has also improved the quality of its services to enterprises. In terms of research and development, in 1996 Telebras signed more than 200 contracts with local industries to transfer its technologies, exploit its patents or license software for the use of its programmes. Finally, one of the most interesting aspects of project impact is the social benefits of new technological developments, such as the community telecommunication centres, "virtual" telephones and tele-education. Telecommunication services are thus made more widely available in rural areas, by using new technologies that reduce costs.

UN System Contribution. ITU made possible, or at least facilitated, the placement of highly qualified experts in Brazilian telecommunication institutions. It also helped to train key Brazilian experts and employees at world centres of excellence. With its experience and

databases, ITU identified and contracted the best professionals available, according to the specific needs of the Government and Telebras. While international experts were in Brazil, the Government assigned groups of qualified counterparts to absorb pertinent knowledge and know-how. National and international staff were integrated in teams that cooperate as work plans are designed, executed, monitored and evaluated. ITU also assisted the Government to identify necessary literature and equipment and helped it acquire, install and monitor this material.

Between 1980 and 1995, capacity-building impacts were varied and widespread. In the area of training, the National Training Centre (CNTr) was established and computer-based training programmes were developed and then transferred to other Latin American countries. Technical cooperation among developing countries (TCDC) was promoted, with more than 100 technicians from Latin America and Portuguese-speaking African countries were trained in Brazil by Telebras.

The National Institute of Research and Development of the Telecommunications Systems (CPqD) was founded and has 400 researchers working on a variety of projects to support the companies of the Telebras system. Further developments include a large-capacity telephone digital switching system, opto-electronic devices, digital radio equipment and Application Specific Integrated Circuits. Management innovations included development and transfer of a packet switching data communication system and a text switching system. Equipment purchased through the project has enabled researchers to pursue their goals with state-of-the-art tools. The support that CPqD received noticeably increased its installed capability to carry out research and development in telecommunications at the national level. It is now a nationally and internationally recognized research institution in telecommunications. Telebras was integrated into the global telecommunications community.

ITU and UNDP utilized a variety of instruments and approaches. Four key types of successful project interventions were: support for training activities carried out abroad; short- and long-term international telecommunications experts and consultants brought to the country; identification and contracting of consultant enterprises for crucial activities; and support for the acquisitions of key equipment and materials needed for research and development. About 120 short- and long-term, highly qualified telecommunications experts and consultants stayed in the country over the 15 years under consideration because of UN system support to Brazil. These expatriates further prepared 600 highly qualified national experts and professionals. In successive rounds, these national professionals may have trained a minimum of 3,000 professionals now working throughout the country. This critical mass of professionals is perhaps the main capacity-building impact of the UN support to Brazil.

ITU and UNDP identifed and selected world market firms with comparative advantages in telecommunications technologies to work closely with Brazilian institutions and professionals. This has helped to build substantial capacity in the Brazilian telecommunications system. As to acquisitions, with the intervention of the UN system, equipment and telecommunications materials can arrive and be ready to function in a few months, while using only government channels, it can take two to four years.

During the period under consideration, there have been many impressive achievements. The System for the Automated Management of External Networks (SAGRE) methodology was

developed with the support and within the context of the ITU-UNDP project. This procedure brings about an estimated saving of US$1.2 billion through optimizing the use of existing cables. For the development of this system, CPqD relied on direct and indirect UN support.

Another concrete capacity-building impact is the electric protection of external networks and the phone card. With innovations done within the framework of project-CPqD endeavours, estimated annual expenditures for repairs were lowered from US$55 million to US$5 million per year. Telebras has licensed this phone card system for use in China and is negotiating the sale of the license in Bolivia. CPqD has three main locations where these activities are carried out. The ITU-UNDP project accompanied and supported most of the efforts to develop and support this infrastructure. Without this support, we believe that the Government could not have achieved what it has thus far in the field of telecommunications.

Information Technology Development

The UN System supported the Government in developing its Programme of Information Technology and in achieving advances reached thus far in the fields of the Internet (Brazilian Research Network-RNP), a multi-institutional thematic programmme in computer science (PROTEM) and the Brazilian Society for the Promotion of Software Export (Softex). The Strategic Development in Information Technology (CNPQ) project seeks to build an internationally competitive computer industry in Brazil that will create growth, exports and jobs and facilitate overall technological innovation. The project provided the computer industry with infrastructure, export incentives for software products and strategic research in computer science. It also promoted synergy between education, research and the computer industry.

The Brazilian computer industry developed behind strong trade barriers. With the opening of the market in the beginning of the 1990s, the industry had to face fierce international competition. In particular, it had relied too heavily on the hardware sector for which it could not compete at the international level, while the communication and information infrastructure in the country was not yet developed enough to act as an incentive.

Findings. The Internet has grown rapidly in Brazil. Approximately 60,000 hosts are currently connected, providing access to about 1.2 million individual users through more than 2,000 institutions. These figures are higher than those of any other Latin American country and can be compared to some European countries.

PROTEM has re-equipped Brazil's computer science teaching and research laboratories. It has installed 230 computer stations in almost all computer science courses and research centres, replacing obsolete microcomputers and establishing a new phase in computer science research in Brazil. Approximately 700 new stations have been installed throughout the country, doubling the number in academic laboratories. More than 50 research projects involving 70 institutions and 15 firms have been developed in strategic areas (e.g., artificial intelligence, software for tele-communication and operational systems). There are already 23 software promotion offices in Brazil and three offices abroad, in China, Germany and the United States. Approximately 700 firms participate in the programme, with 40 already exporting their products. Brazilian software exports amounted to US$100 million in 1996 and more than 50,000 jobs have been created as a result of the RNP and the connection with the Internet. The RNP has also promoted long-distance education, health services, environmental monitoring and

services for the disabled. The main impacts are in two programmes: Alternex-IBASE and Softex.

Alternex-IBASE : UNDP support was small and indirect, but very successful. Initial UNDP support made possible an international conference of NGOs in June 1989. As a part of its contribution, UNDP facilitated the acquisition of needed computer equipment and helped develop the network rapidly. In 1992, also through UNDP, Alternex-IBASE cooperated in the preparations for the Unoited Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED). IBASE installed and provided basic Internet connections and services in Brazil and other countries. Until the time of the conference, significant and influential segments of the academic community did not have access to the Internet. It is clear that Internet expansion would have had been much slower without Alternex participation in UNCED. As a result of these capacity-building measures of the UN system, as of 1996, Alternex had become a self-sustaining private enterprise. Its main sources of income are from lease of lines, Internet publicity, Internet database hosting and other network services. The rapid growth and sustainability of the Internet in Brazil is the main capacity-building impact of UN support.

Softex: There are 20 Softex clusters, whose aim is to promote Brazilian export of computer software and to create, strengthen and consolidate the installed and available capability of companies in this sector. There are two primary programmes: incubation of new software companies and training and consultation for already existing firms. Clusters are organized in a variety of different forms. RIOSOFT is a non-profit NGO integrating software and other companies in the Rio de Janeiro region. Financing comes from enterprises and local governments.

In order to survive, the clusters must become self-sustainable, preferably in two years. UNDP technical cooperation made possible the creation of Softex and its 20 clusters. UN system agencies contributed with the assistance of international and national professionals, training and equipment. The main capacity-building impact is the growing network of clusters. Project personnel helped establish mechanisms to sensitize and strengthen inter-institutional coordination between pertinent federal and local government institutions and agencies, and among the latter and the community of small and mid-sized software companies. Softex is now able to develop multi-institutional research projects for the export market. Another impact on the project is the opening of about $US30 million in credit from an IDB loan.

The following are direct capacity-building impacts of UNDP technical cooperation in this area: the integration of clusters into a nationwide network; growing and continued participation of local government; increasing sustainable support of local partners in the public and private sectors; growing replacement of federal funds with local funds for the financing of the projects and functioning of the Softex system; and respect for local input and characteristics in the organization and financial structuring of each cluster or branch of Softex.

As more indirect capacity-building impacts, the following were identified: linking Softex with about 1,800 informatics operations in the country; helping to establish about 200 software enterprises throughout Brazil; creating graduate programmes in over 70 Brazilian universities to train "entrepreneurs in informatics"; and establishing a software export culture in the entrepreneurial and financial sectors of Brazil.

Analysis of Findings and Lessons Learned. The main capacity-building impact of the UN system and the Government is the training of highly qualified manpower in the field of telecommunications. Outputs are also in the form of development of new products and technologies. They have undoubtedly had an impact on the installed capability of the telecommunications system in the country. However, the enabling environment is changing. The new environment stresses the use of comparative advantages. This favours efficiency and productivity in an open market, using the best available global inputs. In this environment, some UN system inputs may be abandoned.

In Brazil, comparative advantages for development of its telecommunications system do not dwell in its public sector. Because of their training and educational experiences, human resources are available for other desirable projects and activities in the country as a whole. That critical mass of highly qualified professionals in telecommunications, and the new policies taking into account globalization and other world realities, constitute the new Brazilian enabling environment for a genuine and competitive development of its telecommunications system.

Impact of UN Capacity-Building Efforts. UN support to the Brazilian telecommunication systems and to the development of its information technology have contributed to the current state of telecommunications, mainly through organizations capable of satisfying client needs today and in the long run, at a minimum cost and within a competitive framework. Training programmes have been developed that are responsive to organizational needs, with a meaningful proportion of graduates utilizing and perfecting what they learned within their organizations. These organizations have strategic plans and monitoring systems that keep them competitive amd financially solid. Again, illustration of these capacity-building inputs can be seen in the growing importance of CPqD and the critical mass of telecommunications specialists working througout the country.

UN support to CPqD and Telebras had direct and indirect impacts on the rest of the sector and on other sectors in Brazil. Within the sector, capacity-building repercussions launched further activities in the area of information technology. As Brazil sought to export about 1 per cent of the software world market by the year 2000, Softex was established in CPqD. CPqD developed a series of software programmes that have not been aggressively marketed, mainly because the research centre was part of Telebras. As Telebras becomes privatized, however, CPqD will probably form some type of partnership with universities or firms in the private sector. It will then need the installed capability of Softex for the marketing of its software. In addition, the development of the Internet as a part of the Information Technology Development Programme is having direct and indirect repercussions in all Brazilian sectors.

UN Contribution in Perspective. UN system contributions evolved from a focus on training to institutionalization and then capacity-building. As an illustration, government officials approach UN agencies for a computer and, as they analyse that need, they jointly focus on broader capacity-building needed to be able to use the computer, other types of computers and a complete network. That kind of interplay between UN agencies and nationals brings new forms of cooperation, which in itself is a clear impact of UN programmes on capacity-building. As a result of these continued interactions, the capacity for programme and project identification, development and execution in the public and private sectors increases. As it increases, capacity-building impacts further leverage one another at higher and more sustainable levels.

The main factor contributing to the success of UN system programmes and projects is the partnership and trust developed between the UN system and the Government. Within that framework, UN agencies provided Brazilian institutions excellent and world-class technological inputs. In the process, there has been significant transfer of technology in a variety of fields. Brazil has high regard for the neutrality and universality of the UN system and therefore chooses UN agencies for the execution of its most sensitive technical cooperation development projects.

UNDP coordinated the work necessary for the execution of the technical cooperation projects that brought about the capacity-building impact identified above. ITU was the executing agency. Total resources allocated to this sector during the 1980-1995 period were about US$70 million, of which 97.4 per cent came from Brazilian funds in the cost-sharing modality, and about 2.6 per cent from UNDP.

II. UN CAPACITY-BUILDING IN FORESTRY AND ENVIRONMENT

Four projects were selected for review and evaluation, based primarily on project longevity, the amount of project documentation and number of project personnel available for interviews: Forestry Development in the Northeast, Fire Prevention and Management, the National Environment Programme and Desertification Strategies.

Forestry Development in the Northeast

The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and UNDP have supported number of forestry programmes in Brazil, beginning with the Programme for the Development of Forestry Research (PRODEPEF) in 1972. This was a huge project for its time, employing 25 to30 FAO and Brazilian forestry specialists. Their work included nationwide basic mapping, inventories and analysis, with a focus on the use of native forests and plantations for Brazil's growing industrial needs. The project also carried out basic research used to establish one of Brazil's first national forests and set up the country's first wood products research laboratories.

A 1982 follow-on project focused on the Brazilian northeast region, to plan and define improved strategies to manage the native vegetation in a sustainable manner, in order to increase wood production needed to satisfy household and industrial demand. A 1987 project had as its objective to strengthen the capacity of the Brazilian Institute for Forestry Development (IBDF) to execute, manage and evaluate programmes in the northeast. This was modified in 1990 to strengthen the capacity of the Brazilian Institute for the Environment and Renewable Resources (IBAMA) and the northeast states to execute, manage and evaluate environmental and forestry policy and strategy, as well as the forestry action programme for the region.

Over the past 15 years, this programme and its successors wandered from one institutional base to another, operating as an independent federal government project under IBDF and, after 1989, under IBAMA. Initially it focused on basic research and information gathering. State-level data were aggregated into forestry "diagnoses", which in turn were the basis for forestry action plans. Project research showed that 114,000 jobs in the region depended on the forest sector and that almost all rural households were extremely dependent on forest resources for survival. The project received little or no financial support from the states,

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however, as agricultural and industrial development were higher priorities.

Other sources of financing for forestry activities initially proved to be ephemeral. A major IBAMA-FAO effort to obtain US$5-6 million in Global Environmental Facility (GEF) funding in 1992 had extremely disappointing results—only US$100,000 was provided. The traditional FAO approach, building up from basic data gathering and research to analysis and then to action, brought no positive response from the state government in the first pilot state. With no outside financing available and no other federal incentives to take action, state leaders decided against financing and carrying out the project's proposed forestry action plan.

The project leadership decided, therefore, to complement these activities with actions that would show concrete results in 8 to 9 demonstration areas. Unfortunately, in most cases, the states did not provide follow-up funding to expand on these demonstration area activities. Short-term training in the region was the primary approach to expanding the project's reach beyond the team of 5 to 10 state technicians who worked with and later were integrated into the project team. Nevertheless, the magnitude of need for extension programmes in the sector went far beyond the project's capacity.

The quality of resident and short-term FAO technical support for these projects was excellent. FAO administration of the programme was replaced in 1992 by national execution, with UNDP as the executing agent. At the present time, approximately 60 per cent of project staff are IBAMA employees, while 40 per cent are UNDP contract employees. Since 1991, basic project activities have been fully funded by IBAMA.

The aggregate outputs in capacity-building from this series of forestry projects are: more than 50 IBAMA and state technical specialists trained; a large (but unquantified) number of extension agents trained to transfer concepts and practical knowledge to small and medium-size rural producers; teachers and primary education supervisors trained in environmental education in 4 states; 100 months of training courses provided on technical subjects; 32 special courses, seminars and meetings provided, accounting for 4,500 person-days of training for small producers, extension agents, students, teachers and supervisors; establishment of project technical committees; basic studies, diagnoses and plans of action prepared with state officials for 4 states; production of graphic materials (manuals, posters, handouts), videotapes, radio programmes and technical guides to help extension agents train farmers and others; a pilot programme in environmental and forestry education carried out in 13 rural primary schools with follow-up support from the Government of Switzerland (similar programmes were initiated in 3 other states); internships for dozens of university students, who gained practical experience.

Much work remains to be done, both at technical levels where there have been few opportunities to apply training for the resolution of practical problems, and in the formulation and application of forestry policies. In recent years, the project has been more successful in getting private and other donor funding for activities supporting project objectives.

Findings. Locating project activities in the northeast, where forestry was not a significant priority for state governments, had limited initial impact. Recently, however, the desertification prevalent in the area has heightened national and international interest in managing forest resources in the region. Project data and diagnoses, as well as draft state

forestry action plans, may become even more valuable resources due to this recent interest. In the long run, the capacity built by this programme will become more valuable.

Capacity-building has been hampered by the absence of an institutuional base for the project. The changing relationships and responsibilities over this long period between federal, regional and state government institutions exacerbated the problem. A happy medium between project independence and state sponsorship may have been found recently with the creation of a regional "technical council for forestry".This situation is in stark contrast to the telecommunications sector, where institutional stability, a strong demand for outside support and clear capacity to absorb the benefits of technical cooperation were preconditions for UN funding.

The introduction of environmental programmes and state environment secretariats in the 1990s also blurred the concept of the "natural home" for forestry activities. This project has tended to dig its technical roots deeply into forestry and has been somewhat reluctant to enter into multidisciplinary (and much better funded) environment programmes. FAO reportedly provided excellent technical support and "political support" for controversial initiatives of the team. The same type of support was not evident under UNDP project management. Lack of sustained funding for state forestry staff and programmes has been perhaps the major limitation to expanding project impact. Project documents do not addresses financial sustainability in any significant way. This, again, is in stark contrast to Telebras.

The project has had a major impact on increasing technical capacity in forestry planning and management and in reforestation in four of the seven states in the northeast. Until recently, that capacity had been underutilized. Project-trained technical staff are now beginning to respond to recent demands from the private sector.

In sum, the impact of this sequence of projects has been impressive in terms of the quantity and quality of basic technical material produced and the number of persons trained. However, broader objectives—execution of forestry action plans and acceptance by rural smallholders and larger private sector landowners of forestry management technology—have not been achieved. Considerable technical capability has been produced, but skills, materials and technologies are not being fully utilized in the absence of public sector programme funding and/or incentives for private sector adoption of sustainable forestry practices. The northeast forestry projects have been "advocacy projects" with an ultimate goal of convincing state leaders to finance forestry action plans. Unlike United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) advocacy activities, however, these projects are purely technical in nature, with no strategies to address the political and financial constraints to achieving their ultimate goals or to find non-government sources of support.

Fire Prevention and Mangement

Fires are a grave threat to grasslands and forests of Brazil. Traditional practices of using fire as an inexpensive way to clear land for agriculture continue. On average, 30 million hectares of forest and agricultural land are burned each year, destroying biodiversity, threatening the life and health of the local populations and contributing to global warming. Responding to domestic and international pressure, in 1989 a fire prevention and management programme (PREVFOGO) was established. A UNDP project was initiated one year later to develop and coordinate a national system for the prevention and control of forest fires and

burning; to provide scientific training on the effects of fire on ecosystems; and to develop human resources at the federal and state levels.

PREVFOGO was executed by UNDP under a cost-sharing arrangement, with UNDP financial inputs less than 2 per cent of total costs. Project staff were IBAMA officers and technical staff contracted by UNDP, who collaborated with a network of 30 researchers located at the University of Brasilia, the Brazilian Geographic and Statistics Bureau (IBGE), the national space centre (INPE) and elsewhere. The project also benefited from technical collaboration and technology transfer provided by the United States Forest Service (USFS).

The programme operated as expected for about two years. However, with a change in leadership at IBAMA, the project fell from favour. Funding provided from 1992 to 1995 was only about 10 per cent of planned levels. As a result, many project activities were curtailed or terminated. Nevertheless, the programme strengthened Brazilian capacity in the following ways: a satellite monitoring system was established to monitor fires; basic systems for monitoring fires were established in 5 of 8 planned states; a national fire prevention campaign was carried out; federal and state capacity to fight fires was improved; personnel from three "demonstration" conservation units were trained; the first national seminar on forest fires and burning was carried out in Brasilia in 1992 ; and the forest fire brigades of state fire departments in Rio de Janeiro, Brasilia and Goiania received training and equipment.

IBAMA has included a smaller PREVFOGO-like component in a new environmental macromonitoring project begun in 1997 with UNDP as executing agent. However, almost all of the personnel located at IBAMA implementing this programme are contract employees of UNDP. Supporters of the UNDP-execution model point to many examples where projects were executed twice as quickly and that institutional capacity will be built at the the state and municipal environmental secretariats. Opponents worry that this mechanism enables the Government to postpone taking serious steps to achieve public sector reform and avoids the real need to establish a permanent federal-level capacity.

Findings. PREVFOGO was an ambitious project with unusually broad interaction planned between a variety of federal, state and parastatal institutions, university researchers and foreign collaborators. Inflexible government procedures hampered inter-agency collaboration. For example, no mechanism was established to allow the transfer of critical project research equipment from IBAMA to IBGE. Following the 1992 change in IBAMA leadership, it is not clear whether UNDP took action to urge IBAMA or government leadership to keep the project on course.

Some capacity built with PREVFOGO resources is being gradually worn away by the lack of adequate funding. A prime example is the Rio de Janeiro Forest Fire Brigade, which has received no funding for equipment replacement since 1990 and whose capacity to fight fires is being reduced year after year.

The USFS training programme has been extremely effective. The long and well-organized training period abroad (7 months) allowed Brazilian fire fighters to acquire sophisticated skills. Significant transfer of technology and know-how occurred via PREVFOGO. INPE and IBAMA now have the capacity to interpret satellite data to target enforcement efforts. However, this system is far from operational. Much remains to be done to

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increase the number of trained federal and state officials and conservation unit managers. Recent research indicates that fire is now widely recognized to be one of the greatest threats to Brazilian forests and biodiversity. There are significant opportunities to address this growing problem quickly, building on the capacity developed by PREVFOGO.

The National Environment Programme

Initiated in 1990, the National Environment Programme (PNMA) was the Government's first major environmental programme. The World Bank and the Governments of Germany and Brazil provided over US$100 million. UNDP provided funding to carry out studies and analyses which led to the programme design and was responsible for executing several project components totaling almost US$30 million, including strengthening of the Ministry of Environment, IBAMA and state environmental agencies; and a programme of decentralized execution, which has funded subprojects in 20 states. About two thirds of this funding is provided by the World Bank with the remainder (except for US$300,000 in UNDP funds) provided as cost- sharing by the Government.

The programme was initiated at a time of institutional flux in the environment sector in Brazil. IBAMA had just been created in 1989 by fusing four existing institutions with distinct organizational cultures. By 1992, a new Ministry of Environment had also been created, which gradually began to take over some responsibilities previously accorded to IBAMA, as the Government tried to define its role in this relatively new sector. Political circumstances such as the impeachment of President Collor in 1993 contributed to extreme instability in environmental leadership. Between 1990 and 1997, IBAMA had 10 presidents and the Ministry of Environment had 7 ministers or their equivalents, each with a new cadre of senior officials. The overall objective of Brazilian environmental institutions was also gradually changing— from preservation to sustainable development. A study by Price-Waterhouse in 1992 recommended a major structural reorganization of IBAMA, but strong unions successfully blocked the proposed changes.

In 1994, a major PNMA project revision was agreed upon, reducing funding for capacity-building. A new project component was added that would transfer project funds to local demonstration projects in states that qualified for funding. To qualify, states had to establish state environmental laws, guidelines and staff and dedicate at least 10 per cent of the state budget to environment activities. To date, 16 states have complied with these conditions.

A recent project evaluation reviewed the results of the capacity-building of the programme. The key findings are:

The Ministry of Environment, IBAMA headquarters and state offices and state environmental secretariats have been well equipped with computers and a modern communication network, greatly increasing their capacity.

Many studies to formulate environmental strategies were carried out, workshops and seminars took place and manuals were produced. Yet they do not seem to have led the ministry to adopt an integrated strategy for environmental management.

Decentralization of environmental management is occurring gradually, with various agreements signed between federal and state entities. Most state organs, however, need

additional strengthening in order to carry out their mission.

The institutional restructuring of IBAMA is still "in process".

Over 3,000 persons were trained, but there has been little or no follow-up and the applicability and use of the training received is uncertain.

A national environmental information network (RENIMA) has been created unifying servers and databases, integrating international and national data and training 4,000 users.

A National Remote Sensing Network has been established but will need recurrent funding for maintenance and support.

The PED subprogramme, also executed by UNDP, has successfully encouraged local and state initiatives. Most subprojects have been operational for only 18 months, however--far too short a time to have significant impact.

Findings. UNDP provided financial support for the design of the first major environmental programme in Brazil. It is widely lauded for its role in assisting in programme operations, especially in hiring personnel and consultants, in financial management and in procurement of computers and other equipment. Observers stated that UNDP execution reduced the project's life span by one to two years.

It is not felt, however, that UNDP provided technical input itself or through another UN agency such as the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), nor did it provide a "UN approach to capacity-building" in its project components. The UNDP role was clearly seen as administrative rather than technical. The flexibility provided by UNDP administrative mechanisms has been important in supporting decentralized demonstration projects via PED. States and municipalities have often used UNDP systems to avoid the entanglements of state or municipal personnel contracting and procurement.

Major discontinuities in leadership in the new environment sector during the early 1990s severely hampered the achievement of PNMA objectives. The impact was greatest in the formulation of environmental policy and in establishing a systematic programme of institutional capacity-building. The results of capacity-strengthening efforts at the central level (the Ministry of Environment and IBAMA) have been mixed. Computer and informatics capacity has increased enormously. It is uncertain, however, whether the technical capacity of permanent employees (those not UNDP-contracted staff) has been measurably improved and whether it will remain after project termination. Training was not well organized; no assessments of training needs were carried out prior to organizing courses; and little or no follow-up occurred to reinforce the training provided or to determine whether the training had any impact on job performance.

The design of the PED programme was particularly effective, combining capital assistance (much in demand by subprojects), technical support (often via UNDP-contracted personnel) and conditionality. This combination successfully leveraged major improvements in state laws, guidelines and staffing in the new environment sector, changes that likely will benefit future environmental programmes. The PED programme provides only a modest opportunity, however, to strengthen the capacity of local NGOs.

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Desertification Strategies

The International Convention to Fight Desertification and Drought was proposed and approved by the majority of delegates at UNCED in 1992. Following the conference, a Brazilian NGO, the Group Esquel Foundation/Brazil, proposed to help develop a Brazilian strategy for combating desertification, by organizing a Latin American regional conference and seminar in 1994. The NGO received US$60,000 from UNDP. As a result of the conference, the Brazilian Ministry of Environment took a greater interest in this initiative, and a project was developed by Group Esquel and approved by both UNDP and the Ministry. Project objectives are: the formulation of policy guidelines for sustainable use of natural resources in semi-arid areas, as well as guidelines for local action; and the structuring and consolidation of methods to control desertification in semi-arid and dry semi-humid regions of Brazil. The project has now been amended to continue until 2000, with US$3.8 million in funding. All funds, except for US$70,000 from FAO, are being provided by the Ministry of Environment.

Findings. This project is an excellent example of UNDP ability to respond quickly and positively to an NGO proposal to follow up on an international convention, even with little government support. The return on a small initial investment of US$60,000 has been exceptionally positive. The project, an example of a successful government-NGO partnership, is also developing an unusually thoughtful and useful set of indicators of success that sets an excellent example for other Ministry of Environment projects.

UNDP and FAO technical support has been limited but helpful in identifying complementary projects and activities. This is an excellent example of the UN system "moving upstream" and providing a modest amount of financial and technical support to galvanize action on an important new issue. Aggressive UNDP and FAO help may be needed to solicit and obtain donor funding to implement the Desertification Plan being developed by the project. All project personnel in Brasilia are contracted by UNDP, raising the obvious concerns about the absence of true capacity-building in the Ministry and the issue of long-term sustainability.

The UN Capacity-Building Approach in Forestry and Enviroment

Planning for capacity-building in Brazil has not been systematic. None of the UN projects evaluated used institutional assessments or situational analyses in planning their capacity-building activities. In project design, there is little analysis of the level of capacity needed to achieve objectives, no review of problems that need to be addressed in building capacity and no discussion of preferred operational approaches that might significantly increase sectoral or institutional capacity in the most cost-effective way. This is due in part to the enormous pressure placed on getting quick results in a new and highly visible sector (deforestation in the Amazon, reduction of forest fires). Capacity-building that did occur probably resulted not from the quality of the intervention but from the amount of effort. Capacity-building seems to have had more success in telecommunications, where there was less political pressure for immediate results.

Project Planning and Monitoring of Results. Most forestry project documents were

relatively unsophisticated. They simply list objectives and activities (or outputs). The objectives, for capacity-building and other areas, are often quite broad and are not broken down into measurable results. Project reporting is equally vague. Annual project reports list activities carried out but do not give any sense of whether the project objectives are being achieved. Imprecision in the UN project documentation reviewed makes monitoring and evaluation exceedingly difficult.

Newer UN documentation, especially the Desertification Strategies project document, shows improvements in the project design process. However, the excellent indicators in that document were provided at the initiative of the Brazilian project manager and were not required by UNDP. Now that UNDP is executing several projects fully designed and fully funded by the Government (rather than by a donor such as the World Bank), it has an excellent opportunity to encourage greater rigour and sophistication in the project design process, including the use of institutional assessments and situational analyses, where appropriate.

The entry points for UN involvement in most of these projects was at the very beginning of Brazilian involvement, which demonstrates UN leadership and foresight and government confidence in the UN. As noted above, UNDP financed the preparation costs of PNMA, Brazil's first major environment project. FAO provided leadership beginning in the 1970s in developing the basis for Brazilian forestry research. The PREVFOGO project was approved less than a year after new PREVFOGO legislation had been formalized. The UN funded an initial desertification workshop using regional funds, even before the Government had decided to support the concept. In all projects reviewed, except desertification, the entry point for UN system support was through the federal government, and assistance was provided primarily to government entities. No capacity was developed in the private sector. Limited resources available to NGOs in the PED programme can be used only to purchase materials, not for NGO capacity-building.

Duration of UN Assistance and Resource Levels. UN work in the forestry/environment sector deserves very high marks for continuity and duration of support. UNDP and FAO have maintained support to forestry activities in the northeast for over 15 years, even while state responsiveness was uncertain. UN funds available for environmental projects have decreased significantly since the 1980s. Timely funding for catalytic actions, for pilot activities or for new project preparation are all that is likely to be provided in the future for Brazil.

Cooperation among UN Organizations. FAO and UNDP are the only UN organizations that have been directly involved in the forestry and environment sectors in Brazil. Despite Brazil's importance in terms of forest cover and biodiversity, UNEP has never had an office in Brazil. UNICEF and the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) have reportedly played useful supporting roles, reviewing health and child-related issues in project preparation for environment and rural development projects. Inter-agency cooperation appears to be excellent at this time. Both Brazilian and UN officials confirmed, however, that FAO and UNDP clashed in 1992 over responsibility for directing the northeast forestry programme. Reportedly, FAO insistence that a proposed FAO project coordinator have status and responsibility equal to the Brazilian project coordinator was not accepted by government authorities. Brazil readily accepted the UNDP offer to execute the project under Brazilian terms.

Gender. Very little information is available on gender in project documents and there is scant evidence that gender issues were considered in project design and implementation during this period. Women do hold professional positions in the Brazilian forestry and environment sectors. Data available for the northeast forestry project indicate that approximately one third of state-level project personnel and one third of technical cooperation personnel (both Brazilian and international) were women. Twenty-three per cent of those who received project-funded training abroad or at special seminars in Brazil were women. The impact of this special training is reduced, however, when one notes that a single woman attended 10 of these 21 training programmes.

The Enabling Environment. In most countries, ministries of environment or their equivalent were created for the first time in the early 1990s. The scope and responsibilities of these new ministries is still often uncertain. In Brazil, the early 1990s was a period of rapid institutional change at the federal level. A strong forestry institute was incorporated in 1989 into IBAMA, a huge new organization with several diverse mandates. As UNCED approached, President Collor created the new Ministry of Environment. There has been a struggle as regards the division of responsibilities among IBAMA and other ministries. In addition, the Ministry of Environment and IBAMA have had rapid turnover of leadership.

While federal environmental institutions were identifying their new responsibilities during the 1990s, state and municipal institutions were doing the same, albeit with a certain lag in time. Poorer states with severe budget pressures were often reluctant to assume their new environmental responsibilities in the absence of additional funding from the federal government or donors. Municipal governments were also wary of taking on new tasks. The lack of a civil service at the municipal level meant that with each change in leadership, municipal technical and administrative officials were replaced. Both state and municipal discontinuity limited UN project impact. In the midst of these public sector discontinuities, donor persistence is essential for project benefits to reach their intended beneficiaries and be sustained.

Government Capacity. Alleged government corruption has led to increased review of government hiring and procurement. The effective result is a freeze in government hiring of civil servants and an almost total federal government incapacity to hire consultants or to procure equipment and materials. These limitations are most evident in the Ministry of Environment, which has only 100 staff members. As a result, all new donor- and government-funded environment projects rely on personnel hired by UNDP or other executing agents. Key state positions are also normally filled by UNDP-contracted employees. One result is an almost total absence of long-term government capacity and programme continuity in the environment sector. It is claimed that the most basic conditions required by donors for traditional capacity-building programmes are being ignored.

But perhaps this traditional view is no longer valid, undermined by public sector downsizing. Proposals to create new federal environmental bureaucracies and establish new federal responsibilities in the environment sector in the early 1990s seemed out of place in the midst of a highly publicized effort to reduce the federal bureaucracy. Major public sector reform legislation is now pending in the Brazilian Congress. If passed, it would go one more step towards streamlining the Brazilian federal bureaucracy. Flexibility in government hiring will be essential as new environmental problems arise that require federal government action. Under these circumstances, the old models of capacity-building (linked to institution-building) seem out of date and inefficient.

Legislation and Political Support. In a new sector such as environment, basic legislation must be created along with operational guidelines to implement laws and regulations. In the early 1990s, these laws and regulations were being established haltingly at all levels of government. Technicians in the forestry project insist that laws, regulations and technical guidelines are essential to ensure continuity of government performance when state and municipal technical personnel change with each election. Federal laws and regulations also ensure continuity of state level performance, even when new governors do not give the environment high political priority.

The projects evaluated demonstrate that a combination of capital funding, technical support and conditionality can bring quick responses from state government. After the PED programme was initiated, 16 states approved or reinforced state environmental laws and guidelines (with project technical support) in order to gain access to project funds. The contrast with the northeast forestry project is striking and instructive. The forestry programme offered governors high-quality forestry action plans, but without additional funds to implement programmes. Over 15 years, only one northeast governor agreed that a major forestry programme should be carried out.

In sum, many of the enabling conditions essential for successful public sector environmental capacity-building were not present in Brazil during the 1980-1995 period. Nevertheless, a reasonable amount of capacity-building did occur, the best example being the PED programme, where capital resources, technical support and well-designed programme conditionality were integrated into a programme that was attractive to state leaders.

UN Comparative Advantage. Four key factors have been identified by Brazilian and UN officials to explain why the Government (and an NGO like the Esquel Foundation) came to the United Nations system for development assistance and technical cooperation for forestry and environment programmes.

Neutrality and Objectivity: In the 1970s, Brazil asked the UN system for assistance in the forestry sector, because Brazil hoped to compete in the international timber market and feared that bilateral donor assistance might be influenced by timber interests in those countries. The UN was viewed as a neutral and objective source of technical advice and cooperation, and it successfully performed that role.

Access to Global Technical Capacity and Technology: UN procurement has worldwide access and, unlike many bilateral donors, is not tied to the countries that provide the funding. FAO technical support for ongoing forestry projects at present is reportedly very modest. UNDP has not played any significant technical role in support of forestry or environment projects either. In spite of this, it is felt that there is a continuing role for UN technical support in Brazil, especially in sectors like environment, where world knowledge and experience are evolving rapidly. The UN system should strive to provide at least as much technical support and backstopping to the teams it has contracted as a private consulting firm would provide.

Administrative Competence: UNDP is best known in Brazil's forestry/environment sector as a programme executing agent. Increasing numbers of large environmental projects,

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funded by the World Bank or the Government, are now partially or fully executed by UNDP. UNDP is attractive because of its low overhead (3 per cent), its ability to use its own rather than government hiring and procurement regulations and its reputation for administrative effectiveness and efficiency.

Catalytic Capacity: The strong FAO presence in the 1970s gave prominence to the forestry sector in Brazil, a prominence that grew as young Brazilian researchers supported by FAO gained their own stature within the Government. UN catalytic actions in Brazil are now much more indirect. With less UN funding now available, UNDP leadership and key Brazilian counterparts agree that UN funds should be used for catalytic purposes—to fund conferences that stimulate new programme ideas, to finance small pilot projects and to bring government, civil society and the private sector together to address critical problems or to publish important reports.

UN Contribution in Perspective. FAO and UNDP contributions to the forestry sector were extremely valuable for all the reasons noted above. With the exception of some German technical support for forestry training in Brazil's relatively wealthy southern region, no other donors provided significant support to the forestry sector until the 1990s focus on the Amazon. Even today, the UNDP northeast forestry project is the only significant project in the region.

During the 1990s, international donors and private voluntary organizations have provided financial and technical support to Brazilian government entities and to NGOs to address forestry issues related to broader environmental concerns. The regional focus has spread from the Amazon to include other threatened areas. UN financial and technical assistance is extremely modest, indeed, within this large panoply of donors and resources. Some say that the UN system now provides no leadership or technical value added to the environment sector and functions only as an executing agent for Brazilian programmes. This does not take into account the large and growing number of UN environment projects that assist the Government to meet its international obligations related to the international conventions elaborated in 1992 and later. This critical role is clearly one in which the UN will continue to have a significant role in Brazil.

Chapter 4

UNITED NATIONS CAPACITY-BUILDING IN EL SALVADOR

by Jose Luis Medal and Arnold J. Meltsner

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report examines United Nations system capacity-building activities in El Salvador. It attempts to cover a wide range of UN system activities, both before the period of conflict and after the signing of the peace accords in 1992. The study was conducted under severe resource limitations, particularly the lack of information and time. While we found the term "capacity-building" difficult to use in the field, we did try to identify instances of capacity-building, which we describe as "the ability to perform appropriate tasks effectively, efficiently and sustainably".

We briefly examined the capacity-building activities of the World Food Programme (WFP), Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). We then examined non-traditional programmes, such as the successful community-based Development Programme for Displaced Persons, Refugees and Returnees in Central America (PRODERE), as well as efforts directed at decentralization and government modernization. Finally, we concentrated our efforts on the various peacekeeping reforms, such as the creation of the ombudsperson's office, the new national police force, the police academy and improvements in the electoral and judicial systems. Finally, we identified instances where actions undermined capacity-building—a situation we call "negative capacity-building".

Issues

In a special issues section we address a number of significant, cross-cutting questions. We find that capacity-building has a dynamic that changes with time and uncertainties. It makes a difference whether you are talking about capacity-building during stable, peace-time conditions or unstable emergency conditions. Generally, we found that the UN presence was positive in terms of its influence on capacity-building in a variety of areas; that the process has to be changed in polarized political contexts; that gender issues are addressed adequately; and that activities at the field level are fairly well coordinated. We found that resources were commensurate with outputs, but they were insufficient to deal with the aftermath of war. Continuing financial support will be necessary.

Lessons

Managers underestimate the time and other resources it takes to implement programmes.

Project management perspectives dominate the activity and viewpoints of managers, despite the broader perspectives of capacity-building.

Training should be provided to local populations, who are quite capable of taking care of their own lives and well-being.

Different forms of organizational structures should be used for different environments.

Implementation problems should be anticipated in achieving consensus in peace accords.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The UN system made a major contribution in moving El Salvador towards peace, democracy and an enhanced quality of life for its people. It helped established a number of institutions that, while fragile now, can continue to prosper with sustained support by the international community and the Government. On some minor technical issues, we find a "matrix" form of organization would be more suitable for field operations. There is too much turnover of key international personnel, and increased emphasis should be given to training and keeping qualified nationals working for the
UN system.

I. INTRODUCTION

As we have discovered, the term capacity-building is fairly broad and protean. On the positive side, there is an umbrella under which many parts of the UN system, donors, recipients and beneficiaries can join together. On the negative side, there is little consensus on the operational meaning of the term, and in our interviews it was apparent that respondents tended to have their own definitions.

Our terms of reference made clear that capacity-building is an evolving concept that is growing in complexity. The international community, including the UN system, would like to see nations be able to formulate goals (i.e., have a vision), develop strategies and policies to achieve goals and manage and learn from the implementation of those policies. In short, a nation should be able to act as a rational problem solver. Moreover, the nation is not conceived as a monolith but rather is composed of numerous societal and governmental levels and points of entry: systems, organizations, groups, communities and individuals. Simple definitions of capacity are criticized as being too static and incomplete.

UN agencies are now developing more comprehensive schemes and guidelines for evaluation and assessment. For example, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) has developed an elaborate set of check-lists for three levels: individual, entity and system. Each level has a set of dimensions. On top of these are factors that make for a successful capacity initiative. But the sheer quantity of different levels and dimensions is far too much. It is ironic that as behavioural and system scientists learn more about cognitive limits on rationality and the need for managers to operate under conditions of uncertainty and interdependence with incomplete information and knowledge, UN planners are developing synoptic, comprehensive information "guidelines" or check-lists that have little relevance to measuring impact or managing performance in the field.

The measurement of the impact of capacity-building has to be evaluated in terms of the sustainability of policies and programmes. In short, has the UN system contributed to the

design of adaptive structures, enhanced problem-solving resources and accomplished sufficient training so that a nation can be self-managing and in charge of its own destiny? In the case of El Salvador, did the various UN programmes contribute to its peacekeeping mission?

In discussing capacity-building, it is important to understand that there exist obstacles, limits, constraints and impediments that hinder the development of the elements of positive capacity-building along democratic and productive economic lines. A climate of mistrust, for example, can affect efforts at building capacity. It can also linger and affect future activities. Continual dependence on outside funds and mediators can postpone the objective of self-sustaining capacity-building. In a situation such as that of El Salvador, where there are no "winners" by definition, there can be a drag on development. As we will see, at some point these obstacles can actually become negative capacity, in the sense that actions taken by either the Government, donor or UN agency can, at least in theory, undermine existing positive capacity. In certain cases, of course, some capacity should be eliminated or modified if it does not foster democratic norms or help restore the post-war social fabric. For example, actions were taken to reduce the size of the military as part of the peace process and further reductions might occur in the future.

Limitations

The mission had only a short period (about two weeks) to conduct the examination of the overall UN system. This involved all UN agencies, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), various levels of governmental actors and environmental or community participants. Difficulties were also encountered in that for much of the assigned evaluation period, there was a lack of institutional memory (including records and people). Many of the principal managers or "representatives" of UN programmes have been in place only since the peace agreement of 1992. In our interviews, post-1995 activities dominated the discussion. Furthermore, the concept of capacity-building itself is multidimensional and not conducive to empirical operationalization, either as a rough standard or as a concrete criterion for assessing success and failure. Finally, due to time and resource constraints, we were restricted to selecting a small number of UN projects for evaluation and analysis. Such a small sampling produced a rather generalized account. Our report, therefore, should not be considered definitive. The reader should see it, rather, as a matter of informed judgement or conjecture, conjecture which could be followed up by in-depth study.

Country Context

The situation in El Salvador has been well documented. As recently as July 1997, the Secretary-General assessed the peace process in a report to the General Assembly. Our focus is a bit different, however. Peacemaking and peacekeeping provide a context for our mission, which is to examine the organizational reform and development strategies or approaches that contribute to capacity-building.

Our general conclusion is that the UN has played a significant role in making and keeping the peace. It acted as a mediator at an important juncture and helped mobilize resources to make peace work. The UN system has helped create a number of major social innovations, and its staff have done so in a highly professional and efficient manner. As a chief of police told us, "Without the UN, there would be no peace", and as a major political figure put it, "On a

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scale of 1 to 10, I give the UN a 10". Thus, some of the following analyses and criticism are directed to a managerial or technical planning level.

II.   CAPACITY-BUILDING

Traditional Programmes

World Food Programme. WFP distributes food to impoverished persons. It has been in El Salvador since 1963. Its mandate and methods have changed over time, and for our purposes we discerned three periods: pre-war, war and post-war. The war, or crisis and emergency conditions, caused changes in beneficiaries, target areas and, particularly, the way food was distributed.

In the pre-war phase, WFP attached social objectives to incentives for receiving food. Thus, if beneficiaries sent their children to school, the children would receive lunch. If beneficiaries performed socially useful work in their own interest, they would receive food. The use of food as an incentive is an example of traditional capacity-building because it changes the behaviour of the recipients, whose lives are greatly improved. The entry point for capacity-building is the individual. During the war, the nature of the emergency modified these strategies. After the war, WFP returned to distributing food as an incentive for behavioural change via the food-for-work programme, the school lunch programme and a mother and child programme. The last, started in 1994, had a strong educational component. Capacity-building before the war was designed to encourage people to do useful work, while after the signing of the peace accords, capacity-building focused on getting children to school and, in the process, improving educational, health and parental behaviour.

Today the programme contributes to the peacekeeping mission of the United Nations, and there are signs of sustainability. WFP has been reaching out to about 3,000 schools and 300,000 children. Currently, WFP is stressing education and training for teachers and parents. It is also working on transition problems. WFP is scheduled to complete its mission in the year 2003. With its logistical support, information systems, establishment of warehouses and training, WFP has certainly created a legacy of capacity for the future.

Food and Agriculture Organization. FAO activities are focused on soil conversation. The organization seeks to use its resources to solve the human poverty problem and not use agriculture simply as a subsidy to other economic sectors, as has been done for the past 20 years. Generally, these economic sectors want low-cost food supplies for their employees, and so they encourage the growing of grains. One goal of FAO is to convince farmers to grow vegetables, which would allow them to receive a larger return at market and eventually to become self-sustaining. We would have liked to explore agricultural research in depth, yet were not able to do so, given the limitations discussed above.

United Nations Children's Fund. In traditional UNICEF capacity-building activities, the primary goal was to reduce infant mortality and improve health and well-being of children and women. Support was provided for enhancing health infrastructure and strengthening maternal and child health care services (immunization, the promotion of breast-feeding, health education and growth monitoring and development). Activities included training health personnel and traditional birth attendants, providing basic supplies and equipment and enhancing local capacity for health planning and programming skills. In the non-traditional

area, UNICEF provided assistance to persons displaced by the civil war. Intervention was oriented towards the provision of basic services in conflict areas. UNICEF was successful in promoting temporary cease-fires ("days of tranquility"), observed by both sides of the conflict. This allowed the national vaccination campaign to expand coverage of its immunization programme.

Non-Traditional Programmes

The implementation of the peace agreement resulted in the extension of the UN system to what might be considered non-traditional activities. By non-traditional, we refer to situations where the UN is working in a new area or in a new manner, as with the creation of the National Police, or where the UN system worked to create community organizations, such as the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) efforts as part of PRODERE.

When appraising the details of a programme, there tends to be little difference between traditional and non-traditional activities. The UN system will purchase a computer for an office; provide funds for government staff to travel; develop a plan; set up a course for training and find people to teach it; conduct and go to meetings; and write proposals and get funding. In short, inputs are the same, but objectives may be different. In non-traditional projects, the reach is greater in cutting across a number of sectors, and there is often a mix of political and technical considerations.

PRODERE. Under the Special Plan of Economic Cooperation (PEC) adopted by the United Nations in May 1988, UNDP established PRODERE in 1990. Its main objectives were to contribute to the peace process, provide assistance to the populations affected by the civil war, furnish the means to resettle them successfully in their places of origin and supply development support to their communities. The programme was established with the financial support of the Government of Italy.

PRODERE was implemented in El Salvador during the 1990-1995 period. It is an example of non-traditional capacity development at the local level. Initially implemented as an emergency programme, the objectives were to give immediate assistance in terms of food, health, education and housing to the thousands of families affected by the war and to help the reintegration of former combatants and attend to the needs of the communities most affected by the war. At the same time, its aim was to achieve sustainability, not only to make arrangements for stable resettlement but also to contribute to the peace process. After the emergency stage, it was transformed into a local development programme, which had already achieved a significant level of sustainability, at least from an organizational perspective. Under PRODERE, 255 local development organizations were organized that serve as strong advocates of their communities' interests.

The PRODERE methodological approach was based not on a top-down, vertical, hierarchical organizational structure, but on a more horizontal approach, employing community capacity to find solutions to problems. PRODERE used a territory approach and promoted empowerment of the local communities. Planning and implementation of interrelated projects were carried out on site, with strong participation of local citizens and NGOs. Civil society was empowered thorough encouragement of the creation of Local Economic Development Agencies (ADEL), Local Education Systems (LES), Local Health Systems (SILO) and inter-institutional

committees.

PRODERE ended its activities in July 1995; however, many of the civil society organizations that were established are still active and are strong advocates of the interests of their communities. Sustainability was achieved because of the contributions of the programme and the cultural tradition of strong grass-roots organizations. The UN decision to implement the programme where there was a history of local participation was an important element of its success.

During the 1990-1994 period, PRODERE made a total direct investment in El Salvador of US$20.4 million. Additional supplemental funds increased investment to US$57.2 million dollars. An evaluation of the impact of this investment was not possible because of the limited information and time. PRODERE impact in El Salvador, however, should be evaluated not only in quantitative terms but also in qualitative terms. The programme made a substantive contribution to the peace process, to the promotion of human rights and to empowerment of local communities.

PRODERE was carred out in poor rural areas, the regions of the country most affected by the civil war. These areas were also where the guerrilla movements had it strongest base. After the peace accords were signed, the Government adopted laissez-faire policies and tended to ignore local areas. In fact, local organizations had more interaction with international organizations than with central government. PRODERE was to some extent a "post-war rural development programme", which was implemented during a period when, at the national level, rural development strategies were not emphasized.

The PRODERE experience showed that a more flexible organizational structure—flat rather than vertical—together with strong leadership, are important requirements for the successful implementation of a crisis programme. The United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS) is accustomed to a high degree of decentralization and had highly motivated leadership in the field, who were not bureaucratic and not averse to risk. The community had confidence in the UN field team, and the members of the communities became active participants in the programme, another example of capacity-building during the implementation of emergency activities.

The primary bilateral donor supported an organizational structure based on delegation and versatility, which greatly facilitated implementation. When there are many influential donors with different approaches to the use of resources, the level of coordination can be weakened. This suggests the need for more coordination among donors, particularly in emergency programmes, where bureaucratic routines should be minimized. Regarding the UN system, the level of coordination among UN agencies was facilitated in PRODERE by "delegating" almost entirely the implementation of the programme to UNOPS. Thus, a UN team with good leadership encouraged the community to participate, and because the community had confidence in the team, they did.

Data from 1994 show that PRODERE had 53,250 beneficiaries of projects, 6,695 persons received training, 20,927 received loans, 500 kilometres of rural roads were constructed, 62 schools were constructed or rehabilitated and 32 health centres were constructed or rehabilitated. Former combatants received land, credit and technical assistance from the UN

system. Capacity was created for local planning, coordination and project implementation. The PRODERE experience is a clear example of capacity-building at the community or local level. On the negative side, PRODERE programmes were financed primarily through funding from the Government of Italy and there was little support from the central government, which had limited resources and many demands on it. PRODERE did not create sustainable financial support. Nor did it ensure expansion throughout the country or as part of national strategy.

From 1990 to 1995, PRODERE was implemented as a pilot programme despite the reluctance of some government and party officials to promote local participation, fearing perhaps political implications. Today, however, an approach in favour of local empowerment is more acceptable.

The PRODERE experience has already produce an "intra-sectoral" spillover in the form of the Sustainable Human Development Programme (SHD). In 1995, the UNa operational system and the Government signed a memorandum of understanding in order to implement SHD in the northern area of El Salvador. Two departments were added to the original area of the PRODERE programme, with the objective of strengthening local management capacities at the municipal and departmental levels. SHD is expected to cover a great deal of the country.

PRODERE, a peace-building effort, has been integrated into a long-term human development programme for the following reasons. First, although PRODERE was an emergency, post-war programme, it incorporated a comprehensive approach to addressing social, economic, legal and ecological issues. Second, PRODERE used a territory approach, which requires that sectors converge and be integrated. Third, at the national level it was recognized in 1995 that a rural development strategy was lacking and that the problem of deforestation was extremely severe. Fourth, the PRODERE experience proved that local participation could help deliver social services at lower costs. With PRODERE, by 1994, 118,025 persons became beneficiaries of improved and accessible sewerage and latrine facilities and increased access to potable water. Finally, from a political perspective, the central government wanted to be involved in a successful local development experience.

Decentralization, Participation and Government Modernization. Officially, the current development strategy puts more emphasis on strengthening the capacity of communities and municipalities and in using an integrated approach to local development. Perhaps in part as a result of the PRODERE experience, there is now more emphasis on empowering communities to solve their problems.

There are other important factors that played a key role in the higher degree of acceptance of local empowerment and community participation, including:

Lack of commitment to assigning a greater share of the national budget to social services;

Budget constraints and lack of will to increase taxes;

Recent change in the strength of political parties; and

Less identification of grass-roots efforts with socialism and communism.

Participation in the 1980s and early 1990s was, in the view of some, almost synonymous with membership with the leftist guerrillas and was an extremely risky activity. Now, participation is considered normal and even necessary. In short, at least in "official statements", it is agreed that some central government institutions need to be radically transformed—from vertical and hierarchical structures to horizontal and participatory organizations.

Although decentralization and local empowerment goals were established in the 1989-1994 development strategy, the peace accords of 1992 committed the Government and the FMLN to the strengthening of local democracy. However, during the 1990-1995 period, the Government lacked the political will to move ahead. Citizen participation in programmes such as PRODERE was at least initially tolerated, and more recently it has been promoted through SHD.

Local Government. The development of local government capacity has lagged. El Salvador is divided into 14 departments and 262 municipalities, mostly impoverished. Local revenue is extremely low and rural municipalities depend primarily on transfers from the central government, assistance from NGOs and grants from international organizations and other donors. During the 1990-1995 period, no significant progress was made in decentralizing central authority to local governments or in shifting financial resources to municipalities.

This situation changed after the elections of March 1997, when the opposition won control of the National Congress and most of the 262 municipalities. Since the transfer of funds from the central government had been small, irregular and subject to political manipulation, the new Congress passed a bill establishing that 6 per cent of the national budget be transferred to local governments.

The national association of municipal governments (COMURES) has become an active forum for voicing local interest at the national level. A large number of NGOs are helping communities meet pressing needs, albeit often with little coordination with local government. UNDP has provided technical support and equipment to COMURES. The Salvadorian Institute for Municipal Development (ISDEM) was created in 1987 to provide technical and financial assistance to municipalities. It receives funds from the central government, part of which goes to local governments for economic development. ISDEM has also received support from international agencies. From the perspective of the mayors in the opposition parties, ISDEM is too often viewed as an instrument serving the interests of the majority party ARENA. UNDP conducted a study of ISDEM with the objective of increasing its effectiveness in municipal modernization. This has the potential to increase its capacity to provide technical and financial assistance to municipalities.

There are three others important examples of decentralization: the Social Investment Fund (FIS), the local health system (SILO) and the local education system (EDUCO). In our opinion, in these cases, the goal of decentralization was not achieved during the 1992-1995 period. We will limit our comment to the cases of FIS and SILO.

The Social Investment Fund: FIS was created in 1990 with resources from the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) and received technical assistance from UNDP. Its objective was to address poverty. It works through local groups in funding development

projects. A significant share of local public works activities has been funded by FIS. From 1990-1995, FIS worked with a high degree of centralization and with little coordination with municipal officials. In September 1996, its charter was modified to incorporate the Municipalities in Action Programme, which seeks to further municipal development and enhance local government-citizen interaction. FIS and the National Secretariat for Reconstruction (SRN) were merged into a new Corporation for Local Development. FIS did not work in an efficient way during the 1990-1995 period. There were also some problems of "rent seeking behaviour" in the management of FIS resources.

Local Health System: SILO was created in 1990, promoted by the World Health Organization (WHO) and PAHO, in order to decentralize health services and increase the coverage and efficiency of primary health care, particularly to the poorest sectors of society. In each local system there are representatives of the community, municipality and the Ministry of Health. In its planning and operational activities, SILO uses a territory approach and a network of services and resources. None the less, as regards capacity-building, this organization did not work efficiently in the 1990-1995 period.

State Modernization. UNDP has been involved in the formulation, implementation and assessment of proposals for the modernization of the state. UNDP assistance sought to redefine the role of the state, improve the coverage and quality of basic public services and achieve efficiency in public sector activities. Modernization of the public sector was a goal established in the national development strategies that were formulated for the 1989-1994 and 1994-1999 periods. Implementation was initially the responsibility of the Ministry of Planning. After the Ministry was dismantled, the Commission for the Modernization of the Public Sector was created. It has given priority to the privatization of public sector activities and to reducing the size of the bureaucracy.

UNDP has also supported modernization of the customs systems, within the framework of extensive integration in the global economy and innovation in the Ministries of Agriculture, Education and Health. Modernization of the public sector has suffered from inefficiency and serious delays. These delays are not the result of the environment of a post-civil war society but, rather, reflect government priorities in the privatization process and the identification of "state modernization" with a substantial reduction in government activities. Despite some progress, the public sector in El Salvador is still characterized by inefficiency, poor service delivery, a centralized state and inadequate administrative infrastructure.

Peacekeeping Reforms. In El Salvador, the classic division of power in the three branches of government had not been working. In fact, the legislative, executive and judicial branches were simple extensions of the alliance between the ruling oligarchy and the military. Hence, the UN system contribution was instrumental in identifying the need for and creating new democratic institutions.

The UN system initially took an emergency approach in the creation or reform of democratic institutions. Its vision was quite comprehensive, in the sense that the whole spectrum of political institutions was deeply affected. With the goal of democratization, the control exercised by a small segment of the Salvadoran society in the judicial and legislative branches was eradicated. A new institution—the Office of the Ombudsperson—was created to protect human rights and to add, as one interviewee stated, "an additional element for a more

functional system of checks and balances of political power". From a political perspective, the reforms were so deep that it is more appropriate to use the expression creation rather than strengthening or reform.

Given the emergency approach that was necessary in the process of capacity-building, and given the historical structural deficiencies of Salvadoran government institutions, it was unrealistic to expect that in a relatively short period of time the new institutions would be working with a high degree of efficiency. If we use the definition of capacity as the "ability to perform appropriate tasks effectively, efficiently, and sustainably", capacity-building has not yet been achieved in most of the new or reformed institutions. None the less, within a broad political perspective, and taking into account that the main objective of UN system intervention was to create peacekeeping institutions, the goal of institution-building was accomplished. Needless to say, it will take a longer period of time for the new institutions to perform—in a post-war, non-polarized environment—their tasks.

Office of the Ombudsperson. This office was created as a result of the peace accords. During the 1992-1995 period, UNDP contributed training, supply of equipment and identification and support of its modus operandi. Its mandate is civil rights and human rights protection. The law also requires the office to focus on protecting the environment and the well-being of women and children. In spite of the strong leadership of the ombudsperson, the office has not been able to deal effectively with these issues, mainly as a result of external factors.

Public opinion, however, indicates strong support for the office. A survey conducted in September 1997 shows that the office had the highest level of confidence within the broad range of Salvadorian institutions. The Supreme Court of Justice, National Assembly and executive branch had the lowest level of confidence. In the middle were the national police and the armed forces.

The budget of the office, which did not receive protection through the peace accords, is subject to the vagaries of politics. To some extent, there is limited cooperation by the attorney general's office, the national police and the judicial system. There is an overall belief by parts of the Government that the office is a threat rather than a tool. In spite of the strong public support that she receives, the ombudsperson concedes, "The future of the institution is uncertain, not in the sense that it could disappear, but that it could be reduced to a cosmetic role".

Justice. As a result of constitutional reform in 1991 and the peace accords, the judicial system was radically reformed. The peace accords, in which the UN played a key role, contained measures for removal of the magistrates of the Supreme Court of Justice and the National Council of the Judiciary. A Judicial Training School was established, and a Career Judicial Service was established. A percentage of the national budget was assigned to the judicial system in order to assure its financial independence.

UNDP assisted reform of the judicial system: 80 public prosecutors of the Office of the General District Attorney were trained. Technical cooperation was provided to strengthening operational and administrative procedures of the National Council of the Judiciary and for a new pensum of the Judicial Training School. More recently, UNDP has supported training on

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the criminal code and in the opening of the penitentiary school. Regrettably, persistent deficiencies in the judicial system have contributed to a lack of credibility. Inadequate budgets, corruption, disorganization, outdated systems, poor infrastructure, lack of a proper judicial career structure, resistance to respecting judicial decisions and inadequate public support are some of the factors.

Legislative Reform. After the peace accords, the National Assembly approved important new statutes: the Law of the National Counsel for the Defense of Human Rights, the Organic Law of the National Civil Police, the Organic Law of the Armed Forces, the Police Career Law, the Military Law, the Criminal Code, the Code of Criminal Procedure and the Penitentiary Law. The new criminal code, approved in 1997, includes crimes such as torture, force, disappearance and the violations of the laws of war. It acknowledges that these crimes are not subject to a statute of limitations. However, creation of new legislation is not enough; it is necessary to transform the whole legal system. This is a formidable challenge, given the serious historical weakness in the Salvadoran judicial system. UN system support has already had an important impact—mainly in the "depolitization" of this branch of government. However, a long-term commitment will be necessary in order to build capacity.

Electoral System. Writing in 1982, Joan Didion, in her book *Salvador*, observed, "Terror is the given of the place". In 1994, the FMLN participated as a political party in the first election after the war. But many deficiencies in the system remain. Voting is not entirely secret, as party members can observe whom a person is voting for. The registration list is not accurate. One observer told us that when he voted, he saw that his mother had voted, yet she had been dead for a number of years. In rural areas, there are not enough polling places. Registration lists are alphabetical, instead of by location, so family members must go to different places to vote.

The importance of the electoral system cannot be overstated, because it guarantees other capacity-building activities. As we understand it, the UN has had five different missions reporting on extant deficiencies. UNDP has provided technical assistance to the Supreme Electoral Tribunal and the Electoral Oversight Committee. Along with donor support, UNDP was able to provide necessary equipment, training and supplies, and these inputs have contributed to electoral system capacity, but much more needs to be done. At the moment, the ball is in the Government's court.

National Police and National Security Academy. The National Police (PNC) and National Security Academy (ANSP) have been established and seem to be functioning well. As of 1996, there were about 13,000 law enforcement officers. There is also a civilian component to handle the administrative functions of the police department. The overall impression of the civilian chief of police is that the UN presence is an indispensable and positive influence for his department. The public evidently approves of the department. The PNC seeks to upgrade quality, in terms of education and background, for entrance into the force, yet the peace accords specified percentages -- 20 per cent guerrillas, 20 per cent former army combatants and 60 per cent civilian -- and these quotas affect recruitment.

In peacekeeping activities, most problems of coordination, provision of supplies and equipment and conflict between country-provided experts occur in the first few years. We suspect that the United Nations Observer Mission in El Salvador (ONUSAL) faced many of

these problems because it was charged with monitoring all aspects of the peace accords. For example, in the fall of 1992, the first candidates for the academy arrived, but there were no beds for the students and there was a rush to buy cots. For the most part, as the situation stabilizes, the number of problems diminishes. This is not to say that problems entirely disappear. Some problems exist between the PNC and the ANSP because each has its own set of experts paid by different donor countries.

The head of the ANSP feels that his school has made great strides and is regionally recognized as a quality educational institution. The training period for entry-level policemen is eight months, but he would like to extend it to one year. The urgent need to place more police throughout the country, however, tends to undercut educational objectives. Yet current faculty include about 90 nationals and 11 international staff, certainly a good indication of capacity-building. Moreover, it has become more respectable to be a police officer, and recruitment of better qualified persons, those with high school education, has been realized.

Both the civil police and the academy were created as separate, institutions, independent from one another and from the executive branch. It is felt that this independence should be preserved (despite some recent moves to undercut it). Moreover, it is in the interest of the police not to return to former ways and become politicized. This notion of independence is part of the training and socialization of the police, an example of capacity-building through curriculum development and execution.

Negative Capacity Building: Closing of Ministry of Planning

In 1994, President Calderon Duarte closed the Ministry of Planning. This institution was responsible for national development strategy and coordination of foreign cooperation. The Ministry formulated a national development strategy for the 1984-1989 period and for the 1994-1999 period. It is not our purpose to evaluate these development strategies, which in general terms included the classical components of structural adjustment programmes, together with social compensation programmes. However, what we choose to emphasize here is that a national capacity existed to "see the whole picture" and achieve some degree of coherence between economic and social policies.

With the closing of the Ministry, an important national capacity to elaborate long-term national strategies and to draw up coherent and effective national policies deteriorated. Some of the functions of the extinct Ministry were transferred to Ministry of Exterior Affairs, an entity that has responsibility for coordination of donor contributions. Regarding official development assistance (ODA), responsibility was transferred to the Ministry of Finance. In short, there is now no national institution that has the capacity to coordinate economic and social policies and foreign cooperation.

III.   ISSUES

To assess capacity-building, we need to examine three periods: the post-peace agreement phase (roughly from 1992 to the mid 1990s); the transitional phase (from the mid-1990s to 1998); and the future. In the post-peace agreement phase, the political climate in the country underwent a major shift to civilian participation. Major institutions and activities that would be part of the new democracy were established: the Office of the Ombudsperson, the National Police and National Security Academy, the reduction of the army, electoral reform,

etc. What drove these various efforts was the peace accords and overall supervision and assistance by the UN. In a sense, the peace accords set the capacity-building agenda. That agenda was highly political, but through the provision of significant external funding and UN system coordination, various capacities were established and were effective.

In the current, transitional phase, capacity is in place but needs strengthening in order to be fully useful (for example, in the area of administration of justice). Parts of the agenda of the peace accords seem to be diminishing as new issues emerge. Some wonder whether it is time for the country to assert its sovereignty and establish a new relationship with the UN and donors. The government agenda is not as clear, however.

Institutions established during the peace process are sill in place. They have handled many operational problems, but a few signs of retrenchment have come into the picture. The Government, for example, cut the inspection budget for the ombudsperson and attempted to pass a bill that would undermine the independence of the National Security Academy. The funding situation is not focused; indeed, it is "atomized".

A great deal of policy is based on anticipation of what donors will support. One minister, for example, promotes a "sellable portfolio", containing projects that are consistent with donor priorities and preferences. From a micro viewpoint, it would appear that these allocations are inefficient, but from a macro viewpoint, the process may work well. It was difficult for us to determine. Yet donors and banks are funding capacity-building activities, such as modernizing the customs tax system . In brief, the country has an expanded economic and political capacity, but it is at a critical juncture, when the sustainability of capacity is in question.

In the third, future phase, there are a number of possibilities. First, the country is likely to experience a decline in external financial support. The most significant reforms have been implemented only partially, and only after strong and continuing pressure from UN monitors and bilateral donors. As international assistance declines and the international presence is reduced, there are disturbing signs of retreat".[53] The dwindling interest in the region on the part of the donor community and the former major players has been broadly noted. This will translate into significantly reduced levels of resources available to fuel democratic transition. Shrinking budgets for foreign aid in donor nations, dramatic conflict situations in other areas of the world and the end of the Cold War have all contributed to inevitable disengagement in the coming years.

So the nation will, in the future, have to take major responsibility for its own capacity-building activities. What is particularly troubling is that the people with whom we spoke have an optimistic, short-term perspective. The general perception is that in some form or other the UN system will have a presence in the country, and somehow funds will continue to flow. Moreover, no plans are under way for the Government to take over the UN role. Thus, the long-run viability or sustainability of the peace initiatives, in particular, has to shift to party support and the electoral process. What is needed is the election of a party in both the legislative and executive branches that can form a coalition to support these initiatives. Without a supportive

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53 Jack Spence et al., Chapúltepec Five Years Later: El Salvador's Political Reality and Uncertain Future (Cambridge, MA: January 16, 1997), p. 5.

environment, their future is very much in doubt.

As regards process and input, there is not much difference between traditional and non-traditional activities. From a substantive point of view, there has been capacity-building. People in certain areas of the country are healthier; many have realized that they have rights and the ability to decide what is best. Improved infrastructure, such as roads, will help farmers in the long term. The National Security Academy is helping create a civil police force. Yet it is equally important to realize how much more development and capacity-building is necessary. In part, it is a question of the starting point. El Salvador was not a highly modernized, urbanized, democratic state before the war, and 12 years of war made matters worse.

Change seems to take place by building on existing projects. One action to build capacity brings about another action to enhance that capacity. The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) sponsored the complete revision of the criminal code, and UNDP followed suit with a programme to teach legislators about the changes in the code. Thus, the UN system works with donors to enhance capacity, but one cannot say that the UN system is solely responsible for the totality of that capacity.

Entry Points. Generally, UN agencies have a government counterpart. These government entry points could be a means to contribute to a national strategy, but as far as we can see there is no strategy that is operational, in the sense that it sets priorities and allocates resources. Either because of government resistance or lack of interest or resources, some of the successful efforts at capacity-building have been to work with local communities or service areas. While not entirely bypassing central government, the UN system did set up a number of projects that benefited people in areas that had been seriously affected by the war and where there are severe problems of health, education and a lack of infrastructure.

Although such entry points in themselves are worthwhile, they usually do not contribute to national capacity-building because of a lack of linkage to other geographic areas and to other levels of government. This lack of linkage may be remedied by the relatively new regional SHD, which involves various government participants and a concerted effort by UN agencies to work together in the Lempa River Basin, in the north. The expectation is that various levels of government will be involved and that a much greater area of the country will be reached.

One of the problems with the community entry point is the general undeveloped nature of local and departmental government. The UN has initiated government modernization efforts, but a radical restructuring of government service is necessary. EL Salvador has far too many municipalities for a country its size and quite a number of the departments lack adequate staff. Decentralization is fine, but you have to have something to decentralize to. This inadequacy may partially explain the use of entry levels at community or special geographic areas.

Country Circumstances. Every country has particular circumstances that affect process and outcome. In El Salvador, there was a 12-year war, followed by the peace accords of 1992, which were, at least for some, a mandate for social change. The country is actually two nations: rich and poor. The society is polarized and deep social conflicts remain. Both Right and Left deal in metaphors and stereotypes. The ideology of the Cold War lingers. There is a lack of trust and many feel that the UN has short-changed them in one way or

another.

This prevailing distrust leads to a greater emphasis by the UN system on negotiating and consensus building. The slightest technical issue can quickly become a source of political conflict and polarization. Particularly during the years after the peace accords, UNDP had to find other ways to get agreement and consensus. One successful approach was *concertación*, a sequential approach. As a first step, UNDP would develop a "minimum" plan that it thought most parties would agree to. Then the main donor would review the plan and accept it; staff of other key donors were then consulted and the plan was modified. NGOs and finally the Government and the FMLN would sign off on the plan. Such an approach achieves consensus, but it may take considerable time. Considering the pressure to reintegrate the combatants as quickly as possible, *concertación* may not be the optimal method.

Gender. Generally, we found UN programmes and personnel very sensitive to the issue of gender. Many programmes focus directly on women, their health and education. For example, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) programme on reproductive health and violence is designed to promote gender equity. It is reported that various indicators of women's status have improved. In a recent election, over 50 per cent of the registered voters were women and the political parties paid attention to them. Fourteen women were elected to the legislature (about 17 per cent of the total seats). Many women hold visible government positions; for example, a woman is the current ombudsperson, a position that is germane to the maintenance of the peace process and to citizen confidence in the Government. Three per cent of the 17,000 members of the new police force are women. The UN is providing professional employment opportunities for Salvadoran women. In many UN offices, there is a mix of national and international women filling important and responsible positions. Moreover, there has been institutional change. In 1996, the Government created the Salvadoran Institute for Women's Development.

Despite some progress, gender equity remains a key issue because of various legal, health and education constraints placed on women. Many women are consigned to low-paying jobs as servants or factory workers. Women are subject to violence, domestic and otherwise; a Secretariat of the Family (SNF) study reported that one quarter of sexual crimes were incestuous. The Office of the Ombudsperson reported that over half of violent sexual acts were with girls under the age of 14. As there are high rates of adolescent pregnancy and maternal mortality, much remains to be done. Gender issues are kept on the agenda by the UN as follow-up to global conferences. There is a definite awareness of gender-related issues in all UN offices.

Coordination. We found that the various approaches taken by the UN were sensible and effective. They were systematic in the sense that UN personnel developed an understanding of problems and needs and then set in motion the means to deal with the problems. We could not discern any significant difference in the way the various agencies behaved in this respect. Coordination problems arose, however, when several agencies were involved in the same task or a closely related task. This was the case after the peace accords, when both UNDP and ONUSAL were working in the same area. ONUSAL and UNDP issued different guidelines for the police on the use of weapons. There were also differing standards for field implementation put out by various UN experts. In the years immediately following the accords, a great deal had to be done in a short period, hampering coordination

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at times.

Today, the situation has changed. UNDP has an excellent reputation for coordination. As far as capacity-building is concerned, the most interesting forms are informal. Women from various UN agencies meet regularly to discuss gender issues. After hours, nationals working for UNDP meet to exchange ideas about projects and future actions. This is an excellent example of capacity-building, where programme staff take time for reflection. Often, staff are too busy fighting fires to think in depth about problems.

Structural Adjustment. Did structural adjustment policies affect capacity-building and the UN system's contribution to it? The answers is yes. Although the incidence of poverty fell by 12 per cent over the 1991-1995 period, rural poverty tended to stagnate. From an economic point of view, at the national level, the main concern during this period was the implementation of structural adjustment policies to consolidate macroeconomic stability and to achieve growth within the framework of a development strategy. There was strong economic growth, averaging 6.7 per cent from 1991 to 1995, but this growth benefited urban areas primarily.

In 1980, the ratio of current expenditures to gross national product (GNP) was 25 per cent; it decreased to an average of 13.4 per cent in the 1991-1995 period, low compared to international and Latin American standards. In spite of fiscal policies that were necessary for price stability and long-term macroeconomic sustainability, this affected the budgets of the institutions that were reformed or created as a result of the peace process. As already mentioned, the Office of the Ombudsperson was subject to serious budget constraints. These constraints also affected the judicial system, the national police and, generally, all government activities.

The UN system response to these budget cutbacks has not been systemic. An overall assessment of the long-term implications for capacity-building does not exist, nor does a strategy to overcome the problem. Without an assessment of the impact of budget constraints on capacity development, there is a risk of putting resources into activities that are not sustainable in the long run. Given that the UN system itself is subject to budgets constraints, this puts additional pressure on obtaining resources from bilateral donors who want to channel their resources through the UN system.

The impact of long-term structural adjustment policies on capacity-building is complex. In the Salvadoran case, structural adjustment was almost a synonym for privatization and laissez-faire economic policies. The response of the UN system to the closing of the Ministry of Planning, to the privatization process, to budget constraints and to structural adjustment in general has been one of adapting to a new environment. Although there is no widely accepted national development plan, there exist "pieces" of a development strategy. The international financial institutions have made some contributions to the design of economic and social strategies. The UNDP country development strategy plays a minor role in this process. However, this contribution has had, in some ways, a negative effect on domestic capacity to formulate economic and social policies. There is a tendency to depend on foreign advice rather than on national capacity.

There are examples of UN system adaptation to the new economic environment created

by structural adjustment. As already mentioned, UNDP has been supporting the government modernization programme, particularly customs modernization, a crucial element in development strategy integration and globalization. Another example is UNDP support to the Investment Social Fund (FIS), which was created in 1990 to compensate for the social costs of structural adjustment. The UN system has also played an important role in strengthening the social safety net (as already mentioned, FIS, SILO, PRODERE and others programmes had been supported by the UN system). Despite continuing high levels of poverty, there have been improvements in the last few years.

Resources. The resources dedicated to non-traditional capacity-building in the peacekeeping institutions by the UN system were commensurate with the achievement of its main goal: to make a substantial contribution to a radical transformation and to create institutions that would play a key role during the peace process. From a methodological perspective,[54] the analysis of the impact of UN resources directed to capacity-building cannot be realized without taking into account total foreign resources devoted to the same goal or to the same institutions. The UN contribution was about 10 per cent of total foreign aid contributions during the 1992-1997 period (US$2.5 billion). Hence, we should ask another question: were the total resources provided by foreign cooperation to establish democratic institutions and to foster economic and social development in El Salvador commensurate with the results?

Total technical and financial cooperation for the period represents 6 per cent of Salvadoran GNP. Obviously, we are talking of technical and financial assistant for a post-war reconstruction process, and not only for "capacity-building". The amount of foreign cooperation received by El Salvador during the period was generous, but still insufficient with regard to the serious effects of the civil war. The Salvadoran reconstruction process and the democratic institutions that were created are still fragile, vulnerable and, to some extent, dependent on foreign aid. Capacity-building, in the sense of self-sustainability, has not been completely achieved. This will require a longer period of time and continuous but decreasing support by the international community and the UN system.

Despite considerable efforts by the UN system to coordinate donor resources, we found that the most important donors, bilateral and multilateral, usually channeled their resources directly to different programmes and projects, without using the "intermediary services" of the UN system.

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54. The methodological problem is extremely complex. Donors may be tempted to approach effectiveness of assistance programmes by looking at the relationship between level of resources and results. However, this approach is highly unsatisfactory. On the one hand, results are determined by a large set of domestic and external factors that are usually beyond the donor's control. Since such factors relate to technical assistance in an indirect and complex way, and no causality direction can be assumed a priori, there is no theoretical basis for associating changes in results and resources with the effectiveness of the latter. On the other hand, a measure of output, in this case capacity-building, is not possible. A practical, intermediate approach in the Salvadorian case would be to move ahead from the current stage of project evaluation to a broader programme perspective. This has already been initiated by the UN system in El Salvador.

UNDP listed all the projects terminated or being executed by UN agencies or other donors in El Salvador during the 1992-1997 period. Yet even with such information, a precise evaluation of the UN system contribution to capacity-building is not possible. This is due not only to time constraints. From a methodological perspective, an assessment of the UN system contribution to several institutions cannot be made in isolation of the programmes and projects of others donors. Additionally, during the period, an emergency approach was predominant, and the Government, the UN system and other donors were unable to implement a systematic, analytical or empirical programme approach to evaluation. From a national perspective, the use of the resources of the United Nations agencies, in non-traditional capacity-building, was efficient and the results were commensurate with the financial, managerial and political resources used.

IV. LESSONS

The lessons from the El Salvador experience were very general and dealt more with an understanding of social change than specifically with capacity-building:

Programme designers and managers underestimate the time and resources it takes to implement a sustainable programme. It takes a great deal of time to get local citizens and officials to change their beliefs and behaviour, even when it is in their interest to do so. The personnel involved in development are often so preoccupied with their own project that they do not reflect on how their piece will relate to the whole. There exists a faith that the pieces will somehow add up to something important, without systematic, comprehensive, national-level efforts.

People at the local level, with little education and expertise, learned to plan and implement projects that affect their well-being and the status of their community. Thus, the individual level is an important entry point for capacity-building.

The use of different organizational structures for different environments is essential for success. Generally, flat, small-team structures are best for an unstable environment. A small team with a leader willing to take risks helped PRODERE deliver credits for farming when they were needed. This quick reaction created trust between participants and the UN system, a valuable commodity for future efforts. On the other hand, a vertical, hierarchical structure is appropriate in a stable environment. This type of structure allots time to coordinate staff inputs, secure funds and implement proposals. Flat structures are flexible and quick. Vertical structures are built for control, as insurance for compliance. In the design of peacekeeping activities, it is important not to put in place both types of structures at the same time. The flat structure should be used during the emergency period and the vertical structure should follow, as conditions become stable.

When the UN is mediating a peace agreement, it should be aware that too many details or too much ambiguity lead to severe problems in the implementation phase. It is difficult to be exact about what is "too much". Perhaps it is best to say that negotiators should try to anticipate what implementation problems might arise following the agreement.

V. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In general, the contribution of the UN system in moving El Salvador towards peace, democracy and a better life for its people was significant and valuable. Without the UN system, the country would still be at war and its people would continue to undergo severe hardship.

The UN system has helped strengthen capacity that, over time, will contribute to the protection of human rights, justice and public security. It should be noted, however, that new institutions such as the Office of the Ombudsperson, National Police and National Security Academy are fragile. To ensure the full development of this capacity, the UN, donors and international financial institutuions must continue to be supportive and allow sufficient time for the reforms to solidify.

The UN system is a complex collection of organizations, many of which have their own governing bodies. This complexity can present problems of coordination and produce inefficiency. It is recommended that a "matrix"[55] form of organization be explored for possible adaptation in specific UN country operations. In it, the resident coordinator would be in charge of all UN agencies in the country, and the agencies would act as functional specialists. Such an arrangement would reduce overhead (such as transportation, security and clerical support) and would strengthen the authority of the resident coordinator.

An effort should be made to standardize the empirical meaning of capacity-building for development. Both at UN headquarters in New York and in El Salvador, we found little consensus on its meaning.

In the El Salvador situation, there have been a number of successful community development and local empowerment projects, such as PRODERE. What is lacking is a strategy to use these approaches throughout the country. Further study is needed to establish linkages.

PRODERE, by encouraging community participation and organization in poorer rural areas, is an example of effective, non-traditional capacity development. At the same time, it made an important contribution to the peace process. Since the UN has used PRODERE in countries outside of Central America, it is essential that the "fit", culturally and otherwise, be examined.

There is inadequate institutional memory. Rapid turnover of both international and national personnel is also a problem. For international staff, assignments of two years are too short because they do not develop requisite political sensitivity, cultural awareness and an understanding of problems. UN agencies should review their personnel policies in this respect.

The rapid turnover of nationals, while a problem for UN field managers, does not undermine capacity-building, as long as the person remains in the country. In our view, every

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55. *A matrix organization involves a dual authority structure in which functional specialists report to their functional supervisors as well as to their hierarchical supervisors.*

effort should be made to hire and train nationals to conduct UN activities as a direct and useful form of capacity-building, not to speak of obvious savings in costs. Provision of training to upgrade skills and issuance of longer contracts could mitigate excessive turnover.

Finally, it is important to realize that over the next decade, funding for capacity-building is likely to decline as "development fatigue" sets in. The question of sustainability becomes central. At what point does the UN let go, and what programmes should be handed off? Obviously the UN system has to sort out its priorities and determine the timing for self-management. The problem is not that El Salvador will completely retreat to pre-war conditions, but the most significant reform may be undermined by a less than benign environment.

<center>Chapter 5</center>

<center>UNITED NATIONS CAPACITY BUILDING IN MALI</center>

<center>by Rajaona Andriamananjara and George T. Eaton</center>

I. BACKGROUND AND OBJECTIVES

The mission's assignment was to undertake an evaluation of United Nations operational activities in Mali during the 1980-1995 period, especially with regard to the impact on capacity-building in basic health and basic education. The mission defined capacity as the ability of Malians and their institutions to conceive, plan and implement their own development programmes—including the capacity to deliver the relevant services of basic health care and basic education to the population. The aim of the exercise was twofold: to assess efficiency of UN system operational activities and to have the review of programmes undertaken by the UN system, rather than by individual agencies, at country level. Capacity-building is a cross-cutting issue that allows us to examine the problems of the Government, which has been unable to supply basic services. The study is not limited to the Government, however, but includes other actors: the public sector, civil society, communities and non-governmental organizations (NGOs).

Mali is a landlocked republic in West Africa in the drought-susceptible Sahel. Its 1997 population was approximately 9.5 million, the vast majority of whom live in the southern 40 per cent of the country. Cotton and gold are the most valuable exports and sources of foreign exchange. Mali also exports cattle to West Africa. Its principal renewable natural resource is the Niger River.

In the first few years after independence in 1960, Mali followed a policy of state-dominated economic development. A 1968 coup d'etat brought a period of military rule, followed by an era of one-party politics. In 1991, a popular uprising overturned the regime. The country's first government chosen in free and fair elections took power in 1992. The second round of elections, held in 1997, retained the current president and his party in office.

Per capita national income did not grow from 1980 to 1994, but GDP increased in 1995 and 1996 on the order of 7.1 per cent and 4.2 per cent, respectively. Such rates comfortably exceed the 2.9 per cent estimate of annual population growth. Likely contributing factors are favourable weather, liberalized government economic policies, the 1994 devaluation of the CFA franc and completion of the most severe structural adjustment reforms. Mali's social and quality-of-life indicators, however, rank extremely low among sub-Saharan African countries. As of 1994, some 70 per cent of the population was living below the poverty line. Mali rates 171 of 175 countries on the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) human development index.

The traditional Malian approach to the social sectors has been to promote development from the top down, but as early as 1977, the Government announced its intention to make administrative reforms in the public service, stressing decentralization. A national policy adopted at the end of 1990 called for communities to take over the main responsibility for planning, financing and implementing basic health care. Many communities are setting up community primary schools to supplement the formal system. That experiment will reach a

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critical point in 1998, as the first group of children is due to transfer to formal schools. A long national debate on education led to the preparation of a draft 10-year education plan (1998-2007), which is being considered by the Government and a national forum before presentation to a round table of donors.

II. BASIC HEALTH AND UNITED NATIONS ACTIVITIES

Basic health is the health status that can normally be sustained by an individual or family without resort to a hospital. Basic health services stress preventive care and a rapid, effective response to common health problems. In Mali, this includes vaccinations; treatment of malaria, respiratory illness and dysentery/diarrhoea; and forestalling infection by proper attention to injuries. For women and children, it also means care during childbirth and afterwards. For men and women, it further means access to family planning information and contraceptives. This report deals with maternal and child health, immunization, community health and population.

UN Approaches in the Health Sector

Developing capacity and national execution of UN projects are matters of considerable interest to Malian and UN officials. There is a wide range of views as to how much capacity exists and the degree to which national execution is a reality. We were cautious in accepting claims that seek to demonstrate increased national capacity by pointing to national execution. If what is cited as an example of national control turns out to amount to a parallel administrative structure, is that increased capacity or duplication of efforts? This type of issue arose repeatedly, suggesting how much remains to be done.

United Nations Development Programme. UNDP emphasized training of individuals and institution-building and is shifting from agency execution to national execution in its health projects in Mali. An example is the expanded programme on immunization (EPI), which is viewed by Malians and by UNDP and the World Health Organization (WHO) as a success. A solid basis exists for such a conclusion on human resource, institutional and absorptive scores. Mali is not able to assume the financial burden at this point, but the solution lies outside the health sector and the mandate of UN agencies. A similar evolution of execution responsibility occurred from phase I to the current phase II of the programme to combat the human immunodeficiency virus/acquired immune deficiency syndrome (HIV/AIDS) pandemic. But because most efforts within this programme involve immunization, a definitive conclusion on capacity-building in this area lies at some distance in the future.

United Nations Children's Fund. UNICEF approaches and actions in health have, over the years, been more varied and complex than those of UNDP, in part because UNICEF is both a financing entity and an executing agency. Before the mission's reference period, UNICEF was best known in Mali for interventions aimed at helping to alleviate human suffering during the great Sahelian drought of the 1970s. From 1987 to 1992, government and UNICEF health programmes contained vertical projects. The Bamako Initiative (1987) opened the way to much reflection about health care approaches but did not have a rapid effect on programmes. In time, though, it did help bring the spirit of the 1978 Alma Ata Conference (health for all by the year 2000) to Mali, in the form of a national health policy,

adopted in 1990, followed in 1992 by the vast, multi-donor Health, Population and Rural Water Supply Project (PSPHR).

The subsequent UNICEF plan period (1993-1997) saw a full-scale application of the new decentralization policy, coupled with community management of a minimum activity package of health services, including long-term technical assistance in the field. UNICEF considers this to be national execution of a national programme. The organization still has staff on the ground but plans to eliminate their posts by the year 2000. It believes it has provided the essential elements that make possible the building of capacity for planning and implementation below the national level.

It was not until the end of the period under review, however, that UNICEF made significant contributions to national capacity. UNICEF has always contributed in one way or another to human resource development. How well Malian communities will grow in capacity to absorb their own health financing and management probably depends more on human resources than on donor inputs. But on this score, too, the mission judges that UNICEF is very much on the right track working through PSPHR.

United Nations Population Fund. When UNFPA started operating in Mali, it had to begin virtually from zero to create an environment in which its work could first be tolerated and eventually embraced. That such an environment now exists owes much to UNFPA diplomacy and persistence. UNFPA is a funding rather than an executing agency, with the possible exception of contraceptive procurement. It has financed an array of population activities that did not use UN specialized agency execution or rely on long-term foreign consultants. These projects were executed by government agencies or local NGOs. The 1998 census, for example, will be carried out entirely by Malians. What UNFPA has achieved in Mali is capacity-building in the literal sense, starting from nothing at all. UNFPA success can be seen in that there is broad concern for population growth, and modern family planning is readily available for those who wish to use it. The participating UN agencies have been instrumental in setting in motion Mali's ability to plan and implement its own population policy, although the Government has thus far not incorporated population coordination into its own structures.

World Health Organization. A number of senior ministry officials have benefited from WHO training, which certainly contributes to individual capacity development. In its role as executor of important UNDP health programmes, e.g., in such areas as EPI and HIV/AIDS, WHO technical assistance has contributed to institutional and absorptive capacity. But the overall contribution of WHO—judging from the WHO-Mali country case study[1] released in January 1997 -- was more successful earlier in the period under review than in the 1990s.

Attempts at Capacity-Building

In basic health programmes in Mali, at least three distinct UN capacity-building approaches can be discerned between 1980 and 1995: training, institution-building and local empowerment. They are not mutually exclusive in their content or period of application, nor do

the first two appear necessarily to have been the result of conscious overall strategies.

Training has helped to build a corps of health care workers whose numbers are substantially larger and collective capacity considerably greater than was the case in 1980. Capacity built through training has the potential to meet changing demands. It is by no means certain, however, that training alone can develop that potential. Professional health cadres resisted the major health policy shift of 1990, even though its principles had been embraced by Mali as early as 1978 (Alma Ata) and reinforced in 1987 (Bamako Initiative). High-level government leadership, supported by donors and NGOs, eventually pushed the changes through.

Institution-building goes beyond training by attempting to install or improve structures, procedures, policies, technologies and work practices in an existing or new organization, usually with some combination of short- or long-term technical assistance, construction and local cost support. The National Immunization Centre (CNI) and the National Council for Coordination of Population Programmes (CONACOPP) received extensive institution-building assistance. The Government has demonstrated a capacity to modify institutions as conditions change. Once a national population policy had been enunciated, the Government's population unit was replaced by CONACOPP, a coordinating body that drew upon the trained personnel developed within the population unit. The long-run institutional usefulness of CONACOPP may be questioned as long as it relies on UNFPA support. But UN institutional capacity work in Mali was useful because it led to important national institutions that are still carrying out significant functions today.

UN assistance also helped create and support certain structures working in parallel with government organs. PSPHR, the main instrument for carrying out health policy in the 1990s, is coordinated by a project unit attached to the Ministry of Health, Solidarity and Senior Citizens (MSSPA) but outside the national directorate for public health charged with implementing public health programmes. At this writing, an ad hoc group supported by donors, including the UN, is preparing the government 10-year health plan.

These parallel units, staffed by Malians, serve to reduce donor concern about the capacity of regular MSSPA structures to coordinate a huge programme and prepare a major national plan. Donors are typically under pressure to produce results quickly. If their projects swing enough financial weight, they sometimes avoid relying on a host country institution. At the same time, by attracting donor funding, such units appeal to the financially strained Government. They also enable the Government and donors to get beyond the limits and rigidities of a single ministry or sector when broader national and programme considerations are at stake.

The national health planning directorate no longer existed at the time of PSPHR design. Structural adjustment seems to have been the main cause of the directorate's demise in 1990. In that event, donors were working at cross purposes, assuming that all agreed on institutional capacity-building as an important programme objective. One may ask whether the MSSPA national planning directorate would have been strong enough to take on the 10-year national plan were it still in existence. The fairly skeletal Planning and Statistics Unit (CPS) that replaced it is even less capable of formulating a 10-year plan. Here is a case of donor-induced capacity reduction that still has its consequences seven years later. The International Bank for

Reconstruction and Development (IBRD) and UNICEF are now suggesting that MSSPA, not donors, take the lead in making proposals and arrangements for PSPHR implementation and that coordination and project execution become an integral part of the national public health directorate's mandate.

PSPHR coordination belonged in that directorate in the first place. Ad hoc bodies may serve donor interests, and selectively they can have value for the Government, but it is difficult to make the case that they make useful contributions to the development of institutional capacity. Such structures should be limited to truly rare and extraordinary circumstances, such as national emergencies or broad political imperatives requiring accelerated action.

Local empowerment is a form of capacity-building being pursued actively today in health care, notably by UNICEF. There are important changes taking place in many Malian communities, thanks to the 1990 health sector policy and PSPHR. When a village organizes a community health association, sets health fees, hires health workers and manages the consequent health services, it is developing its own grass-roots capacity. It is possible that no such approach could have been mounted before extensive use had already been made of training and institution-building. Both of those approaches obviously are contributing to local empowerment, and their effects can readily be traced today within the actions taken to support what the communities are doing. Local empowerment in health care may be the most important type of capacity-building going on in Mali.

Changes Induced by Capacity Building

In the mid-1990s, about two thirds of Malians had no access to basic health care, nearly two decades after health for all by the year 2000 became the global standard. Recent expansion of health care planned, financed and managed by communities indicates that capacity-building and local empowerment have the potential to change the grim health reality. This change owes more to a convergence of local phenomena than to UN system inputs. As pressure rose in Mali for political change in the late 1980s and early 1990s, local empowerment began to come into its own. NGOs and private voluntary organizations (PVOs) had been experimenting with it in village health.

The new national health policy was in fact devised and issued before the political upheaval of March 1991. The transition government immediately embraced it, and it has become a leading principle of Mali's first and second freely and fairly elected governments. In the middle of its 1988-1992 plan, UNICEF shifted its top-down approach and has since been a programme leader in health decentralization.

Entry Points and Resources Allocated. With perfect hindsight, it would seem that the Government and UN agencies should have seized upon the Alma Ata declaration and plunged into community empowerment in health by the beginning of our reference period. But the Alma Ata document was radical for its time. Even if it had been readily acceptable to everyone as an intellectual concept, could Mali have carried off such a dramatic change in health given the state of its capacities at the end of the 1970s? Would the donors have been ready to go along? Resources devoted to training and institutional capacity-building in the 1980s were probably not commensurate with the results in the lives of ordinary Malians. Yet if the promise of the present decade is fulfilled, efforts put forth since 1980 will have been worthwhile.

Differences in Approach. The UN agencies did not adopt a single systematic approach to basic health in Mali. UNFPA engaged in advocacy and education to help lay the groundwork for later programmes. UNICEF worked on drought relief and vertically delivered services before taking up community health in the 1990s. UNDP provided financing for government health requests often executed by specialized agencies. WHO carried out certain UNDP-funded projects and made its limited agency funds available for Ministry of Health programming.

Despite differences in approach, programme competition in basic health among UN agencies was not evident. Each agency appears to have a more or less established niche. Field coordination is a tricky matter and doubtless went better at some periods than others. The mission was not able to determine if lack of coordination had any particular impact on capacity-building. Effective coordination, were it possible, of all UN and world agency programmes might have been able to forestall the institutional capacity decreases in health planning.

Policy Reform. Policy reform definitely affected capacity-building in basic health. Health workers were hard hit by structural adjustment requirements that cut government budgets for salaries. It is less evident that these changes had a severe effect on the quality of field service delivery in basic health, although the entire government system went into severe shock. Health indicators suggest that government programmes of the time were not doing much anyway to improve people's health. In that event, the actual deterioration of services may have been more limited than the impact on government employees themselves.

The Global Agenda. While the Alma Ata Conference and subsequent conferences, like that which produced the 1987 Bamako Initiative, were slow to have an impact on UN activities in Mali and on Malian society and institutions, they did eventually have an effect. The benefits and lasting nature of the effects remain uncertain, however.

UN Performance in Contributing to Capacity Building in Basic Health

The UN did contribute to developing national capacity in basic health between 1980 and 1995. Those contributions to individual capacity were substantial. In the area of institutional capacity, however, they were inconsistent, as they did not follow a discernible overall strategy and were at least once undercut by other donors' policy actions. Until the advent of PSPHR, there was little evidence of donor coordination in health, and even that coordination has come at some expense to national institutional capacity. But PSPHR, which owes much to UN inputs and support, is encouraging local community empowerment, which amounts to capacity-building.

Because methods to measure capacity did not exist during the period under review, and do not exist today, the mission is not able to offer quantitative support for these conclusions. But a qualitative appreciation is possible in some cases. UNFPA is due good marks for setting in motion and sustaining a process that has brought Mali from an era of ignoring demographic factors in development to its present broad appreciation of their importance (and to offering population services as a standard part of the basic health package). But, as suggested earlier, the Government still depends on UNFPA support for institutional coordination and the Malian capacity to absorb family planning remains to be fully tested.

The key role of UNICEF in planning and implementing PSPHR offers the distinct prospect of helping to develop community capacity to plan and manage basic health care.

UNDP funding and WHO execution have contributed to the development of Mali's ability to plan and operate vaccination programmes and may soon have an impact in the fight against HIV/AIDS. In both cases, human resource and institutional development have been aided. A judgment of the absorptive success is more difficult at this point. As a funder of senior-level training, WHO has probably aided human resource development of Mali's top health offices as well as institutional progress through execution of national programmes.

A Malian health system without these capacities would surely be distinctly less capable than it is today. But it must be acknowledged that in spite of increased capacity, Mali has made little headway towards the goal of basic health for all by the year 2000. More people may have had access to basic services in 1995 than in 1980, but because of the growth in population, not much more than one third of the population has access to services. Measured that way, UN agency health activities during the reference period fell far short of what was needed.

Basic Health Indicators. The 1987 Demographic and Health Survey estimated infant and child mortality at 249 per 1,000, while the same survey repeated in 1995-1996 found a rate of 238 per 1,000. The number of child vaccinations rose sharply, but malnutrition under age three worsened. With only about one person in three receiving health services, the majority of the population remains outside the system.

The Government, aided by its donor partners, tried to improve performance by undertaking many basic health initiatives and programmes. UN agencies acted on a variety of fronts, funding assistance to those affected by drought, spreading maternal and child health services more widely and working to build new and strengthen existing health institutions. This saved lives and reduced illness. Without it, health indicators would surely be poorer. The programmes also increased the number of trained staff working in health, laying the groundwork for more effective institutions to plan policies and service delivery.

UN efforts built individual Malian capacity in this period. Training, including work on the job with technical assistance experts, is the principal method of raising the quantity and quality of suitable health sector personnel. The second level of support, helping to organize people into effective institutions with lasting effect, had somewhat uneven results. While the UN built institutional capacity, the extent of its sustainability is not clear. Is Mali now able to change and rebuild its health institutions? Put differently, would the need for a new or revamped institution likely bring a request for assistance from the UN or another donor? It probably would. Thus the mission suggests that a certain institutional capacity has been built, to the UN's credit, but much remains to be done.

On the third score, translating the strengthened individual and institutional capacities into better services and health status indicators, there is unfortunately little evidence of much progress between 1980 and 1995. But it may be that indicators for the mid-1990s will show that the new approach adopted in 1992 by UNICEF and other donors has begun to help build the capacity of communities to plan, finance and manage their own primary health care. Mali is in a better position than it was in 1980 to conceive a vision for the country's health care and to develop policies and strategies to carry it out. A critical mass of people exists throughout the sector to make strong contributions. Many of them are organized into institutions capable of planning and executing programmes, although these institutions usually depend on donor funding and are not always fully established within regular structures. Local empowerment,

now in full swing, offers the greatest promise for improvement in the health of the ordinary Malian, if it can be sustained.

Lessons Learned. By the end of the 1980s, it should have been apparent that the traditional approaches to health care were not producing better health conditions for the typical Malian. That lesson seems to have been learned not by the UN agencies in their health programmes in Mali but rather as part of a broader emerging realization regarding participation, a trend by no means confined to Mali. Political change was arriving rapidly in many parts of the world at that time. The effects of structural adjustment were causing unrest in Bamako and building pressure for political change. Participation and democracy were becoming daily watchwords. This convergence of many forces that brought forth the need to try something dramatically different, in health as in other spheres.

III.   BASIC EDUCATION AND UNITED NATIONS ACTIVITIES

The Jomtien Declaration of the World Conference on Education for All of 1990 declares: "The diversity, complexity, and changing nature of basic learning needs of children, youth and adults necessitates broadening and constantly redefining the scope of basic education to include the following components: learning begins at birth; the main delivery system for the basic education of children outside the family is primary schooling; the basic learning needs of youth and adults are diverse and should be met through a variety of delivery systems; and all available instruments and channels of information, communications and social action should be used to help convey essential knowledge and inform and educate people on social issues."

The challenge facing Mali, in 1995 as in 1980, remained an inadequate basic education system, with deep imbalances between supply and demand for education. Although the Government earmarked nearly 25 per cent of its budget in 1996 to education, it enrolled only 43.6 per cent of children; and girls, though more numerous, had an enrolment rate of only 34 per cent. There are high numbers of dropouts, and graduates have trouble finding jobs. There is also a low rate of school attendance and high rate of illiteracy. There are serious shortfalls in teacher training and teaching methods. During the period under review, there was a need to adapt and develop basic education and the associated delivery system, that is, capacity. In addition to the domestic considerations, the challenge also came from the global context: the country's commitment to the goal of education for all had to be met.

The first reform of the education system in Mali was effected in 1962, after the country acceded to independence. The aim was to provide quality education for the masses. By 1980, the country had just come out of a long period of drought. Many schools were closed, and already limited government resources were becoming even more inadequate. A national conference held in 1989 focused on physical infrastructure, teachers, curriculum and programmes. The political upheavals of 1991 again put the school system at the centre of national debate. Reforms were widely demanded, with no less than the "recasting" of the entire education system based on four principles: a more significant role for mother tongues in order to reach the maximum number of children; practical elements in the curricula, e.g., ruralization; involvement of the community in what had been considered the business of the state; and establishment of an adequate system and institutions for training teachers, school planners and administrators.

The National Directorate for Planning and School Equipment (DNPES), part of the Ministry of Basic Education well before 1980, was, by all accounts, successfully carrying out all of the functions it was assigned and, according to some sources, maybe too successfully. In 1990, DNPES was eliminated, along with planning units in other ministries, including the Ministry of Health. In 1993, the "planning" function was reintroduced in the much reduced form of a Planning and Statistics Unit (CPS) in five departments: health, rural development, education, mines-energy-water and transport-public works. The various actions taken—and in many cases not taken—created the current system. Briefly stated, there has been an extension of the formal system, with the introduction of community schools in rural areas and non-religious private schools and basic schools in urban areas. In 1992, there were 4 community schools; by 1997 that number had grown to 655. The non-formal system has been extended through literacy campaigns and the creation of education for development centres. And there has been increased use of various means of support, including promotion of local initiatives and creation of a capacity to develop audio-visual tools.

The capacity to effect change was reinforced at different levels and in different ways. Empowerment, including through decentralization, has translated at the local or village level into a greater involvement of local communities, private initiatives and NGOs. This was in part designed to "supplement" or remedy the insufficiency of state resources. At the institutional (central) level, a more systematic use of such management tools as micro-planning was introduced. Sectoral policies and strategies for the entire education system, including at the primary level, were designed.

UN Approaches in the Education Sector

The UN system did not respond uniformly to the challenges presented by the education sector in Mali. In fact, the approaches varied widely from one agency to another. UNDP projects and programmes in the early years covered several areas, including higher education and vocational training. In the 1990s, after the Jomtien Conference, the emphasis shifted to basic education. Up to the mid-1990s, the share of UNICEF resources devoted to education in Mali was between 5 to 10 per cent. (That share is growing and will reach 25 per cent or more in coming years.) UNFPA involvement in the education sector has promoted population issues and family planning in the school curriculum. UNESCO has been present on the education scene in Mali on a more or less permanent basis. Its actions have been funded through a variety of sources: its own budget, other agencies of the UN system, multilateral institutions and bilateral donors. Depending on the source of funding, the UNESCO approach seems to have been quite flexible. In particular, when UNDP moved gradually from agency execution to national execution, UNESCO did not have difficulty following.

UN Contributions in Basic Education

If one considers basic education as a product or service to be delivered to the population, it is possible to say that UN assistance since 1980 took place in three broad areas. The first squarely addresses system-wide concerns, involving mainly the design of sectoral policies and planning. The second relates to the content, quality and relevance of the teaching, i.e., the product being delivered (staff training, teaching methods and curriculum design and content). The third category has more to do with the delivery system, especially in the area of literacy and local initiative. These categories clearly represent "entry points" as far as capacity-building is

concerned: capacity to formulate a vision and the accompanying strategy; capacity to design and produce a quality product; and capacity to deliver the product.

Policy Design and Monitoring. The most significant project is the Education-Training Project (Support for the Formulation of a Programme for the Development of Human Resources), with financial and technical assistance from UNDP and UNESCO. By 1995, it had completed the subsector diagnosis studies; validated a political framework and strategy for the education-training sector; presented short-, medium- and long-term action plans; and prepared a paper synthesizing the action plans. It had thus fully met the first two of its three tasks, i.e., policy and strategy framework and actions plans. Preparation was very advanced for the third task, the organization of a round-table meeting with the donor community.

Teacher/Staff Training and Teaching Methods. The UN system has supported various programmes to train teachers, introduce new teaching methods, evaluate qualitative performance and provide construction and equipment. These various inputs have taken place primarily in the traditional education system, but in some cases they have also addressed the medersas (Arabic language schools) and Koranic schools.

Curriculum Design, Content and "Special Advocacy". The UN system has also supported the content of basic education, either by addressing particular target groups (usually girls and women) or supporting the introduction of subjects of interest into the school curricula (family life, population and environment). Girls and women have received the lion's share of the system's "special advocacy" efforts.

Literacy, Local Initiative and Audio-Visual Tools. Adult literacy programmes, support for local initiatives and development of audio-visual tools fall directly within the purview of basic education and contribute to its effectiveness. As such, they have benefited from inputs from several sources. The UN system, especially UNDP, UNICEF and UNESCO, has supported projects for youth and adult literacy campaigns throughout the reference period.

The promotion of local initiatives, through the creation of village and/or women's associations to design and carry out activities (including school construction and literacy campaigns), has been encouraged by projects which have led to the establishment of Support to Decentralized Collectivities for Participatory Development (ACODEP). In the present phase, ACODEP is "to accompany local development through decentralized actions contributing to the satisfaction of the population's basic needs and the improvement of their living conditions, while protecting their environment". ACODEP efforts have led to construction of schools and the organization of literacy campaigns. Evaluations report that the programme has achieved satisfactory results in the field.

National capacity to design and produce audio-visual tools has been put in place thanks to two projects designed to establish then strengthen the Centre for Audio-Visual Production Services (CESPA). The latest evaluation concludes that, despite some problems (chief among which is the departure of a few professional staff members for better-paying jobs and the need to strengthen financial management and marketing), CESPA is meeting its target. Sustainability, in terms of both know-how and market potential, seems to be within its reach.

Capacity Building in Education

UN system support for capacity-building in basic education took place at three levels: policy and strategies, education content and the delivery system. Given that these interventions are taking place through a multitude of diverse programmes and projects, it is not possible to determine with precision the share of UN contributions allocated to each of the areas.

A great deal of effort has been made to develop national capacity to formulate and implement policy, strategies and programmes in this sector. Due to a succession of structural reforms, however, the country does not seem to be able, as yet, to capitalize on past investments. Highly skilled professionals have acquired the necessary know-how and experience. But they act more or less on a free-lance basis, offering their services to the highest bidder. These individual capacities have not been translated into institutional capacity. This does not bode well for sustainability of national capacity.

UN support has helped the country develop its capacity to design, improve and monitor the content of basic education. This is true for the curricula of the classical school system, the improvement of teaching methods through the actions of the National Pedagogical Institute and the strengthening of capacity to design and produce materials for youth and adult literacy training and to monitor and evaluate literacy activities. The UN system has also been quite active in building capacity of the delivery system for basic education. Through its encouragement of local initiative, it made it possible for villages in several areas to build and run community schools and education for development centres. The country has acquired the know-how and capacity for the production of relevant and quality audio-visual materials for educational purposes.

The education sector had to support the full brunt of structural adjustment until the early 1990s. The impact on capacity at the sectoral planning level has already been mentioned. More important for the longer term is the impact on teaching staff. Within the framework of civil service downsizing, personnel reduction affected the health and education sectors most. One extremely visible sign of this is the high and still-rising number of double vacation schools, where classes are so large that half the students come in the morning and half in the afternoon. Nevertheless, the capacity that has been built or reinforced remains useful in the above three areas. The only concern is how the individual skills can be made sustainable as national capacity by including them in some institutional framework or through other appropriate arrangements.

Changes Induced. The main result of the capacity-building efforts of the UN system is the increased confidence Malians have in the areas discussed and their ability ro carry out the necessary work with minimal substantive inputs from outside. But the results recorded were relatively limited because of shortage of financial resources during the period under review.

Entry Points and Allocated Resources. Two system-wide "planning" exercises were carried out by Malians during the period. The first, in 1980, was carried out with a UNESCO-IBRD team, the second from 1993 to 1996 with methodological support from UNESCO. In both cases, the resources devoted to the exercise appear to have been sufficient and the country was successful in designing national strategy, policies and programmes. The 1993-1995 process was, however, interrupted in mid-stream, with the creation of a donor-supported team.

The interruption was seen by many as a repudiation of what had been accomplished.

Defenders of the new system argue that the difference lies in the participatory methodology it uses. But the only perceivable benefit from the sudden change-over may be more "visibility" for some. The downside is the demotivation of Malians and some donors, which may have an impact on the successful implementation of future actions. The creation of the PRODEC team was a case of national capacity destruction (or, at the very least, erosion). Measures to be taken in the near future, after the new 10-year development plan has been adopted, will determine whether the negative impact has been sustained.

Differences in Approach. The UN system did not have a systematic approach to basic education in Mali, at least during the 1980s. A move towards convergence, however, seems to be apparent beginning in the 1990s, the result of the Jomtien Conference. Because of their respective mandates, there is no indication that the agencies competed with each other, but there is no evidence of successful coordination either. It is the mission's view that the absence of a common approach, or the relative absence of coordination, did not have much influence on the impact of capacity-building in basic education. This is because UNDP was the main actor within the UN system and defined the rules for UNESCO, while UNFPA and UNICEF had limited roles.

Policy Reform. Policy reform undoubtedly affected capacity-building in basic education on at least two occasions. The first was in 1990, with the dismantling of DNPES, ostensibly for civil service streamlining but possibly because it was "too" successful at doing precisely what it was set up to do. The void left needed to be filled through various stopgap measures. The second instance occurred in 1996: a process started with the UN system's contribution through the Education-Training Project was being internalized by the Malians. "Policy reform" stopped the dynamics by imposing the necessity of designing a "new" 10-year education development programme through PRODEC. The internalization of capacity-building was well on its way in 1995. Whether and how the process will be resumed in the future—in order to transform individual skills into national capacity—will very much depend on the organizational and structural arrangement set up for the implementation of the 10-year plan.

The Global Agenda. The mission had no way of assessing to what extent the national capacity built in the education sector contributed to a better preparation of Mali's participation in the Jomtien Conference. An indication is provided, however, by the fact that UNESCO and UNICEF included Mali on the list of countries where a systematic follow-up to this initiative would be undertaken. The Malian authorities were in a position to produce the relevant document in late 1995.

Lessons Learned

There is general agreement that during the reference period, performance in the basic education sector has not been satisfactory. School enrolment, though increasing from 27 per cent to 44 per cent, remains below the 50 per cent considered a minimum for economic growth. The literacy rate has stagnated at below 25 per cent over the period.

UN assistance took place at three "entry points" for capacity-building: capacity to formulate a vision and the accompanying strategies and programmes; capacity to design and produce a quality product; and capacity to deliver the product. The Planning and School

Equipment Directorate was dismantled in 1990, and a much reduced Planning and Statistics Unit was reinstated only in 1993. To fill the void, the UN system stepped in with the Education-Training Project. As the project, headed by a national as "expert national principal", was making good progress, the country began the process of internalizing the results of its work with the creation in 1995 of CONAREF, financed by the Government, thereby mobilizing the formerly existing planning capacity. Their operations were more or less suspended in mid-1996 and the results of their work transferred to the new, donor-encouraged PRODEC team, in charge of designing the Ten-Year Education Development Programme. The process of internalizing the capacity stopped at that point.

Accordingly, the capacity to formulate a vision and strategy for the basic education sector is hard to identify in any one institution, that is, it has not been "institutionalized". The individuals with the skills, know-how and competence are there and are extremely mobile. To the extent that the capacity is embodied in individuals and not part of an organization, their mobilization can be problematic when they are needed. Under present conditions, and if recent events provide any guide, the use of the capacity is conditioned by the existence and attraction of external funding. This dependence points to the fact that although there has been capacity-building as a result of UN system support, it may not have been "national" capacity and its sustainability is uncertain.

As regards capacity to design and produce a quality product, four factors can be considered under the term "quality" in basic education: curriculum content, teaching methods, teachers and evaluation and monitoring. The UN system has provided some inputs to the curricula in Mali by supporting special interest topics and insisting on their formal inclusion in school programmes (gender issues, population and family life and environment). Aside from the intrinsic merit of these subjects, it is not clear to what extent the introduction constitutes capacity-building or contributes to its sustainability in basic education.

At the level of capacity to deliver a product, the UN system has provided substantial support to local initiatives and the literacy campaign. In view of limited government resources, private entrepreneurship and local initiative have stepped in to meet the demand for basic education. In order to encourage the creation of village associations and provide them with assistance in the construction of small infrastructures, the UN system has made it possible in some areas for villages to build their own community schools, which are run and financed by the communities. The capacity to support local initiative appears to have been reinforced through two successive projects and seems well on the way to being internalized and hence sustainable.

Literacy campaigns are financed through development operations and carried out locally by village associations or NGOs. The materials used are developed by a specialized directorate at the Ministry of Basic Education, which, over the years, has benefited from UN system support, though not significantly or in any systematic way. Nevertheless, it can be said that the UN system has contributed to reinforcing capacity in the field of literacy.

Audio-visual materials constitute a powerful instrument in communication, including in literacy campaigns. With UN system support, national capacity has been established and the sustainability seems assured. A cooperation project, the Centre for Audio-Visual Production Services has become an autonomous firm, which should be able to become self-supporting and

then profitable.

The performance of the education sector remains unsatisfactory on many counts. But the UN is not the only actor in the field, nor the main one, and its contribution is extremely modest in financial terms. Furthermore, the reference period can be characterized as a time of structural adjustment, when social sectors were the first to fall victims to austerity.

Taking into account these factors, the UN system has done useful work in the area of capacity-building in basic education. It has helped the country develop capacity to formulate a vision and the accompanying strategy--the skills and competence to do so exist. It has also helped strengthen the country's capacity to design and produce a quality product, for instance at the National Pedagogical Institute, and it has helped to create capacity to deliver the product.

The main lesson learned is the importance of ownership or internalization in order to ensure sustainability. The events of recent years point to the fragility of a capacity embodied in individuals and not formalized into an institution or some other more permanent framework. The experience illustrates the possible conflict between the search for fast and "donor-acceptable" results and the need to strengthen the capacity to produce those results on a more permanent basis. It also shows the tendency of some donors to put into question the results of an exercise to which they have not been associated, and the conditionality of "validation" of both process and content for any subsequent financing.

V. FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The UN system employed effective approaches to capacity-building in basic health and basic education in Mali from 1980 to 1995, namely, training, institution-building and community capacity-building through local empowerment. How well it carried out these approaches varied. Training of individuals and groups, although not easy to assess, was its clearest success. This work is having long-lasting benefit for Malian national capacity. Institution-building was mixed. On balance, some sustainable capacity was created, including capacity of Malians to change and rebuild their own institutions, especially in health. In both sectors, some institutional capacity decayed or was lost because donors bypassed it or required its elimination. Community capacity-building began too late in the reference period to permit a full-scale evaluation. But that now under way in basic health stands as the mission's most encouraging finding, even if at this stage one can be only tentative regarding its success.

The UN system's contributions in Mali, as a whole, represent a relatively small proportion of total foreign aid (5.8 per cent). But it has devoted a substantial part of its resources (25.8 per cent) to the two areas of human resources (including education) and health.

The UN system devoted four times as much of its resources to health (20.8 per cent) as to human resources (5 per cent). This may be due to the fact that public awareness came earlier for basic health (Alma Ata in 1978) than for basic education (Jomtien in 1990). It probably also explains the different results in terms of capacity-building in the sectors of basic health and basic education observed in Mali, where the former is in many respects far more advanced.

The lack of any agreed definitions of capacity-building and national execution makes comparison among UN agencies, or even among the projects of a single agency, difficult. Having had more baseline data and data over time in the main projects would have assisted with

the impact evaluation. There has been insufficient attention during project design to evaluation.

Although no specific provision was made for "capacity-building", the UN system's operational activities have had an impact in changing "the ability of Malians and their institutions to conceive, plan and implement their own development programmes---including the capacity to deliver the relevant services of basic health care and basic education to the population", which is the mission's working definition of national capacity.

Through training of individuals and groups, the UN has without a doubt contributed to the building of individual Malian capacity in basic health and basic education. There are now more (and probably better trained) health care workers, teachers and planners.

At the system level, the UN devoted considerable attention to institution-building. In both sectors, many ups and downs occurred, including some capacity reduction and some bypassing of existing capacity for donors' purposes. The net result is probably some UN-contributed capacity increases, but their sustainability is not entirely clear.

Regarding individual and institutional capacities, however, the mission is uneasy as regards several trends that seem to run counter to what has been achieved, e.g., the elimination of the Ministry of Health planing directorate, replacing it with a weaker Planning and Statistics Unit; the use of parallel donor-supported structures for planning and implementation, thereby bypassing government institutions; and the recruitment of Malians into parallel units and local and international UN offices. The mission is concerned that such practices have become common and urges that their effects on UN capacity-building activities be examined critically. In particular, the sustainability of national capacity seems to be in doubt, for instance in the case of policy, strategy and programme formulation in the education sector, to the extent that capacity is embodied in individuals and has not as yet been institutionalized.

Empowering communities to manage and finance their basic health care is a form of capacity-building. This is the most positive finding of our evaluation. It is our hope that communities, government and donors alike will stay the course on this new policy and that the outcome will be a broad improvement in the health status of ordinary Malians. On the other hand, in view of the limited resources of the state, private entrepreneurship as well as local initiative have stepped in to meet the demand for basic education. The capacity to support local initiative seems well on the way to being internalized and hence sustainable.

Why capacity? Capacity for what? The ultimate reasons are to improve the ordinary Malian's health status and opportunity for basic education. But performance in the 1980-1995 period towards that end was unsatisfactory. Despite the UN system's contributions to capacity-building and its many vertical health and education programmes, it is not obvious that the typical person's health improved much, if at all, between 1980 and 1995; nor have school enrolment and literacy achieved satisfactory rates.

Recommendations

1. **The UN system approach in Mali would be more efficient, and the resulting capacity more sustainable, if the following were carried out:**

Promote coordination and exchange of experience among the various agencies. In particular, adopt common definitions of capacity-building and national execution to be used throughout development programmes.

Seek better coordination and exchange of experience between the UN system and other external actors in Mali. Give resident coordinators real authority and status to harmonize and coordinate the development activities of UN agencies in their country of assignment.

Resist the temptation of parallel administration and help Malians develop the ability for capacity retention.

Clarify guidelines for the use of nationals (or national competence) in projects, agency country offices or agency services outside the country.

Develop workable and practical capacity-building guidelines.

Put in place a system for monitoring capacity-building and evaluate the impact of UN system supported development programmes as a matter of course. In that context, improve record keeping and reinforce the institutional memory of all agencies.

Systematically introduce explicit capacity-building goals in all programmes/projects, in measurable terms. Require all projects, activities and programmes, at the time of design, to show how they would lead, if successful, to the improvement of basic living conditions in the country of operation; to devise appropriate indicators of such success; and to establish systems to gather the data, including baseline data, that will make such measurement possible.

2. **Devise a well thought-out approach to the problem of turnover in foreign technical assistance staff and replacement of soon-to-be-retired nationals.**

Chapter 6

AN EVALUATION OF THE UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM IMPACT ON CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT IN BASIC HEALTH AND EDUCATION IN PAKISTAN:1980-1995

by Peter Morgan and Shelton Wanasinghe

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report sets out an analysis of the concepts of capacity and capacity development. Capacity is defined as the organizational and technical abilities, relationships and values that enable organizations and groups at any level of society to carry out functions and achieve their development objectives over time. Capacity development refers to the processes, strategies and methodologies used by national participants or outside groups to help organizations and/or systems develop their capacity or abilities.

No serious judgments can be made about the impact of UN efforts in capacity development in basic health and education without first understanding the particular context of the social sector in Pakistan. It remains a difficult setting in which to develop any kind of sustainable capacity. The period under review saw a progressive deterioration in governance and institutional decline in most regions and sectors. Pakistan also made slow progress in improving its level of social development, as indicated by its low percentage of total expenditures on education and health, level of literacy, rate of contraceptive prevalence and access to safe drinking water. Part of the reason lies in its inability to build effective delivery systems at any level of society that are sustainable, affordable and participatory.

In practice, most of the public systems in education and health fell into disrepair in the 1980s and 1990s and never recovered. In the 1990s, Pakistan began to struggle through the transition from its traditional centralized delivery system to one structured along the lines of an interdependent network of collaborating organizations in the public, private and non-governmental organization (NGO) sectors. Part of the challenge in capacity development is to help create linkages and connections between communities and government, between NGOs and government, between levels of government and between the public and private systems. Pakistan's sheer size needs to be kept in mind when discussing education and health. Its population of 130 million makes it the eighth largest country in the world. Proposals for systemic reforms in the social sectors and predictions of rapid impact need to be treated with caution, given the scale involved.

Such pessimistic views of the state of social development in Pakistan need to be taken with some caution. Despite the generalized level of poor institutional performance and lack of capacity, genuine progress does take place. Determined leadership combined with even limited resources can make an impact. In order for development agencies to tap into this potential, a combination of many factors is required. This includes the right "entry point", a well-conceived strategy of organizational change, a willingness to enter into partnerships with government, tight monitoring, a knowledgeable national staff, an effective awareness campaign and an ability to connect with other efforts to build a critical mass.

Analysis of United Nations System Performance

The UN system approach to capacity development evolved over the 1980-1995 period. In the 1980s, the primary focus was on improving service delivery and management systems. The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and World Health Organization (WHO) began to work more closely with government at both the federal and provincial levels to strengthen and expand vertical delivery programmes, including the expanded programme on immunization (EPI). Such programmes showed good results, given the national commitment and the effectiveness of the technology. Efforts were also made to improve the performance of delivery systems in family planning and in water supply and sanitation. In the field of education, UNICEF and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) tried in the 1980s to assist the Government with public primary school systems. Both agencies helped to formulate strategies designed to increase female participation, reduce drop-out rates and improve the quality of instruction. Work was also carried out with the National Curriculum Centre to revise traditional learning materials.

Given the constraints on public sector organizations, the UN began a shift in the mid-to-late 1980s to support other forms of capacity development. Efforts were made to help in the decentralization of authority and resources to local governments, community groups and district assemblies. Work proceeded in such areas as setting up district-based information systems and baseline surveys. The UN system also worked with federal and provincial agencies to implement more integrated approaches to service delivery at the district level under the primary health care (PHC) umbrella. To do this, organizations such as UNICEF and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) began to form partnerships with new emerging actors, such as NGOs, community-based organizations (CBOs), private health care givers and traditional healers, as part of the broader effort to encourage a series of public-private relationships.

Two other trends in capacity development are evident in the late 1980s and early 1990s. First, the UN system began to do more policy advocacy and outreach in an effort to involve such groups as the media, religious leaders, private sector leaders, women's clubs and others. And it gave more emphasis to some of the broader contextual factors that shaped Pakistan's progress in educational and social issues. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) championed good governance, including public sector reform, accountability and transparency.

Overall, the record of the UN system in capacity development in the 1980-1995 period was a mixed one, as might be expected in such a difficult environment. It helped to shape the transition from the narrower institutional development concepts of the 1980s to the more complex capacity development ideas of the 1990s. Efforts at improving service delivery made slow progress. But the UN system's work with NGOs and policy advocacy led to promising results.

Key Issues Arising from the United Nations System Approach to Capacity Development

The experience of the UN system to date has underlined the need to focus on a particular niche or role that the UN can best fill, given such attributes as a strong field presence, convening power and ability to innovate and experiment. In general, this report makes the case

that the UN moved sensibly and incrementally over the period to carve out a limited but important role in the social sectors in Pakistan. It expanded its role as policy catalyst and advocate. It made major contributions as a generator, demonstrator and modeler of new ideas. The UN played the role of an organizational and network strengthener. And it acted as a facilitator and connector among different actors in Pakistan.

The strategic design of capacity development interventions, e.g., the choice of entry point and the approach to organizational change, clearly mattered. For example, the UN appeared to have more success in working with smaller organizations outside the main structures of government, which could, in turn, assist line departments in such areas as service delivery and training. Over the period, there was also a shift from traditional project design and management formats to ones that gave more emphasis to social mobilization, adult learning and participation.

This report gives special attention to the issue of sustainability. The likelihood of achieving sustainability, either directly in the form of a single organization or in the form of a broader process, appears to depend on a combination of short and long-term factors. These factors include commitment and ownership of national participants, management skills, the nature of programme design decisions, the degree of external support through networks of organizations and the continuity of government policies.

Most UN-assisted programmes had to contend with the challenge of spread and diffusion, i.e., trying to replicate or expand interventions in order to make a significant difference. The UN experience is a varied one in this regard. One of the report's recommendations is that the UN system make efforts to analyse its experience with this issue and integrate the lessons into the design and management of its programmes. The UN system also made a sustained effort at improving women's health and education over the period in question, including programmes in maternal and neonatal health, the training of traditional birth attendants (TBAs) and a series of interventions to increase female literacy.

Finally, the report concludes that the UN system made a serious effort, particularly in the 1990s, to achieve a more coherent approach among the various voluntary funds and specialized agencies. A series of structural and procedural steps were taken to induce more coordination, and efforts were made to increase joint programming. While not an official United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) site, it is now operating with UNDAF principles. The next step is likely to be more joint programming and more sharing of knowledge and experiences among the various UN organizations.

Recommendations

We were impressed by the operations and staff of the UN system in Pakistan. Given the enormity of challenges, the UN system is making a significant contribution to capacity development in basic health and education within the limits of its resources. Our recommendations, therefore, do not put forward dramatic suggestions for change. Instead, they are designed to amplify and reinforce trends that UN staff are already working on.

Focusing the UN System Approach to Capacity Development. The issue of capacity development still retains a good deal of uncertainty and ambiguity across most organizations and agencies in the UN system. For those involved at the field level in

designing capacity development programmes, the term remains too all-encompassing and must be broken down into more manageable pieces—community development, institutional strengthening, public sector reform, training, decentralization, improved service delivery and many others – in order to be relevant.

The approach of the UN system in Pakistan to capacity development has ended up somewhere between the older approaches to institutional development of the 1980s and contemporary approaches to gender. It is not a core issue to be specifically addressed, but it figures prominently in all programme designs. The term appears regularly but no common definition exists. We could find no staff in Islamabad who used or even knew about the UNDP assessment framework. Staff do not use any particular analytical tools or frameworks at the design stage. A coherent sense of "best practice" has not yet emerged. In our view, this approach has limited the inclination of the UN system to think through some of the underlying capacity development issues that appear and reappear across the range of UN system programmes.

Given the rich experience and insight that is currently part of the tacit knowledge of the UN staff in the Pakistan programme, our sense is that some institutional mechanism should be created to focus more attention on capacity issues. The creation of a working group under the Programme Review and Coordination Subcommittee might be one method.

Improving the UN System Ability to Learn about Capacity Development. A main recommendation of this report centres on improving the ability of the UN system in Pakistan to learn about capacity development. All donors and funding agencies experience great difficulties in encouraging, disseminating and applying the learning that comes out of their operational experiences.[56] In the Pakistan office, the efforts at inter-organizational collaboration have helped in this regard, but more needs to be done. Such approaches might include devising institutional mechanisms to analyse the lessons emerging at the agency and programme level; offering staff incentives; providing logistical support; demonstrating the benefits of capacity development and constantly reinforcing its importance to programme performance; and experimenting with different approaches.

Few staff have the time to write up their experiences for the collective benefit of the UN system. An organizational mechanism needs to be put in place to collate these insights. The Pakistan office might consider the hiring of a part-time "learning coordinator" to focus on a particular issue, interview staff and outside officials and produce a monograph setting out the emerging policy and operational lessons.

The UN system in Pakistan should make better use of the knowledge emerging from the Governance Network now being implemented as a Sub-Regional Resource Facility (SURF) by UNDP. This organizational mechanism can help UN staff to provide Pakistani participants with access to international learning and experience.[57]

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56 *See Swedish National Audit Bureau, Does SIDA Learn?*
57 *One recent example is the IUCN/IDRC Tools and Training Series entitled An Approach to Assessing Progress towards Sustainability for Institutions, Field Teams and Collaborating Agencies. This work was put together over the course of several years by a network of consultants and southern NGOs and was field-tested in a variety of countries, including Colombia, India and Zimbabwe. It also has a section on institutional sustainability.*

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There needs to be more sharing with the UNDP Management Development and Governance Division (MDGD), which is the only unit in the UN system that focuses directly on capacity issues. Its current assessment framework could be strengthened by the inclusion of insights from the field offices.

Sustaining UN Field Office Performance. We found the atmosphere and performance of the UN system in Pakistan to be at a level above many other field offices of both bilateral and multilateral agencies with which we are familiar. Reasons include a high degree of decentralized authority from headquarters; a pattern of productive collaboration among UN agencies and organizations; long-standing partnerships with sectoral ministries; a number of subnational offices which work directly with provincial governments; and a cadre of knowledgeable and committed Pakistani professionals who make up a significant proportion of the UN staff.

This combination of factors—and the need to sustain them—bears directly upon the capacity development issue. Assisting Pakistani organizations in the public, NGO and private sector is a knowledge-, skill- and relationship-intensive business that requires patience, learning and trust. The degree of operational impact of the UN system on capacity issues and the composition and skills of the permanent staff are directly related. Decisions to reduce field resources in an effort to cut overhead and preserve programme funds may end up damaging the invisible web of knowledge and relationships that underlie the effectiveness of the system at the field level.

Improving UN Aid Coordination for Capacity Development. There exists a clear need in the donor community in Pakistan to learn more about various aspects of capacity development. Given its experience on capacity issues, its success with the Institutional Reforms Group and the Good Governance Group and its convening authority, the UN has a natural advantage in establishing and energizing such a group. Its purpose would be to supplement rather than replace both the formal and the informal channels of aid coordination involving the Government of Pakistan.

The UN is already engaged in a series of activities such as the forthcoming workshops on decentralization and the four district case studies. It has also published some useful materials on NGOs in Pakistan. This combination of aid coordination, advocacy and research can be a powerful contribution to the UN system in Pakistan.

Performance Measurement and Management. We would advise the UN voluntary funds and agencies to proceed cautiously with the design of evaluation grids and frameworks for capacity development programmes. Much of the headquarters work on capacity development seems to have little relevance when applied to field situations. Too many of the current donor approaches focus inordinately on elaborate techniques for performance measurement and too little on broader issues of performance management. The result is an imposed set of isolated techniques of marginal use or benefit to field practitioners. Most collapse under their own weight and complexity or add to the overhead burden on UN offices and field programmes. Useful approaches to the monitoring and evaluation of capacity development programmes need to be built slowly from the ground up and reflect the specific contextual conditions, organizational dynamics and constraints of individual programmes.

They need to be of specific operational use to field managers if they are to be sustainable. And they need to reflect the emerging lessons about the long-term patterns of capacity development.

I.   INTRODUCTION

This study looks at the impact of UN system activities on capacity development for basic health and education in Pakistan over the 1980-1995 period.[58] In reviewing this evaluation, readers should bear the following in mind: this review of UN system operations in capacity development over a 15-year period is a new initiative both for the UN and development efforts in Pakistan.[59] We could find few other examples of such an analysis of capacity issues that had been carried out by other development agencies. Inevitably, the depth of the analysis has been limited by the amount of time available for the work and the difficulty in retrieving information and interviewing participants from the 1980s.

The objective of this evaluation is to assess the performance of UN system agencies with respect to the specific topic of capacity development in primary education and basic health. It is not a review of the performance of the Government of Pakistan or any other groups or organizations in Pakistan, although their effectiveness obviously shaped the performance of UN-assisted programmes. It is not a management review of the overall performance of UN efforts in Pakistan, nor an assessment of the overall developmental impact of UN-assisted projects and programmes in Pakistan.

Assessing the effectiveness of UN system efforts at capacity development in health and education in Pakistan does not lend itself to quick or easy judgments. Analysts may differ in their definition of what constitutes capacity development and hence what evaluation criteria should apply to judge the effectiveness of operational programmes. Attribution and causality issues to do with capacity issues, i.e., what causes what and who contributes to what, are notoriously difficult to sort out, as are the connections between capacity and actual developmental progress in activities such as maternal and child health or improved student learning. As discussed below, the UN system, even in its aggregate form, is a relatively small actor in the Pakistani development scene and does not have the financial resources to make major interventions, when compared to a number of other multilateral and bilateral agencies. Finally, many of the issues and constraints associated with capacity development that affect the effectiveness of the UN system are present in the programmes of most other development agencies working in Pakistan. We have tried to keep these qualifications in mind when assessing the impact of UN system work.

Shelton Wanasinghe and Peter Morgan, independent consultants from Sri Lanka and Canada respectively, carried out this evaluation during the period 21 January to 27 February 1998. Material was gathered through interviews with staff from UN organizations and specialized agencies, the Government of Pakistan and other organizations in Islamabad (see References). This report also benefited from a monograph prepared by the Inter-Agency

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58 *Impact is defined as the changes produced in a situation as a result of an activity that has been undertaken.*
59 *In 1997, the World Bank also began to carry out reviews of the operational effectiveness of its work in capacity development in various countries.*

Support Unit (IASU) on capacity development in the social sectors.

Because the amount of time available to carry out the work was limited, the decision was taken to review a representative sample of programmes and projects implemented by the UN system during the period:

Ali Institute of Education in Lahore (UNDP/UNESCO)

National Educational Management Information System (UNESCO)

Basic Minimal Needs Programme (WHO)

Institutional Reform Group (UNDP)

Expanded Programme on Immunization (UNICEF and WHO)

Local Initiative for Urban Environment (UNDP)

Promotion of Education for Girls in Balouchistan and North West Frontier Province (WFP)

Partners in Development (UNDP)

Baldia Home Schools (UNICEF)

Strengthening Reproductive Health Services and Training (UNFPA)

Few programmes or projects, even the most recent ones, came with a full set of indicators that could be used to assess impact, particularly with respect to capacity development. We did not select our own indicators of capacity by which to judge the UN system programmes. Few generic indicators, for example, quality of decision making, knowledge levels of staff and effectiveness of service delivery systems, apply in all cases. In practice, we arrived at qualitative overall judgments on the impact of UN programmes.

Overview of United Nations System Activities in Health and Education in Pakistan

The choice of topic—capacity development in basic health and education—limited the number of agencies to be studied. Of the 16 UN organizations and specialized agencies operating in Pakistan, only 6 -- UNDP, UNICEF, UNFPA, UNESCO, WHO and the World Food Programme (WFP)—have significant roles in health and education. All have offices in Islamabad and three have subnational offices in cities such as Lahore, Karachi, Peshawar and Quetta.

As mentioned above, the UN system was, for virtually the entire period covered by the evaluation, a small player in the Pakistan development scene in terms of financial disbursements. By 1997, for example, UN system assistance to Pakistan totaled US$66.2 million in project funding and grants, out of the total official development assistance (ODA) to

Pakistan of US$1,531.4, or about 4.3 per cent of the total.[60] The proportion of UN system assistance directed towards the health and education sectors was about 30 per cent in 1997. This appears to have been a higher proportion than in earlier years.

Context of the Education and Health Sectors in Pakistan

Pakistan remains a difficult setting in which to develop sustainable capacity. At the root of the problem is a series of interacting constraints that lock the country into vicious circles of decline and poor performance. Over the 1980-1995 period, Pakistan went through a progressive deterioration in governance that led, in turn, to breakdowns in law and order, widespread corruption, a weakening in judicial institutions and institutional decline in most regions and sectors. Many organizations in Pakistan, particularly in the public sector, ended up with a weak sense of accountability. Many plans, policies and strategies are drawn up, yet few are implemented. Many officials have lost a sense of professionalism.[61] In such an atmosphere, conventional technocratic approaches to capacity development have little chance of succeeding.[62] The notion of an enabling environment for social progress does not yet apply in Pakistan.

In addition to the governance issue, some other constraints include: a history of military rule, weak traditions of social justice, excessive centralization, a historic lack of community and popular participation and traditional patterns of religious and tribal culture, particularly with respect to women.[63] In addition, Pakistan has historically given undue emphasis to curative health services in the urban areas, especially hospitals, and to the training of physicians, with little attention given to preventive services in the rural areas of the country.[64] Only in the mid-1980s did governments begin to emphasize the provision of broader public access to primary health care.

The resulting low level of investment in human and social development, despite the rapid rate of economic growth over the last few decades, has been well documented by the Government, outside observers and the various UN agencies.[65] Pakistan ranks towards the bottom of the UNDP human development index (134). It spends considerably less as a percentage of its total budget on education and health than any nation in South Asia. Measured against a number of social indicators, Bangladesh has now caught up with and passed Pakistan. The literacy rate (37 per cent) compares unfavourably with that of India (48 per cent), China (73 per cent) and Sri Lanka (88 per cent). Its rate of contraceptive prevalence is about two thirds

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60 *Of this grand UN total, the figures for those agencies working in health and education were the following: UNDP (US$15.1 million), UNICEF (10.5), UNFPA (6.0), WFP (7.2), WHO (2.9), UNESCO (.6). The UN system is obviously not in the resource transfer business compared to other funding agencies.*
61 *Many of these characteristics are discussed in the government document entitled The Prime Minister's 2010 Programme, dated 1 January 1998.*
62 *There have been 12 police reform commissions since 1947, with little impact on the conduct of security affairs.*
63 *In certain provinces such as Sindh and Balouchistan, rural society is still organized on a feudal basis with traditional landlord /tenant relationships.*
64 *Most countries have four nurses to every doctor. Pakistan has the reverse proportion.*
65 *See Mahbub Ul Haque, Human Development in South Asia, 1997.*

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lower than in India and Bangladesh. Approximately 60 million persons are without health facilities, 67 million are without safe drinking water and 89 million are without basic sanitation facilities. Thirty-four per cent of the total population, or 47 million, live in absolute poverty.

Many in government have seen social development as a benefit that would flow directly from an expanding economy and hence needed no special attention or resources. Others, including many people outside of government, have viewed social work as a charitable exercise with mainly welfare implications. Still others have focused on the symbolic policy aspects of social development, with little regard for the operational and logistical implications of their plans and strategies. The combined result of these perspectives has been an inability to build effective delivery systems for social services at any level of society that are sustainable, affordable and participatory. At times, a feeling of what one Pakistani observer has called a state of "learned helplessness" has pervaded the social sector.[66]

Government agencies that work in health and education are normally poor performers in every country, given the difficulties involved in complex service delivery, chronic underfunding,[67] uncertain technologies and poor assessment of performance and accountability. In Pakistan, these challenges are reinforced by: dysfunctional incentives at all levels of service delivery[68]; pervasive institutionalized corruption and politicization; poor management and supervision; rapid staff turnover[69]; the physical inaccessibility of many health centres; the low standard of care and supplies available at such centres; and the complexities of federal-provincial-local relationships. Few public sector organizations working in the social sector still retain a sense of legitimacy, transparency and responsiveness.[70] Only 20 per cent of the people still use government health services. Approximately 35 to 40 per cent of the big water schemes are not working at any given time. In practice, most government health and education systems fell into disrepair during the 1980s[71] and have never recovered.[72] All are facing a population growth rate of 3 per cent per year.

Since independence in 1947, both federal and provincial government have tried to monopolize the delivery of social services, while at the same time neglecting to make the

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[66] *See Tariq Banuri, S.R. Khan and Moazam Mahmood, Just Development: Beyond Adjustment with a Human Face, p.13.*

[67] *Social sector expenditure increased from 2 per cent of the overall budget in 1981/82 to 3 per cent in 1985/86 and has stayed at that level over much of the last decade.*

[68] *The most pervasive one relates to extremely low pay scales in the public sector.*

[69] *Phase 1 of the Social Action Programme dealt with seven secretaries of health over a four-year period.*

[70] *Despite substantial increases in public sector resources, parents at all levels prefer to send their children to private schools. In one district in the Punjab, out of a total of 548 schools, 13 per cent had fewer than 15 students and another 13.5 per cent had no pupils at all.*

[71] *For example, thousands of schools in Pakistan are empty despite the potential number of students eligible to attend. One third of all teachers actually filling government teaching positions never show up for work. And a further one third teach only part of the time, at their convenience.*

[72] *It should be noted, however, that Pakistan has the highest unit costs for social service delivery in the South Asia region. For example, the unit cost per primary and secondary school enrolment in Pakistan is US$65, compared to US$33 in India and US$36 in Sri Lanka.*

investments needed in human development. In the 1990s, Pakistan began to struggle through the transition from its traditional centralized delivery system to one structured along the lines of an interdependent network of collaborating organizations in the public, private and NGO sectors. But such a transition is a long-haul process. CBOs and NGOs in Pakistan have developed at a slower rate than others in South Asia. Few NGOs have had much experience in education, particularly with respect to improving literacy in rural areas. Prolonged centralization has stunted the development of district and municipal authorities. Few universities teach courses in social work or management. Pakistan still lacks effective organizations in the social sector, such as parent and community committees; joint government-NGO forums; auditing, accounting, research and information management groups; intermediary NGOs; an educational communications infrastructure; and intermediate financial institutions that are needed to help support and manage modern networks of social service delivery. Finally, monitoring, supervision, transparency and evaluation are poorly implemented in Pakistan.

The fragility of linkages and connections in Pakistan—between community and government, between NGOs and government, between levels of government, between different programmes and departments within government and between the public and private systems—have proven to be a major constraint to capacity development.[73] Access to resources across organizational boundaries, rather than the amount of resources per se, is at the heart of the crisis. Part of the fragility stems from a low level of social capital in the form of mistrust, which hinders the country from forging a wide range of effective public-private partnerships and other forms of inter-organizational coordination. The continuity needed to build a sustainable capacity has not been present.[74]

Pakistan's sheer size needs to be kept in mind. Its population of 130 million makes it the eighth largest country in the world. There are about 23 million children between the ages of 5 and 12. Part of the "capacity" problem in Pakistan lies in the unproductive nature of the huge bureaucratic structures erected in the public sector since independence in 1947. In fact, the country has thousands of primary schools (about 130,000), literacy centres, health posts and physical and organizational structures.[75] Proposals for systemic reforms in the social sectors and predictions of rapid impact need to be treated cautiously, therefore, given the scale involved.

The position of women in Pakistan is one of the most vulnerable in the developing world.[76] Pakistan has the lowest level of female literacy in South Asia (23 per cent). In 1992, only 9 countries out of the 173 in the UNDP *Human Development Report* had female literacy

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73 *Historically, there has been little connection between government programmes to do with primary care, health, education, sanitation, clean water, nutrition and agriculture.*

74 *For example, Pakistan has tried at one time or another to use the following organizations to boost literacy: a national education corps of college students, industrial firms, the armed forces, the media, mosques, primary schools and NGOs.*

75 *In 1991, Pakistan had 22 teaching hospitals, 80 district hospitals, 250 subdistrict hospitals, 502 rural health centres, 4,000 basic health units, 732 health subcentres, 3,301 dispensaries and 918 maternal and child health posts.*

76 *The UN system in Pakistan has done the best background document on women's health in the country. See Women's Health in Pakistan: Fact Sheet Prepared for Pakistan National Forum on Women's Health, 3-5 November 1997.*

rates lower than those in Pakistan. Only 18 per cent of women have access to family planning services. Social indicators in the area of maternal mortality are equally low. Women's earned income share is 23 per cent of that of their male counterparts. They hold only 3 per cent of administration and management positions, 2 per cent of parliamentary seats and 4 per cent of ministerial appointments. Pakistan has one of the lowest gender equality measures of any country in the world.

But this pessimistic view of the state of social development, while commonly discussed and admitted in Pakistan, needs to be viewed with some caution. Such trends apply in the aggregate but not necessarily at the level of the individual programme. Amid the generalized level of poor institutional performance and lack of capacity, genuine progress is made. Determined leadership combined with even small amounts of resources can make an impact. For example, some creative organizational strategies enabled the National Immunization Days campaign to reach 125 million children in under four weeks. Many Pakistani NGOs[77] have managed to achieve good progress in partnership with government, especially at the provincial level. In rural Balouchistan, the WFP-supported Girls' Education Project has led to a dramatic increase in the attendance of girls, which has outstripped the school space available. In the case of WFP, the Pakistan programme has a record of implementation that ranks among the best in the WFP global programme. Virtually all observers of the Pakistani development scene comment on the potential, and actual, motivation to improve at all levels of society.

The key for development agencies to tap into this potential appears to be a combination of many factors, including: the right choice of entry point, a well-conceived strategy of organizational change, a willingness to establish partnerships with government, tight monitoring, knowledgeable Pakistani staff, an effective awareness campaign, an ability to connect with other efforts to build a critical mass, a long time frame and on-the-ground experience in dealing with conditions in specific geographic areas of the country.

It is worth remembering that Pakistan has created high-performance organizations in many sectors, including banks; telecommunications and exporter companies in the private sector; universities (such as the Lahore University of Management Sciences); and NGOs (such as the Pakistan Office of IUCN (the World Conservation Union) which is now become the cornerstone of the Asian IUCN field structure). In the social sector, NGOs such as the Aga Khan Hospital in Karachi, the Edhi Foundation, the Orangi Pilot Project, Baanhn Beli and Bunyad, are effective, dynamic organizations with proven track records, determined leadership, the ability to control operations and a high degree of protection against politicization.

Another contextual factor shaping UN performance in education and health is the general shift of development thinking in Pakistan in the 1990s. During the preceding decade, economics, including structural adjustment, dominated the Government's agenda. In the 1990s, attention has shifted towards social concerns and, in the process, towards the strengths of the UN system. The single most important government initiative to improve education and health is the Social Action Programme (SAP), which began in 1992 and has just been extended to the year 2003. The second phase—SAP2 -- is budgeted at approximately US$750 million, of which 80 per cent is to be furnished by the Government. The World Bank, Asian Development Bank

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[77] *Of the roughly 8,000 NGOs in Pakistan, about 50 per cent have activities that benefit women directly.*

(ADB), the Governments of the Netherlands and United Kingdom and a number of smaller bilateral donors are also participating. The focus is on primary health care, education, population planning, water supply and sanitation. Of particular importance in the second phase will be capacity development at the provincial, district and community levels. Much more effort will be made to encourage local participation and ownership.[78] Better information systems will be designed. The Government has agreed to special provisions to ensure transparency of procurement and a normal rotation of staff. Personnel appointments, for example, are to be scrutinized and approved by the auditor-general of Pakistan. SAP funds are protected in the various budgets.[79]

Given this background, we can now address questions concerning UN system effectiveness in capacity development for basic health and primary education:

Was the UN system an effective force for capacity development within government and among other groups and organizations in the education and health sectors?

Did any substantive developmental change result from these new or enhanced capacities? Did they make a difference, and if so, to whom?

Did the UN system, as a system, use its strengths and capabilities to good advantage? Did it find its niche with respect to capacity development?

II. ANALYSIS OF THE UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM PERFORMANCE

The focus in this section is on the evolution of the UN system approach to capacity development in education and health over the 1980-1995 period. Given this focus, the section does not deal directly with the programmes of the individual UN voluntary funds and specialized agencies, except as they contribute to the evolution of Pakistan's capacity in the social sectors. Some attention is given to individual programmes and projects as examples of the evolution of the UN approach.

Three points about the pattern of UN activities should be emphasized. First, most activities discussed in this section—improving service delivery, decentralization and others—are interconnected and need to be seen as part of a larger process of organizational change and capacity development. Second, the evolution described here did not unfold in discrete and linear phases. The UN system worked with NGOs in the early 1980s (although its main collaboration with those groups came in the 1990s). Improvements in service delivery continue to this day, albeit on a different pace and scale than in the 1980s. In many cases, experience in one activity, e.g., service delivery, is critical to effectiveness in another, such as policy advocacy. Third, the phrase "UN system" covers the aggregate activities of the six UN organizations under review. (We address the issue of collaboration among UN agencies more directly in section IV.)

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[78] *It is estimated that about half the schools built under SAP1 are no longer in operation or are used for non-school purposes.*
[79] *SAP2 will command over half the new development spending in Punjab, Balouchistan and NWFP.*

Improving Service Delivery and Management Systems

In the 1970s, the UN system did not focus on capacity development. UNICEF, for example, functioned as more of a welfare organization, supplying equipment and support to impoverished groups, such as women made destitute after the Indo-Pakistan War, or providing water supply schemes to poorer communities. It became clear, however, that such a focus would not strengthen the service delivery systems that were needed to reach a wider population. By the late 1970s, UN system organizations began to pay more attention to longer-term service delivery issues in such areas as family planning, basic education and health care.

Health. By the early 1980s, UNICEF and WHO began to work more closely with the Government at both the federal and provincial levels to strengthen and expand vertical delivery programmes, including EPI,[80] the national diarrhoeal disease control programme (CDD) (which emphasized oral rehydration therapy (ORT)) and the acute respiratory infections (ARI) programme. The emphasis was on improving service delivery through the provision of technical assistance, equipment, supplies, salaries, transport, medicine and training.

Most of these programmes showed good results at the time for the usual reasons that apply in other countries: accepted and effective technology, clear objectives, a high level of government/donor collaboration, good logistical support, the promise of quick and demonstrable results, continuous training and a broad consensus of support internally within Pakistan. The level of coverage for child immunization, for example, went from 5 per cent in the late 1970s to 80 per cent in the late 1980s. By the mid-1990s, the incidence of polio had dropped by about 80 per cent from its previous level in the late 1980s.

Efforts by UN agencies to strengthen delivery systems in the 1980s can be seen in family planning and water supply and sanitation, albeit with less dramatic results. UNFPA built capacity in the areas of reproductive health and clinical services, including integrated clinical training for family planning and NGO personnel, community-based personnel and traditional medical practitioners. UNFPA also provided support to research and evaluation at the National Institute of Population Studies and to public education programmes.

By the late 1980s, this focus on improving service delivery systems had begun to run its course for three reasons. First, the Government reached the point where it could manage and fund the more successful programmes, such as EPI. Second, the pervasive and recurring constraints in the Pakistani public sector—staff absences; lack of supplies, supervision and outreach; federal versus provincial jurisdictions; and poor physical placement of family health centres—limited progress. Third, the inherent limitations of traditional, vertical programmes were becoming apparent. More effort was needed to integrate such programmes into a more comprehensive approach to health care. It was also clear that more community ownership and control was required if the delivery of health care was to be sustainable in both organizational and financial terms.

Primary Education. In the 1980s, UNICEF and UNESCO assisted the Government in

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[80] *Designed to eradicate poliomyelitis, measles, diphtheria, tetanus, pertussis, whooping cough and tuberculosis*

improving the public primary school system.[81] Pakistan has remained one of the countries that experienced great difficulty in achieving universal primary education, a goal set out in the five national education policies since independence.[82] Compared to child immunization, improvements in primary education presented a much greater range of constraints to effective capacity development, including more difficulty in demonstrating results, higher costs, more politicization (e.g., school location decisions and hiring practices), a whole range of disincentives (e.g., low teacher pay) and weak political support.[83] Throughout much of the 1980s, Pakistan focused on improving access, which led, in turn, to the construction of more facilities, regardless of the level of service or quality that would eventually result.

Both agencies helped to formulate strategies designed to increase female participation, reduce drop-out rates and improve the quality of instruction. Work was carried out with the National Curriculum Centre in an effort to revise traditional learning materials. The National Educational Management Information System (NEMIS) was established to supply decision makers with more reliable information on primary school supply, demand and quality. UNICEF helped with in-service teacher training, supplies, teaching kits and school repairs. But such efforts could not break the vicious cycle of low quality and low parental demand. Public primary schools did not show any noticeable improvement, and by 1990, enrolment began to decline for the first time since independence.

Decentralization and Community Involvement

Given the constraints with public sector organizations, the UN began a shift in the mid-to-late 1980s in its approach to capacity development in education and health care. Support of service delivery would continue, albeit on a reduced scale. But greater attention needed to be paid to changing the role of federal and provincial government, decentralizing services to the district level and encouraging greater community involvement.[84] Increasingly, the community was becoming the principal agent of change. By 1985, for example, more than 85 per cent of Union Councils (local government bodies) had health facilities, dispensaries or basic health units. Provincial Directorates of Education also extended to the district and subdistrict levels. The new health policy in 1990 emphasized decentralization to the district level, the training of community health workers and paramedical staff (especially women) and efforts to increase the supply of such commodities as essential drugs.

Throughout the 1990s, UN agencies made considerable efforts to support more decentralized approaches to capacity development, including those promoting community involvement. UNFPA shifted to a strategy based more on a multisectoral approach involving family welfare centres at the district level. District coordination committees were set up in some areas to facilitate collaboration among line departments and between line departments and local

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81 UNICEF began work in education in 1986.

82 National education policies were issued in 1947, 1959, 1970, 1972 and 1979. A new version for 1998 is due for release in early March 1998.

83 See D. Berstecher, Human Development in Pakistan: Issues in Basic Education (Paris: May 1991).

84 In 1979, local government institutions based on the adult franchise were established. The stated intent was to build up their ability to plan and implement local development.

government. WHO advocated a district health service that would be more integrated in terms of health coverage at the district and subdistrict level. UNICEF encouraged a more comprehensive approach to water supply, sanitation and hygiene education through the primary schools. It also attempted to foster greater involvement at the level of the individual primary school by helping to train district assembly members, members of CBOs, district education officers and parent committees. UNDP began to work more at the provincial and district levels.

There were three important aspects of this shift to decentralization: an emphasis on improving statistical information systems at the district level, encouragement of community involvement and a move to more integrated approaches to service delivery. In the early 1990s, UNFPA, UNICEF and UNDP began to conduct surveys and district mapping using the Sentinel Community Surveillance approach and to produce disaggregated data for use by local government and community groups. Reinforcing this trend towards the provision of decentralized information was the parallel effort to encourage more community involvement and ownership. The UN system worked to establish district advisory boards and encourage the use of local mobilizers, village-level workers and teachers and legally constituted village education committees (VECs). By the mid-1990s, virtually all programmes had become community-centred.

It had become clear that progress in education and health could be made only by supporting individuals, households and communities with a package of services. Improvements to family planning and reproductive health care, for example, depended on progress with respect to infant and child mortality, maternal health, female literacy, age at marriage, educational level and access to employment and income. The UN system tried to assist the various governments to integrate the main vertical programmes, including those that dealt with nutrition, ARI, sanitation, family planning, immunization, communicable disease control, HIV/AIDS and emergency obstetric care under the PHC umbrella at the district level. Agencies such as WHO, WFP and UNICEF also began to shift at least part of their resources to broader, multisectoral programmes that integrated health, water supply and sanitation, income generation, environmental management, infrastructure development and education. This effort had varying levels of success, given the complexities involved and constraints within government.

Working with New Partners

Two other basic changes slowly emerged during the late 1980s and early 1990s. The first was the realization that the Government was not going to be the main engine of social change in Pakistan, given its limitations and the vested interests that surrounded it. Second, most of the actual and potential resources in Pakistan, in terms of skills, motivation, energy and even finances, lay outside government in households, communities, NGOs and private firms. The challenge thus became one of catalysing or inducing the participation of these organizations and groups that had played only marginal roles in social development. Thus, in the late 1980s, the UN system began to work with new actors in education and health. Beginning in 1992, UNDP

and UNICEF encouraged the emergence of Pakistani NGOs in the social sector.[85] Both agencies also worked with new actors on the scene, such as new educational and health foundations established at the provincial level. UNICEF helped the Pakistan Boy Scouts Association train 38,000 volunteers in ORT and diarrhoea preventive practices, which were then conveyed to over 380,000 families. UNICEF also began to work with government to involve private practitioners and traditional healers in community service delivery. The UN system helped to create and strengthen what are now called "intermediary" NGOs, organizations that focus on building the skills of other NGO and government organizations rather than engaging in direct service delivery. Key staff of these organizations were sent to Bangladesh and India to study the operations of comparable NGOs.

This encouragement of new actors grew by the mid-1990s into more complex efforts to help forge public/private partnerships between government and NGOs that could result in networks of collaborating agencies focused on the implementation of more complex functions. The Ministries of Education, Women's Development and Social Welfare worked with local government and NGOs to improve female literacy. The National Educational Management Information System involved the Planning and Development Wing of the Federal Ministry of Education, the Central Bureau of Education, the Federal Bureau of Statistics, the Academy of Education Planning and Management, the National Education Council, the Prime Minister's Secretariat, provincial governments (especially the Chief Minister's Secretariats), NGOs and the donor community.

Policy Advocacy

Advocacy, that is, the sustained effort over time to create awareness, new perspectives and changed attitudes in certain key groups in society, is a key component of capacity development. In the case of Pakistan, this activity became a progressively more important aspect of UN system activities in the early and mid-1990s. Virtually all UN voluntary funds and specialized agencies carried out advocacy programmes with the media[86] and a wider range of audiences, including parliamentary groups, doctors, educators, religious leaders, private sector leaders, women's clubs and many others.

Certain patterns emerged in UN advocacy activities. Technical data alone were rarely conclusive in terms of changing the minds of policy makers. What seemed to matter was a complex combination of a pressing problem, a convincing solution that was readily available and a degree of political feasibility that lowered the risk for policy makers, especially within government. An effort was also needed by groups of policy advocates and entrepreneurs to promote ideas over a sustained period of time. This process of advocacy and policy change was fitful and uneven but often resulted in dramatic action after years of delay. It also proved to be the case that policy advocacy and efforts to improve service delivery were reinforcing activities.

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[85] *UNDP funded a 1991 survey of a sample of 4,833 Pakistani NGOs: 70 per cent were rural CBOs; 11 per cent were led by females; 84 per cent were classified as welfare organizations; 54 per cent operated at the community level; 5 per cent were at the national level; 56 per cent had a membership of fewer than 100; 87 per cent felt they could benefit from training; and 55 per cent felt lack of funds to be a major obstacle.*

[86] *In Pakistan, 95 per cent have access to radio and 80 per cent to television; 20 per cent of households have a daily news reader.*

UN agency activities on the ground provided the learning and insight that supported advocacy.

Attention to Broader Contextual Factors

By the mid-1990s, the UN system had begun to look at some of the broader contextual factors that shaped Pakistan's progress on education and health issues. The contrast between this emerging concern with the broader strategic management of social development and the welfare orientation of the UN system in the late 1970s gives some indication of the evolution of the UN system over two decades. The issue of good governance, for example, and its impact on education and health started to appear in 1994. This, in turn, led to an interest in public sector reform, accountability, transparency, monitoring and evaluation and state-civil society relationships.

The Case of the Institutional Reforms Group

In late 1993, the emerging experience of the Social Action Programme (SAP) pointed to the institutional crisis facing Pakistan. Implementation of programmes in education and health care was proving to be slow or nonexistent. UNDP took the lead in organizing an institutional development task force under the SAP to begin a dialogue with the Government. UNDP then formed a working group of donors to compare experiences and create greater awareness of the issue within the Government. The group prepared a paper entitled "A Programme for Management of Development" and presented it to the special assistant to the prime minister, the secretary of planning and the secretary of local government in July 1994. UNDP arranged for the visit of a team from Malaysia to discuss that country's experience in public sector reform. The working group was continued in December 1994, and in April 1995, the acting UNDP resident representative, speaking on behalf of the Donor-Government Consortium Working Group on Institutional Development, made a presentation to the Pakistan Consortium meeting in Paris. This working group subsequently became the Good Governance Group sponsored by the Government to deal with wider questions of public sector reform and corruption. UNDP contributed support to this group in the form of logistics, seminars and travel funds. To date, over 16 workshops have been held around the country on such subjects as decentralization, information technology and the use of performance indicators. Many of the recommendations coming out of this process ended up in the Prime Minister's 2010 Programme, released by the Government in February 1998.

This process of advocacy and awareness raising worked for three main reasons. First, both the donor community and the Government had begun to sense the seriousness of the institutional crisis facing the country. While not always agreeing on the remedies, both made efforts at senior levels to get the issue on the agenda. A common perception existed about the nature of the problem to be addressed. The timing was also important. Second, UNDP supplied the leadership and the energy to the working group at both the logistical and substantive levels in its early stages. This helped the international community to remain committed to the work of the IRG over the course of two to three years. Third, UNDP, the donor community and the Government managed to navigate the transition from an initiative dominated by the international community to one owned by the Government. The policy of national execution encouraged this transition.

Assessment of the Impact of the United Nations System

Based on the summary given above of the UN system's contribution to capacity development in education and health in Pakistan from 1980 to 1995, we can begin to arrive at some rough assessments of its impact. First, the UN system, in our judgment, showed a good deal of innovation and leadership with respect to capacity issues during the period under review. It understood, and in some cases helped to shape, the transition from the narrower institutional development concepts of the 1980s to the more complex capacity development ideas of the 1990s. More attention was paid to the implementation of broad functions—reproductive health services or improved teacher training—and less to improvements to individual organizations. More began to be done to create a critical mass of capabilities in networks of organizations. Issues to do with the growing focus on contextual factors, such as good governance, the greater involvement of new actors in social service delivery, the importance of social development as a government priority,[87] decentralization and community participation, were given strong encouragement by UN agencies and slowly became part of the agenda of the Government and other donors, including the multilateral financial institutions.

This evolution was, in our view, an appropriate one for the UN system. It is important to remember that the percentage of the UN system contribution to ODA in Pakistan steadily declined during the period under review, as financial resource constraints appeared and other development agencies increased their involvement in the social sectors.[88] In response, the UN system shifted its focus from an emphasis on improving direct service delivery to a more complex mixture of capacity development, advocacy and policy innovation, most of which could be implemented at lower cost but with more leverage and strategic impact than the interventions of the 1980s.[89]

It is difficult to arrive at a quantitative judgment as to the overall impact of the UN system on capacity development in education and health in Pakistan. In some areas, such as improvements to the immunization delivery system, genuine progress was made, most of which appears to have been sustainable. Some UN work in the 1980s in other aspects of reform and improvement to the functioning of key ministries and departments was less successful, not surprising, given the difficulties involved. In the 1990s, the UN system can take credit for the strengthening of a series of NGO networks that continue to develop. It also brought about some attitudinal changes in Pakistan, in both political and bureaucratic circles, about the role of the state, the need to devolve and decentralize and the possibility of more creative solutions to institutional challenges likely to have operational impacts over the next three to five years. In terms of capacity developed, the overall impact can be rated as mixed to good. Some limited or

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[87] *The influence of the Human Development Report, first published in 1990, contributed to this change in government thinking.*

[88] *The UN system began to shift its attention towards more programming in the social sectors. UNDP, for example, increased its human resources programming from 17 per cent of total disbursements in the third country programme to about 60 per cent in the fifth.*

[89] *Again, it is important to see this shift as a change in emphasis rather than a replacement of one priority by another. By the mid-1990s, one third of UNICEF assistance still went to capacity development activities to do with service delivery.*

negligible progress in such areas as primary school performance balanced off against genuine gains in some aspects of service delivery, the involvement of a wider range of actors and some policy innovation and shifts in attitude.

The nature of capacity development calls for long-term judgments and perspectives. Many of the initiatives, such as the Ali Institute of Education (see box, page   ), seem well-conceived experiments that merit the resources that the UN system has provided. They now function as sources of innovation, skill and enthusiasm that are so badly needed in Pakistan. In the short term, therefore, the judgment is positive. But what is not predictable at this stage is the degree to which these kinds of innovative projects will expand and whether they will slowly coalesce into a critical mass for change and capacity development that will have a major systemic impact. Most recent UN system investments, however, seem to be justifiable gambles that are worth making, given the potential payoffs. Building the critical mass for innovation is likely to be a task lasting generations in Pakistan.

Finally, did the capacity that the UN system helped to develop result in any definable gains in people's welfare or personal well-being? Although making this particular judgment is not the focus of this report, it should be addressed, given the general belief that capacity is seen as a means rather than an end of development cooperation. Again, the assessment is a mixed one. In instances such as the improvements to immunization, the enhanced capacity led to demonstrable improvements in child health. As mentioned earlier, Pakistan achieved 80 per cent coverage for all childhood antigens other than measles by 1991. But other systemic indicators were not as promising. There was little recorded change in the nutritional status of women and children over the 1980-1995 period.[90] Indeed, by most measures, there was little indication of any positive changes in the lives of Pakistani children up to the mid-1990s. Fertility rates remained relatively constant at 6.1 and contraceptive use remained at an estimated 14 per cent. The performance of the primary school system also did not appreciably improve, even during the period of increased investment under the SAP from 1992 to 1996.[91]

Three factors need to be kept in mind when assessing this limited impact on developmental performance. The first is the tiny size, in comparative terms, of actual UN investments on the ground. Second, the benefits of UN system investments in advocacy and policy innovations that began in the late 1980s are difficult to trace and long term in nature. Third, it is important to remember the deep-seated nature of the constraints restricting progress in the social sectors—the feudal nature of rural society in Pakistan, the lack of political support during most of the 1970s and 1980s and the lack of effective actors outside the public sector (compared with such countries as Bangladesh). Again, the same judgments apply -- mixed outcomes and the necessity of a long-term perspective.

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[90] *Figures in the 1988 National Nutrition Survey indicate little progress over similar figures in 1977.*
[91] *Again, the scale is important to remember here. In 1988, for example, only 10.8 per cent of all ODA to Pakistan went to education and health. Only 3.4 per cent went to education by itself.*

III. KEY ISSUES ARISING FROM THE UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM APPROACH TO CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT

We were struck on this assignment with the need for the UN system to think through its comparative advantage and niche with respect to capacity development in Pakistan. It needs at all times to be clear on the nature of its unique contribution and the ways it can generate the greatest operational impact and strategic advantage. Given the limited financial resources available to the UN system and the potential in Pakistan for development agencies to be overwhelmed by the inherent constraints, the choice of intervention points and programmes is a critical one that has immediate operational implications.

In Pakistan, the UN system has a number of attributes that have helped to shape its comparative advantage with respect to capacity development in the social sectors:

It has a strong presence at the field level that compares favourably with those of other bilateral and multilateral donors, in terms of both technical and logistical capabilities. It has access to a wide variety of in-house expertise, both in Islamabad and in regional offices in places such as Kathmandu.[92]

The UN system has neutrality and a convening power that is respected by the Government and many funding agencies. There is a sense within the Government that its policy preferences are more likely to be respected in its dealings with the UN system.

It has the capacity to support small experimental projects using funds that would be considered too small by other donors with limited operational capacities in the field.

Most UN agencies have a good deal of experience and credibility in advocacy work.

Pakistan remains a country still relatively open to new ideas.

The UN is part of a community of development agencies in Pakistan that is informally divided into two groups, at least in terms of financial resources. The three multilateral financial institutions, including the International Monetary Fund (IMF), are in one group. Virtually all the other multilateral and bilateral donors form the other group. There is no group of influential mid-sized donors, as is the case of Bangladesh.[93]

In general, we believe the UN system moved incrementally and sensibly over the years to carve out an appropriate capacity development niche in Pakistan. This emerging role has a variety of facets. First, the UN system has increasingly acted as a policy catalyst and advocate to bring capacity development issues to the front of the Government's agenda. This advocacy has taken place at a number of levels, ranging from the global (e.g., the influence of UN conferences on basic health in 1978, basic education in 1990 and social development in 1994) to the federal, provincial and community levels. The issue of Pakistan's poor performance in social development surfaced in the Government's agenda after its low global ranking became

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92 *UNFPA, for example, has 15 professional staff in Kathmandu.*
93 *For various reasons, the European Union and the Government of Japan do not play large roles in the donor community. USAID wound up its programme in 1994.*

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clear in the Human Development Reports, beginning in 1990.[94] The UN system was among the first to underline the connection between social development and governance. And the UN system has engaged both the Government and NGOs in a range of issues, from reproductive health to female literacy. This upstream part of capacity development that leads to changed attitudes and subsequent policy reformulation has proved to be an important part of the broader process of capacity development in Pakistan.

Second, the UN system has acted as a generator, demonstrator and modeler of new ideas as regards capacity development. In our review of the various programmes, we came across a number of examples of small, low-cost experiments and pilot projects that were set up to learn about and disseminate new ideas. One example is the BMN programme initiated by WHO in 1994 in four locations around the country. UNDP sponsored four pilot projects in the decentralization of education and health care to the district levels as part of the SAP. UNICEF sponsored water supply, environmental sanitation and health education projects in 10 villages. Various UN agencies sponsored a number of South-South exchanges that promoted learning among practitioners. In supporting these kinds of activities, the UN system has played the role of facilitator of international knowledge and as incubator, or at least birth attendant, of new and innovative ideas in Pakistan, which can then be scaled up for broader application.

Third, the UN has played the role of organizational and network strengthener. In the 1980s, WHO assisted with the building of immunization services in Pakistan. In the late 1970s, UNFPA began to help develop the Government's capacity to deliver population planning services at the provincial level. During the 1992-1996 period, UNDP worked with a number of small NGOs and CBOs to create and strengthen a network better able to deliver services in education and health care to rural populations. In this sense, the UN system tried to create critical masses of capacity, in many cases outside of government, which could achieve sustainable growth and which could also push for change within the large public system.

Finally, the UN system increasingly acted as a facilitator or connector that located actual or potential pockets of capacity and then provided the financial support, access to information, symbolic protection, connections with other actors, faith and confidence that allowed such groups to accelerate and sustain their work. Given the lack of connections among groups and organizations in Pakistan, this function was a critical one, and one that had to be carried out with a good deal of sensitivity and local knowledge. The latest example of this kind of activity, the Sub-Regional Resource Facility (SURF) based in Islamabad, sponsors workshops, networking, exchanges of information, access to pools of knowledge and expertise. UNICEF, UNDP and UNFPA are all moving at present to play this intermediary catalytic role in Pakistan, especially with respect to the NGO community.

The Strategic Design of Capacity Development Interventions

Development agencies working in the education and health sectors in Pakistan face two major dilemmas. The crisis of capacity development is clearly a systemic one, which is unlikely to be "solved" by piecemeal project interventions, particularly in the short term. Yet huge system-wide reforms are likely to be unmanageable, unaffordable and probably unacceptable to key groups. Second, Pakistan has few characteristics of an action environment that can facilitate

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[94] *The first Social Action Programme began in 1992.*

good performance.[95] In many respects, the context is hostile to good institutional performance. Such situations have led donors in the past to create enclaves or protected spaces within which their programmes have a better chance of implementation. But such an approach tends to guarantee a lack of sustainability once outside funding is withdrawn.

The strategic choice of capacity interventions and their subsequent design in the mid-1980s did not always allow UN agencies to cope with these dilemmas. During that period, UN organizations and agencies were frequently the major international actors in education and health. In comparative terms, their resources were greater than in the 1990s. Some agencies concentrated on the improvement of conventional service delivery and made attempts to reform the main formal structures of government, including provincial departments of education. Most of these initiatives had limited impact, given the difficulty of shifting the large bureaucratic structures involved. In the early 1990s, poor results, declining resources and the entry of other funding agencies, particularly the World Bank,[96] into the social sector changed the nature of the interventions of the UN system in two key ways.

First, the nature of the policy dialogue with the Government changed. Rather than attempt to persuade authorities of the wisdom of a particular social policy, the UN system began to focus on facilitating the learning process underlying policy decisions. The demonstrator role discussed above was a part of this new approach. In effect, the UN system tried to help create what might be called policy learning communities of which it was also a member. Second, the UN agencies began to focus more on organizations either outside government or on the periphery of the main departments and ministries, in effect setting up centres of innovation and change that themselves could either influence or work with government. In some instances, this represented a strategy to build capacity at the micro level in an attempt to achieve quality, leadership and performance and then either replicate or scale up. The efforts in the 1990s to work more at the district level were part of this strategy, on the assumption that more flexibility existed at that level.

The UN system also changed its approach to the process of capacity development over the period under review. In earlier years, the emphasis was on more traditional approaches to project design and management—feasibility studies by outside experts, the project format with all its normal control and structural characteristics and implementation by outside firms or UN system executing agencies. The emphasis in the 1990s has shifted to social mobilization, community organization, behavioural change, adult learning and empowerment. The UN system has, in our judgment, made a significant transition to a system in which ownership and control lies much more with the Pakistani participants. WFP, for example, insists on the participation of VECs before allowing food to be used as an incentive for increasing girls' attendance at school. UNICEF is training field officers to use its approach to participatory processes,[97] which is built on the principles of adult learning, dialogue, attitudinal change and group problem solving. UNDP has sponsored national consultations involving the Government

95 *See Grindle and Hildebrand, Building Sustainable Capacity: Challenges for the Public Sector, p.33.*

96 *The World Bank invested over US$200 million in the Social Action Programme beginning in 1992. The UN system decided to play a supportive but much more marginal role.*

97 *See Workshop on Strengthening Participatory Attitudes in Communication and Development: A Facilitator's Manual, September 1996.*

and NGOs to consider the NGO Capacity Development Project. Four provincial workshops involving over 200 NGOs took place. The shift to greater community participation and Pakistani ownership has dramatically reduced the level of external technical assistance. The number of full-time technical assistance personnel declined by about 75 per cent between 1980 and 1995.

Training

Under certain conditions, training makes a useful contribution both to capacity development and to developmental performance. Training programmes must be part of a broader effort at organizational change within a particular institution. They must be combined with other logistical and administrative systems to result in sustainable capacity. The financial and professional incentives impinging on staff who have received training must support new ways of behaving. There must be immediate opportunities for staff to apply new knowledge. And there must be concerted efforts to retain staff as well as train them. Most of these conditions did not apply in Pakistan and it is our sense that many training programmes supported by the UN system in the 1980s were largely ineffective, as they were for most donors. Training per se has little inherent value if it is not carefully designed and if it does not form part a broader programme of organizational reform.

Sustainability

The issue of sustainability of UN system interventions in education and health is an extremely important one. It has proven difficult for most development agencies in Pakistan, given the harsh political and organizational context in the social sectors and the uncertainty about how to help induce sustainability. It seems clear from the experience of the UN system in Pakistan that sustainability derives from a combination of short- and long-term factors.

The most important factor seems to be the degree to which a programme or project engenders support and loyalty from groups in Pakistan from the outset. This includes those most directly affected or in a position to benefit directly from its outputs and those outside stakeholders whose support is crucial to its survival. Efforts at capacity development need to be demand-driven as much as supply-led. Issues to do with financial and political support, including cost recovery, charitable donations or access to continuing budgetary allocations, are crucial. NGOs in Pakistan, in particular, had a weak financial base and were susceptible to dependence on outside financing. The more demand-driven programmes in the 1990s appear to have survived longer than the more conventional supply-driven ones in the early 1980s.

Programmes that help equip Pakistani managers with the skills to adapt and change the direction and behaviour of their programmes and organizations in order to cope with different circumstances after the termination of donor support do well. This refers mainly to the capacity for self-diagnosis, self-renewal and resource mobilization.

It is important for a programme or project to focus on the sustainability issue during the design and implementation phases. Those programmes that set a rough balance among factors to do with relevance of outcome, complexity of design and absorbability seem to survive better. Those that become sustainable also seem to have been given a sufficient period for what might be called institutional incubation. When programme and project formats lead to arbitrary deadlines designed to fit the UN system's bureaucratic requirements, programme

participants frequently trade performance targets for the need to build capacity.[98]

Organizations that are part of a supportive network, such as a cluster of NGOs, have a better chance of achieving sustainability than those that have no such supporting connections. Organizations in the private sector that are used to competing for survival have an easier time maintaining themselves than new entrants in the public sector. This leads, in turn, to a wider use of public-private partnerships by UN agencies. A key to inducing organizational sustainability seems to be found at the broader organizational systems level than at that of the individual institution.

The stability of government policy formulation and decision-making has an effect on sustainability of the organizations involved in implementation. The general institutional and political instability in Pakistan led to frequent changes in policies with respect to primary education and/or health care, which made it difficult to sustain improvements over the medium and long term.

Finally, those UN system programmes designed by or with participants with a detailed knowledge of bureaucratic, political and cultural conditions in Pakistan seem to have a better chance of sustainability than those without.

In common with most development agencies in Pakistan, the UN system had a mixed record in making its capacity interventions sustainable. But the UN record appears to be as good as, and in some cases better than, those of other development agencies. And in some cases, UN interventions contributed to sustainable ideas and processes even in cases where the original organization faded away.

Spread and Diffusion

One of the issues that appeared in virtually every UN programme or project was what might be called spread and diffusion of the results of UN demonstration activities into larger programmes, with sufficient critical mass to make a difference. Such diffusion can take a variety of forms, including the replication or duplication of pilot projects, such as the BMN activities of WHO; the integration of pilot activities into regular government programmes, as in the case of the Institutional Reforms Group (IRG); and the scaling up of pilot projects, as in the case of the Ali Institute of Education.

It is important to remember that the diffusion challenge facing the UN system changed over the 1980-1995 period. In the earlier years, the problem was to induce system-wide changes in government delivery systems. If the intervention was successful, the Government would manage the diffusion of innovation and the process of scaling up. In the 1990s, as the UN system gave greater emphasis to either smaller interventions or demonstration programmes outside the main structures of government, the new challenge became to induce government and NGOs to adopt new practices that had been developed either in isolated field sites or in

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98 *"...the press of deadlines, the call for tangible evidence of activity progress and the need to meet performance standards have caused managers to concentrate on short-term production and technical outputs to the neglect of longer-term capacity and sustainability issues...." A Strategy for Assessing UNDP Effectiveness in Capacity-Building during the Fifth Programme Cycle, Central Evaluation Office, 1993.*

working groups in Islamabad.

The Case of the Ali Institute of Education

The Ali Institute of Education in Lahore is the first private sector institution to be supported by UNDP and UNESCO. It was established by a Pakistani entrepreneur and philanthropist and dedicated to improving teacher performance in Pakistani schools. Since its start in 1994, its primary focus has been on pre-service training. Most of the 16 full-time faculty have been recruited from outside the regular primary school system and have been sent to Columbia University Teachers College in New York as part of their professional development. The Institute maintains links with the Institute of Educational Development in Karachi, Strathclyde University in Scotland and others in Asia to keep abreast of international trends. External evaluations have been performed twice yearly since its establishment to check its performance standards. Faculty have visited the Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee to study its progress in non-formal education at the primary level. Its explicit mission is to act as an outside agent for change, which can collaborate with the Government to improve teacher performance. It hopes to help produce a new generation of teachers who can be the motivating force for teacher improvement.

Ninety per cent of students are women from poor backgrounds who go through a 40-week course before their posting in groups to a rural school in either the government or private system. The Institute keeps in touch with these students after graduation to give them the professional support they are unlikely to receive on site. Its most recent innovation is a series of Training and Resource Centres (TARCs) located at the better performing schools in particular provinces, such as Punjhab. Five to six teachers in each participating school act as a force for change at the local level and draw support from the main TARC at the Ali Institute. The school itself and the local community must also financially support the TARC. The current goal in the Punjab is to reach 2,000 teachers in an advisory/consulting service to government and the private sector for the improvement of teaching standards and a research and publications capacity. It sees itself as a public/private partnership that can act as a resource for government—not a replacement. The Institute has, for example, built strong relationships with the Government College for Elementary Teaching and the Directorate of Staff Development in Lahore and will gradually move into in-service training, as resources permit.

The experience of the UN system with the dynamics of innovation, scaling up and adoption by larger systems has not, to our knowledge, been examined in any systematic way, despite it being a pervasive theme in virtually all programmes. Aspects of the issue, similar in some way to those of sustainability, have to do with the total cost and component breakdown of a programme, its logistical and organizational intensity, its visibility, its similarities and differences with government or NGO programmes, timing and many others. Experience to date indicates limited progress. Replication and scaling up have proved difficult in Pakistan, with few examples outside of the Aga Khan Rural Support Programmes in the Northern Areas and the Orangi Pilot Project. The UN system has also encountered some difficulties in integrating separate programmes, such as EPI activities in PHC and the BMN into regular government programmes. This issue should receive special attention from the UN system in Pakistan.[99]

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[99] *The book "Making a Difference: NGOS and Development in a Changing World", edited by Michael Edwards and David Hulme, is one of the best general summaries of this issue.*

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Focus on Women

By direct mandate and by policy choice, the UN system made a sustained effort to improve women's health and education throughout the period in question. UNICEF, for example, issued its Situation Analysis of Children and Women in 1987 and its approach to Improved Motherhood and Neonatal Health in 1988. Part of those programmes involved the training of TBAs and lady health visitors (LHVs)[100]. UNICEF trained 8,000 TBAs during the 1984-1992 period to supplement the 45,000 trained by government at both the federal and provincial levels. A renewed campaign in support of women's education was initiated in 1988 to deal in part with the low level of female literacy in the country. Throughout the period under review, the UN system, particularly UNICEF and UNFPA, made special efforts to improve both formal and non-formal primary education for girls, to reduce son preference, to improve maternal health and lower mortality rates and to expand women's access to sustainable livelihoods.[101] The UN system helped to establish the Women's Development Support Network (WDSN) in Pakistan, organized around five University Women's Studies Centres. The IASU in Islamabad also established a substantial gender database for use by programme participants.

Coherence of the United Nations System

The terms of reference of this report focus on the performance of the UN system as an actor in Pakistan. Did the UN, as a system, act to promote capacity development in education and health in Pakistan? Or are we looking simply at the aggregated efforts of individual UN funds and agencies? In terms of the structure and procedures of the UN system in the field, the following aspects are present in the Pakistan case:

The UN Development Group in Pakistan (comprising heads of agency of UNDP, UNICEF, UNFPA, WFP and UNDCP hold meetings every two to three months to review system policies and performance.

The majority of UN organizations and all the members of the UN Development Group are located in UN House in Islamabad. Of the six UN organizations reviewed for this report, only one—WHO—has offices elsewhere.

A Programme Review and Coordination Subcommittee has been established to review programme policies, joint advocacy and inter-agency collaboration. Working groups exist on HIV/AIDS, poverty, the SAP and the district-level planning and database. The IASU, whose costs are shared by the UN agencies, provides the technical and administrative support to the programme coordination process. In 1996, the UN system submitted a Country Strategy Note to the Government, which was the culmination of a collaborative process begun in 1993.

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100 TBAs and family members are still responsible for about 75 per cent of all births in Pakistan.

101 "...an emphasis on training and orientation of officials, trainers, health workers, auxiliaries, teachers and others backed up by awareness campaigns and social mobilization. ...A special emphasis will be placed on the inclusion of women at all levels as both recipients and deliverers in the capacity-building process. Programme planning, management and accountability shall receive special consideration for training." UNICEF Country Programme of Cooperation, 1988-1992, p.14.

Collaborative approaches to programming include submissions and policy papers[102] to the Government, common programmes such as the UN Common Socio-Economic Database,[103] working groups, the UN Poverty Alleviation Group, the Inter-Agency Working Group on Gender and Development and the UN Working Group on Health and Nutrition (with WHO) and the UN Working Group on Education.

Joint programming also includes International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD)-WFP-UNDP collaboration in area development programmes, UNICEF-WHO work on immunization, UNDP-UNICEF work in governance and the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) in Pakistan involving UNICEF,UNDP, UNFPA, UNESCO, WHO and the World Bank. Efforts have now been made to synchronize programme planning for all UN organizations for the 1999-2003 period. From time to time, the UN system engages in joint advocacy, such as the Joint Agency Statement on Education personally presented by the heads of UNESCO, UNICEF and UNDP in 1995.

It is our view that the UN system in Pakistan has made a genuine effort to act in a more coordinated fashion in accordance with General Assembly policy, particularly in the 1990s. While not an official UNDAF site, it is operating in line with UNDAF principles and, in fact, intends to apply for site status at some point in the near future. UN staff seem convinced of the need for individual organizations to act as a more coherent family if their impact and influence in Pakistan are to be strengthened and sustained. Issues to do with greater coordination and collaboration, which appear intractable at headquarters, are much more easily resolved in field units. The same dynamic that leads to decentralization in the Government of Pakistan is influencing the behaviour of the UN office.

Two other points about UN system coordination are relevant. First, the main challenge at the field level in Pakistan is not overcoming the resistance of recalcitrant staff intent on preserving individual organizational prerogatives. Rather, it is the more complex challenge of managing a pluralistic "system" in which the unique contributions of the individual UN organizations and the benefits of collaboration can be simultaneously maximized. Also important is the need to limit the escalating costs of joint action (e.g., too many meetings, slow decision-making).

A second point applies to the issue of capacity development. All the UN funds and specialized agencies reviewed for this report are more and more engaged in overlapping activities, such as community development, women's programmes, decentralization, advocacy and support to NGOs. All are acquiring insights on capacity development that can and should be shared. The big gains in promoting UN system collaboration will thus likely come from joint programming and from more conscious efforts to share experience and learning. The UN system in Pakistan is already far along in its efforts to promote structural and procedural collaboration. Organizational learning seems to offer the greatest returns.

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102 Two examples would be two papers submitted to the new Government of Pakistan after its election in February 1997.
103 The technical committee comprised UNESCO, WFP, UNICEF, UNDP and UNFPA.

Chapter 7

IMPACT EVALUATION OF SUPPORT BY THE UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM TO CAPACITY-BUILDING IN UGANDA: 1980-1995

by Andre Nzapayeke and Denis Osborne

I. INTRODUCTION

The Evaluation Process

It was difficult to define a methodological framework for the analysis of the capacity-building policy of the different United Nations agencies in Uganda. Indeed, there are few common points in the operational modalities. The methodology chosen has been to seek elements within the implementation process of each agency's programme (its decisions, activities and institutional development) that could be related to capacity-building. Although capacity-building was not widely recognized as an important concept in relation to development until the late 1980s, activities related to capacity-building—even though not called by that name—have always been part of development efforts.

The Country and Its Governance

Uganda's population of 21.3 million lives on 93 million square miles straddling the equator and bordered by the Democratic Republic of Congo, Kenya, Rwanda, Sudan and the United Republic of Tanzania. Most of the land is at high altitudes and very fertile. The gross national product (GNP) per capita was US$190 in 1994, well below the average for sub-Saharan Africa (US$539) and developing countries as a whole (US$1,053). The 1997 human development index ranked Uganda 159 out of 175 countries.

Since independence in 1962, when it was considered to be one of the most prosperous countries in Africa, Uganda has encountered severe upheaval. After a coup d'etat in 1971 led by Idi Amin, the economy was decimated. Many people suffered and the image of the country was tainted by the excesses of the dictator. A border dispute with the United Republic of Tanzania led to full-scale war in 1979 and to Idi Amin's overthrow by the Tanzanian army. Administrative and social services were severely damaged or destroyed during the war. The infrastructure for production, processing, transport and marketing of crops collapsed. The task of repairing the damage caused by the war and its aftermath posed a great challenge to the regime of President Milton Obote. Government efforts to stabilize the economy were accompanied by a drastic devaluation of the currency and severe budgetary restrictions on the entire public sector, particularly on the delivery of social services. Urban areas, for example, were hit by a stringent fiscal policy allowing only limited salary increases. Roadside "farms" sprang up as part-time, extra-curricular ventures run by public servants.

According to a United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) report, children and women suffered most from this situation, given their vulnerability and susceptibility to disease. Famine in some districts, increasing infant mortality and epidemics of typhoid, cholera and dracunculiasis caused by deterioration of water quality gave striking examples of the effect of the disruption in medical and maternal health services. Much of the health care provided then in

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Uganda was delivered through a network of hospitals, health centres and clinics run by missions and non-governmental organizations (NGOs).

By late 1985, civil war had brought development programmes to a virtual standstill. International staff were evacuated, vehicles and supplies were stolen and equipment looted. After President Joweri Museveni came to power in 1986, many programmes were restarted, but continuing insecurity isolated northern Uganda. By the end of 1989, security was restored to most areas and the implementation of development projects and programmes took place on a national scale. Some northern districts are still not entirely stabilized, however, making it difficult for some UN agencies to operate there.

Uganda is described as a non-party democracy. Local Resistance Councils were established during the civil war at five levels (village, parish, subcounty, county and district). They became institutionalized in 1987 and formalized in 1993. The Resistance Councils have formed the basis for a policy of vigorous decentralization that has led today to the creation of 45 districts, each with subsidiary area councils. At the highest level, debate in parliament is lively and reported widely and in the press.

In 1995, a new constitution was adopted and "democratic decentralization" became the foundation of Uganda's national policy. With the Local Government Act of 1997, many functions and powers that hitherto were exercised only by the central government have been devolved to local government units. [121]. Decentralization to the district level can be considered one of the major achievements of the Museveni government. It has defused tribal tensions, increased participation and ownership and improved the quality of governance.

Government commitment to promote good governance and democratic participation seems to be strong in Uganda, at the highest level of the society. This commitment can be partly measured through the freedom of expression and genuine efforts to promote community participation, taking into account the issues of gender and the disabled.

The Government is also strongly committed to capacity-building. Almost every project and every government institution has a capacity-building component. Government directives give clear priority to the use of local expertise in the implementation of development projects. The determination of the Ugandan Government to work towards change and development has rightly attracted the support of an increasing number of donors.

The Basic Education Sector

By 1962, at independence, Uganda had a well-organized and efficient education system, a reasonable level of school enrolment and a high level of literacy. When the social and economic situation deteriorated, the government contribution to the cost of education decreased, the desertion of poorly paid teachers became common and the schools lacked materials and facilities. To stem the collapse of the school system, parent-teacher associations were formed and school management committees were established with the right to levy charges to support the running costs of the schools. With the continuous rise in costs, however, many parents could not afford to keep their children in school. Girls were the principal victims.

Even with the gradual rehabilitation of the economy, basic education in Uganda did not

seem to be a priority in the investment policies of the Government and donors. In 1987, the Government appointed the Education Policy Review Commission to appraise the existing system. The commission recommended measures and strategies for improving the system and pointed to the need for universal primary education (UPE). A white paper on educational reform was published in 1992 [159], the same year as the Jomtein Conference on Education for All.

Donors were slow to respond to the 1992 paper, despite their own commitment at Jomtien to the ideals of UPE, and donor support for UPE in Uganda was delayed. That has changed dramatically, however. For the 1994-2002 period, more than 16 multilateral and bilateral donors pledged over US$450 million for primary education projects in Uganda. According to a recent United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) report, the UPE policy has been a great success. Enrolment rose from 2.9 million in 1996 to 5.7 million in 1997; the number of schools increased dramatically, to a total of about 11,000 today. Besides formal basic education, an effort has been made in recent years to promote functional adult literacy and take into account educational conditions of the disabled child and of the girl. Donor organizations such as UNICEF, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and bilateral organizations are strongly involved.

The Basic Health Sector

At independence, the proportion of doctors in the population of Uganda was three times as high as elsewhere in sub-Saharan Africa. Health service delivery systems were satisfactory. But civil strife, war, lack of governance in public affairs, extravagant public expenditure and economic mismanagement left Uganda's health system in ruins.

The basic health sector benefited more than basic education from the attention of the Government and donors in Uganda. Despite this, health coverage of the population is still a major problem. Health infrastructure is effective mostly at national and district levels. Subcounties, parishes and villages depend on the health service delivery at district level or on private and community initiatives, usually supported by the Government. UN figures indicated in 1995 that only 49 per cent of Uganda's population had access to basic health services. Data for the same year indicate that life expectancy is low: 40.4 years for males and 42.3 years for females.

By 1992, government expenditure on health had increased to 5 per cent of gross domestic product (GDP). The majority supported curative care, however, primarily in urban areas. Sanitation was available to only 42 per cent of the population. With the human immunodeficiency virus/acquired immune deficiency syndrome (HIV/AIDS) becoming a major challenge, the Government and donors gave priority to health education at several levels, including support to strengthen the capacity of individual NGOs and to improve the coordination of health activities.

II. THE UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM IN UGANDA

The UN agencies operating in Uganda can be grouped into three categories:

Specialized agencies, including the Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations (FAO), UNESCO and the World Health Organization (WHO), mostly providing professional or technical competence and cooperation in a given area or discipline;

Funds (UNFPA, UNICEF), targeted at specific needs or groups and using a multidisciplinary approach, with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) also in this category;

Programmes (United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and World Food Programme (WFP)), determined primarily by their inputs directed to development, with the United Nations Capital Development Fund (UNCDF) probably best included under this classification.

The Joint United Nations Programme on UNAIDS is not an agency, but a cosponsored programme bringing together UNICEF, UNDP, UNFPA, UNESCO, WHO and the World Bank in a common effort against the AIDS pandemic. It is one of the best examples of coordination within the UN system. In Uganda, before the creation of UNAIDS, there was already inter-agency activity to support the Ugandan AIDS Commission, the AIDS control programmes of 12 line ministries and the work of NGOs.

Other agencies in the UN system may not be especially active in the field of basic health and basic education in Uganda, but mention of their activities is relevant when considering UN structures and coordination. The International Labour Organisation (ILO) has supported training for micro-enterprises and helped the staff of the Uganda Management Institute attend seminars. Some staff members of the UNDP-funded National Execution (NEX) project located in the Ministry of Planning were also trained at the ILO International Training Centre in Turin, Italy.

The table below gives an illustration of the scale of the activities of certain UN agencies in Uganda in 1995, based on figures supplied by the agencies (with several figures rounded off):

AGENCY	Programme Spending $m for 1995	Office Costs $m for 1995	Ugandan Staff professional	Expatriate Staff	Support Staff
UNDP	10.0	1.4	10	7	?
UNHCR	18.6	3.7	Nil	16	62
WFP	56.0	4.3	5	20	130
UNICEF	45.0	1.8	16	18	54
WHO	0.9	0.3	7	8	18

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

Agriculture was one of the sectors most affected by war and by inflation and price distortions associated with the initial phases of reconstruction in Uganda. FAO policy in the 1980s focused on capacity-building at higher rather than basic levels, for example, staff development, especially training for higher degrees. After 1990, there was more emphasis on training for the public service in areas relevant to structural adjustment. After 1995, attention turned towards capacity-building for NGOs, hoping to reach community-based organizations and farmers' organizations.

Support for high-level training helped create a viable veterinary school at Makerere University. It was not possible to judge the levels of retention of trained staff within Uganda or to compare numbers graduating with employment opportunities. Nor was it possible to identify links between veterinary training at university and the training of extension workers, or the effect of any veterinary component in teacher training on capacity-building for basic education. The sustainability of support for veterinary workers in the field was uncertain.

A training project to develop economic and financial policy skills, linked with International Development Association (IDA) credit, contributed substantially to capacity-building, as evidenced by improved policies. Indeed, between 1992/93 and 1995/96, the farmers' share of the export price of coffee increased from 30 per cent to 60 per cent, and over the same period, coffee exports more than doubled. Many farmers were investing in new varieties of beans for higher-quality coffee. FAO was less in evidence in Uganda, however, than several other agencies. At the time of the evaluation, the top representative post had gone unfilled for several months, reducing the operational capacity of the organization to support any programme or give sufficient information to do justice to its earlier activities.

United Nations Development Programme

UNDP activities from 1980-1986 were essentially focused on providing food and relief to drought-stricken populations and war-ravaged districts. Starting in 1988, UNDP moved its focus to enhancing the planning and financial and human resource capacity of Uganda's public sector institutions, which had been severely crippled by years of civil strife. The programme also focused on the revitalization of the agricultural sector, with support to the horticulture and dairy industries, and to rehabilitation of feeder roads, in cooperation with UNCDF.

The fourth country programme (1992-1996) marked a transition from rehabilitation to development activities, with an emphasis on poverty eradication and grass-roots participation; environmental protection and natural resources management; and women in development. Within the framework of this programme, assistance was given to the AIDS Control Programme in a multi-sectoral approach (a kind of inter-agency activity), and to the Ugandan AIDS Commission.

Before 1988, very little was done in the area of capacity-building by UNDP for two main reasons. The first is that in the post-war period, during which food and housing security was not assured, priority was given to relief activities. The second reason is that capacity-building and sustainable development—and policies associated with them—were not in the forefront of development thinking. UNDP involvement in more sustainable development

activities began with the third country programme, between 1988 and 1991.

In basic education, UNDP supported, in the period covered by this evaluation, only one three-year project, Basic Education for National Development (BEND), whose objective was to facilitate integration into the school curricula of such practical subjects as health, adult literacy, appropriate technology, community development and agriculture and to provide appropriate pre-service and in-service training methodologies for teachers. Other activities in the area of education included technical assistance and academic training for Makerere University. Equipment was supplied, usually in association with other UN agencies such as FAO and UNESCO. A number of Ugandan academicians were trained. The master's programme in economic policy and planning was also quite successful, according to beneficiaries.

In basic health, besides the rehabilitation of 12 health centres in the late 1980s, the major activity has been the contribution to the fight against HIV/AIDS. Among the achievements of the programme so far are:

Support to the establishment of the Ugandan AIDS Commission secretariat to coordinate the AIDS control initiatives of about 65 member NGOs;

Supply of material and financial resources to build the operational capacity of NGOs and to improve their service delivery to persons with AIDS;

Support to capacity-building of 12 line ministries to help integrate HIV/AIDS concerns in their activities;

Provision of seed funds to affected families and communities to cope with the long-term economic consequences of the disease; and

Support to help increase awareness of the immediate and long-term social problems brought by AIDS.

This project, with a budget of US$12 million, has been executed by the National Execution (NEX) Unit of the External Aid Coordination Department of the Ministry of Planning. The NEX Unit was established in 1990, in response to General Assembly resolutions 44/211 and 47/199, which stressed the need for the UN system to give increasing priority to building and /or enhancing the capacity to undertake national execution. Forty projects have been funded by UNDP through the NEX Unit, whose staff includes 8 highly trained Ugandans, supported entirely by UNDP, and which provides logistics, training, supplies and operational costs.

Aside from the education and health sectors, UNDP is active in areas that have implications for education and health, including poverty eradication and rural development, policy and management capacity-building, environment and natural resources and gender. According to evaluation reports, major contributions to capacity-building have been made. Examples include: support to the Civil Aviation Authority; strengthening the system of tax administration of the Ugandan Revenue Authority; support to civil service reform; institutional support to the National Environment Action Plan; and institutional support to the Ministry of Gender.

Impact on Sustainable Capacity-Building. In the area of basic education, UNDP made a limited contribution to capacity-building in the period covered by the evaluation. It is

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surprising that despite the priority given to basic education by the Government and in response to the Jomtien Declaration, UNDP did not respond to the call to promote universal basic education for all. It may be attributed to the fact that since 1994, many multilateral and bilateral donors have offered strong support for primary education. Higher education, to the contrary, received great attention from UNDP. This was probably due to the urgent need to provide Uganda with competent personnel to revitalize public service delivery systems on a sustainable basis.

In the area of health, UNDP support for the rehabilitation of health centres in the mid-1980s can be considered an ad hoc emergency activity. In HIV/AIDS control, UNDP acts through the NEX Unit of the Ministry of Planning, which in turn gives support to the Uganda AIDS Commission and to line ministries, which support NGOs and district service delivery systems. It is difficult to establish a direct link between the results obtained and UNDP assistance, but it can be assumed that the ability to deliver appropriate services is due to UNDP support.

All UNDP projects are nationally executed, some by Ugandan bodies other than the NEX Unit. There were differing views about the NEX Unit. Some thought it performed well, promoting better and local management of projects. Others thought this failed to justify the continued—some said increasing—dependence on UNDP financial support

United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

The implementation of UNESCO activities in Uganda is coordinated by a National Commission for UNESCO, created about 10 years ago and chaired by the Minister of Education. UNESCO is not a funding agency as such, but provides seed financing and implements projects funded by donors. Between 1980 and 1995, UNESCO implemented about 63 projects in Uganda covering various areas, from support to Makerere University to the rehabilitation of the National Museum and establishment of a seismological network. Of total projects in Uganda, 22 per cent are related to basic education and 5 per cent to the health sector. Some ongoing projects in the area of basic education are: curriculum reform for basic education (a subregional project); vocationalization of the curriculum, aimed at rehabilitation of technical institutes; support to special needs education; development of guidance and counseling programmes in teacher training colleges and schools; and a research project for improving reading achievement levels in primary schools.

Very few details exist on UNESCO capacity-building. Many Ugandans benefited from UNESCO scholarships during the 1980-1995 period, others were able to pursue research and implement pilot projects and the national media were strengthened.

UNESCO is the only UN agency that uses nationals almost exclusively to pursue its goals at the country level. This transfer of responsibility and competence from expatriates to nationals is an important contribution to capacity-building, as it gives National Commission members the possibility to improve their skills through the conception, formulation, implementation and monitoring of projects. Problems pointed out by some members of the Commission, however, make it necessary to question the sustainability of these capacity-building activities:

Many beneficiaries of scholarship do not return to Uganda, leading to a loss of

capacity for national institutions.

The retention capacity of the institutions utilizing trained cadres, e.g., Makerere University and the public service, is usually weak because of the low level of salary and bad working conditions.

In some cases, equipment provided by UNESCO arrived too late to be useful, sometimes, without spare parts and/or appropriate instruction booklets, making it useless.

The decrease of UNESCO funding capacity since 1982 has made it harder to motivate people to take part actively in UNESCO activities.

The most discouraging problem underlined by senior Ugandans in relation to UNESCO activities is the long and uncertain procedure for the approval of projects by headquarters in Paris. The best research workers are unlikely to seek funding from UNESCO, so that the system of international competition does not result, as was intended, in support going to those who most deserve it. The long procedures, delays and uncertainty make the National Commission members appear powerless in terms of their capacity to make decisions.

The UNESCO Club Movement, which fosters international understanding and cooperation, is, however, a good example of long-term capacity-building. The initiative to set up the club came from young Ugandans in 1989 and was supported by the National Commission. Today there are 65 UNESCO Clubs throughout the country; 40 per cent are in schools and the rest are community based in rural areas.

United Nations Population Fund

Much of the work of UNFPA begins with sensitization. In the early 1980s, the Government did not have a stated population policy, and the UNFPA programme in Uganda was described as having an "ad hoc" character. In 1988, a UNFPA office was established in Kampala, and UNFPA policy became focused on capacity-building at the centre (institutional support), shifting later towards capacity-building in districts, in line with the country's policy of decentralization. Population-related activities in the Uganda National Rehabilitation and Development Plan for the period 1991/92 to 1994/95 set targets for reduction in infant and maternal mortality. Other UNFPA goals included increasing immunization coverage for children under two years of age from 33 per cent to 80 per cent. UNFPA staff said they thought that immunization was work that would normally be undertaken by UNICEF. Its mention as one of the (few) quantifiable goals for UNFPA activities in Uganda shows how easily such responsibilities become blurred.

A 1985 UNFPA mission identified family life education as a priority. UNFPA supported work by the Ministry of Education Curriculum Development Centre to develop materials for use in primary schools and teacher training from 1989 to 1993. The materials produced covered population, reproductive health, sexually transmitted diseases, nutrition, environment, women and community development and were subsequently tested in 16 pilot districts. Staff were trained and the subject matter introduced in teacher training colleges. These materials on family life were to be integrated into different parts of the primary school curriculum, and similar materials were prepared and tested for secondary schools. In the pilot districts, there was capacity-building (training) of teachers to handle sensitive materials,

reaching approximately 100 schools, 1,000 teachers and 34,000 pupils.

UNFPA worked in the districts to create capacity by training staff in family planning, providing equipment (which included vehicles) and supplying contraceptives. UNFPA considers that distribution of materials from the District Medical Office to the clinics has sometimes been poor, with transport and stock-keeping problems. Improvements are currently sought through the privatization of central medical stores and the provision of motorcycles to district offices.

There have been attempts to integrate HIV/AIDS issues with support for reproductive health, as stated explicitly in the objectives for a new phase of a Mother and Child Health Project starting in 1989. The project was characterized by quantifiable, long-term objectives for reduction in maternal and infant mortality rates.

In 1988, an Integrated District Population Programme was executed by ILO and implemented by the (then-combined) Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning. There was training of community-based distributors to reach the rural areas, but these were volunteers and the use of volunteers as distributors seems unlikely to prove sustainable. The UNFPA view [94] is that this has strengthened the coordination of UNFPA-funded activities in the districts, but that coordination with other agencies and NGOs involved in population activities needs further strengthening. Indeed, there is considerable evidence of duplication with UNICEF activities. It is difficult to assess the impact of this programme.

All of these projects should contribute to capacity-building, even if the major contribution is to sensitize officials involved in project preparation. It was impossible to ascertain, however, whether there would be better and more cost-effective ways of promoting sensitization.

Although this is outside the target areas of basic health and basic education mentioned in our terms of reference, we wish to comment on UNFPA support for activities at Makerere University. Support for demography began in 1975 and a course in population studies began in 1985, with the first students admitted in 1987 [55]. UNFPA supported further projects from 1988 and 1993 and evaluations were undertaken in 1990, 1994 and 1996 [54, 55, 56, 57]. The projects helped prepare the staff needed for continued training but retention was poor because of the low salaries and unfavourable working conditions.

There was concern that project procedures are often too rigid for the needs of the districts. The general attitude among those working in the different parts of the UN system seems to be that ensuring the responsible use of their funds requires management control from the centre. A more effective approach would be to motivate partners to share their missions, delegate management, transfer ownership and monitor outcomes. That is especially so in a country that seeks decentralization for its own governance. Ugandan officials told of their confusion about the lack of coordination among agencies. In part, this is a matter of explaining different agency roles. WHO, for example, may pioneer new health care procedures, UNICEF fund and support their use on a larger scale and UNFPA provide education about their relevance to family needs.

The sustainability of UNFPA work on the family life components of the primary school curriculum is uncertain. The UNFPA mandate does not go beyond support for the

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development of learning materials to the trial testing stage. Hence a new curriculum developed over several years in pilot projects cannot be offered more generally to schools, defeating the intention of the pilot project. To meet the original objectives, the Government would need to finance translation into four local languages and pay for printing and distribution. This represents a major investment that the Government cannot afford.

In the pilot districts there was capacity-building of teachers to handle sensitive materials, reaching approximately 100 schools, 1,000 teachers and 34,000 pupils. But the project has to be regarded as a failure if successful pilot trials cannot be followed by full-scale adoption of the materials.

We include in this area maternal and child health projects and others mentioned above, for which the main effects would be felt in rural areas. UNFPA is much welcomed in the districts. Both among officials and the people—who are the ultimate beneficiaries—there have been developments of awareness and attitude as a result of UNFPA efforts to promote sensitization. When UNFPA is thought to take ownership of such activities, however, this reduces their impact on capacity-building by detracting from the responsibility of those working in district offices and leading to inflexibility in the procedures and in the use of equipment and other resources.

A long-term objective set for a maternal and child health project [97] started in 1993 was to reduce infant mortality rates from 122 per 1,000 live births (in 1991) to 112 per 1,000 by the year 2001. An evaluation in 1994 asserted that "the project was not designed to reduce infant mortality" because a fall in infant mortality rates would depend more critically on inputs from other projects. A later evaluation [89] in 1996 reported (in relation to increasing obstetric coverage, seemingly distinct from the inputs provided under the project) that infant mortality had decreased to 97 per 1,000 births from 122 per 1,000. Quantifiable targets are most welcome but have to be related specifically to inputs. Another objective of the project was to increase the contraceptive prevalence rate from 8.7 per cent to 15 per cent by 1996, and the evaluation reported that this goal was achieved in 1995. If these figures are sustainable, they represent welcome increases in capacity.

In that 1996 evaluation and others, evaluators measured success more by the extent to which the intended inputs had been achieved (the number of traditional birth attendants trained, for example) rather than the effects or outcomes (such as the proportion of births assisted by a trained attendant and local statistics for maternal mortality). Nowhere in these evaluations is there reference to the budgeted costs of a project or its disbursements, nor are estimates given for the costs to implement recommendations that are made.

Projects to support population research and training at Makerere University had institution-building as an explicit objective. Much of the planning was very businesslike: an evaluation in 1996 found that sustainability depended on continuing financial support requiring a static or increased contribution from the Government in addition to income from contracts for consultancies and from cost-sharing for student fees.

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

Uganda has been a host country to refugees since the 1950s. Between 1980 and 1995, the UNHCR office in Kampala helped the Government meet the needs of refugees from

Rwanda, the Sudan and Zaire. Ugandan refugees returned from their exile to Uganda and they, too, received assistance from UNHCR. According to UNHCR staff, Uganda differs from most countries in that it has been government policy to allocate sufficient land for farming as well as for settlement. This has made it possible for UNHCR to help refugees become quickly self-supporting.

There are three ways UNHCR contributed to long-term capacity-building:

Efforts were made to use and develop the skills of the refugees, those of teachers for example, and develop structures within the camps that could be transferred to their own countries when the refugees returned home.

Ugandan teachers and health care staff were trained to help in refugee camps, providing sustainable and flexible human resources for the districts.

Support services for the refugees, such as dispensaries, were set up in the districts, with the intention to serve the local population as well. Small-scale support for these services was handed over to the Government and continued after the refugees left. UNHCR also provided training for staff from the Ministry of Local Government, the judiciary and the police. This support for the needs of the host population, as well for the needs of the refugees, has made the coming and going of refugees a benefit to the local community and built a capacity to accommodate refugees if they return.

In a situation where long-term capacity-building might seem impossible, capacity was built in basic health and education. It has also generated in the community as a whole a greater capacity for accommodating refugees. The favourable reaction of the local population to refugees on their unpredictable arrivals indicates the success of these efforts.

United Nations Children's Fund

Following the overthrow of Idi Amin in 1979, the first UNICEF activities were in the form of emergency assistance. By 1981, UNICEF policy was characterized by a shift from emergency assistance to a rehabilitation programme, with basic activities related to nutrition and the supply of essential drugs and small items of diagnostic equipment. By 1983, child survival became a central issue and two major programmes were launched: the expanded programme on immunization (EPI), which led to the provision of cold-chain equipment and vaccines, training for health staff and equipping of health centres with solar power; and the control of diarrhoeal diseases (CDD), which led to the training of district health teams in oral rehydration therapy (ORT), installation of ORT units in each district and the distribution of oral rehydration salts to all health units of the country.

But by the year 1983, the main concern in Uganda was to rebuild the basic infrastructure of the country that had been destroyed during the civil war. From 1983 to 1986, UNICEF and the Government gave priority to rehabilitation of infrastructure and supply of essential drugs and equipment. The transfer of skills to improve service delivery became a necessity. UNICEF commitment to the programmes on EPI and CDD included payment for allowances, transport, advocacy and support to the development of training materials. The handbook produced for EPI and CDD training is still in use today, although revised many times to integrate such new themes as health education and HIV/AIDS control. During the period of rehabilitation and reconstruction, the Government was unable to pay the wages of health workers, and UNICEF

stepped in to pay the salary of many health workers over a three-year period. Although some were critical of the idea, Ugandan officials and UNICEF staff agreed that, without that commitment, it would have been difficult to consolidate the newly rehabilitated health system and stabilize the situation.

By 1987, HIV/AIDS had become a major challenge and health education became central to UNICEF policy and strategy. This led to a shift of emphasis to greater empowerment and mobilization of communities. UNICEF gave support to community-based activities, among them: the Functional Adult Literacy Programme, the community maintenance of bore holes and the Ugandan Community-Based Health Care Association, which brings together over 130 NGOs working in primary health care (PHC). A secretariat was established by UNICEF to make it possible for the NGOs to collaborate and coordinate their activities efficiently.

In 1990, there was a major shift in UNICEF policy, following an evaluation that brought to light that despite tremendous efforts, the major causes of child morbidity and mortality had not changed since 1981 and there was no significant improvement in nutrition. In addition, HIV/AIDS had appeared as a major health risk for women and children. The evaluation highlighted the need for sustainable capacity-building in planning, resource mobilization and management, communication and gender analysis. UNICEF priority shifted to supporting capacity-building at the district level.

In the 1980-1995 period, UNICEF supported four major categories of activities to promote capacity-building:

Activities related to EPI/CDD, by rehabilitating health centres, providing essential drugs, vaccines and cold-chain and other equipment, revitalizing bore holes for safe water supply and supporting training programmes;

Basic health education activities, by establishing a district-level health education network and social mobilization programmes and redesigning primary school curricula to integrate such health subjects as EPI, CDD, AIDS control and water supply and sanitation;

Area and community-based activities, such as support for community health care associations, functional adult literacy programmes and a community maintenance system of bore holes; and

District and national capacity, including support to training programmes in management and planning, advocacy and supply of logistics.

Since the Government adopted the constitution of 1995 and institutionalized the decentralization process, UNICEF, which has for a long time supported decentralization of health activities, has given full priority to assistance for capacity-building at district and community levels. In the post-war period and the early period of reconstruction, when infrastructure had to be totally rebuilt, UNICEF made it possible to lay a foundation for more sustainable development activities. Training, institutional development, empowerment and appropriate utilization of personnel were made possible by the necessary first step of emergency relief to stabilize a country in crisis and help support rehabilitation and reconstruction.

Most rural health centres rebuilt in the early 1980s with UNICEF assistance are still operational. After a period of turmoil, EPI and CDD activities launched by UNICEF provided

the country with the basic equipment, supplies, financial and human resources which became the foundation for the rehabilitation of the entire health system. It is within the framework of these two programmes that UNICEF supported the recruitment, training and remuneration of the first post-war health workers. These activities have made rehabilitation of the health system possible. Despite the positive results, however, an evaluation of UNICEF activities shows that in 1990, health infrastructure was inadequate and only 23 per cent of the population lived within five kilometres of a health unit. Rural health units were understaffed and underequipped. Most families still draw their water from polluted swamps and rivers.

UNICEF supports the strengthening of district management. Most district officers have been trained in planning and management to increase their capacity to mobilize and use local resources. Districts are thus increasingly able to draw up development plans using their own planning units. The capacity of districts to empower subcounties and parishes is still weak, however, making it difficult for some sensitization and development activities to reach them. Thus, in general, the impact of capacity-building to plan development activities does not go beyond the district level.

In the districts, UNICEF is considered the most active UN agency in Uganda. The problems mentioned were usually related to the rigidity of procedures and duplication attributed to the absence or weakness of coordination among UN agencies. Nevertheless, UNICEF is strongly rooted and active in different districts of Uganda. Furthermore, positive results are registered at different levels: a better planning ability in the districts, widespread health information, community mobilization, etc.

World Food Programme

Disaster situations and economic difficulties made food aid necessary during the period under review. Nearly half of WFP support has been directed towards education, health and rural development in the Karamoja district. This began around 1990 and cost US$10.5 million by early 1997. Food was used directly or indirectly for "food-for-work" schemes, in support of decentralization, to draw vulnerable women and children to health clinics, to encourage women to attend literacy and reproductive health classes and to induce parents to send their daughters to school.

Because training is directly associated with assistance, the capacity generated appears to have been pragmatic and flexible and, therefore, sustainable. The work experience reinforces the benefits of training. WFP support for basic education and district management for the execution of its projects has also contributed to capacity-building, and the project reports and evaluations show this to be successful. Using the proceeds from the sale of food imported by WFP into Uganda to fund such activities takes advantage of a resource provided free of charge by donors, but it was not possible to judge the effects of this on prices and trading systems in the country.

WFP support of refugees is seen as a life-saving necessity. WFP developmental work is considered effective and well targeted, but we could not ascertain the influence of its activities as a parallel system for importing and marketing food.

World Health Organization

The health sector was greatly affected by the transition from war to peace and by economic constraints. The immediacy of the health care needs made it difficult to give priority to capacity-building for long-term provision of basic health. There were, nevertheless, significant achievements in capacity-building during these difficult years. Although a 10-year action programme for health, started in 1981, was not implemented because of financial constraints, there were repeated calls for more resources to be directed towards PHC throughout the period under review. These were linked with increasing decentralization to the districts of responsibilities for health care. It is difficult to assess the level of capacity-building, however, because many WHO project reports lacked precision and evaluations by external consultants [71, 72, for example] gave only short descriptions of activities and no basis for comparing costs with the outcomes of capacity-building.

In 1982, WHO involvement in national health development in Uganda was directed primarily towards epidemiology, immunization, training and health programming. By 1992, the development profile expanded to include public information and education on health and communicable diseases. The budget rose from about US$550,000 to about US$750,000 a year over that period.

Throughout the period, about half the WHO budget was allocated to health manpower development and one third to support management in country health programming. This included the provision of lecturers, books and journals to two medical schools, support for curriculum development and support for preparations for a degree course in nursing (first graduates, 1996). Extrabudgetary funds and funds from other donors enabled WHO to help with establishment of the Institute of Public Health (first graduates, 1995). Through these efforts and the continuing provision of fellowships, WHO helped restore the quality of medical training at Makerere University and focused interest on basic health needs.

WHO gave substantial support to PHC, including support for policy development and, in 1991, played an active role in the preparation of a Plan of Action for Children [64]. In 1992, proposals for training programmes for health tutors, nurses, midwives, etc., recommended a reorientation towards PHC and building capacity among nursing tutors and clinical supervisors so that they could be involved in the re-orientation of the curriculum.

Individual training included WHO overseas fellowships for senior medical staff. A 1995 report [105] on 30 Ugandans who received WHO fellowships to study overseas found 25 still in government service. Several had additional responsibilities for staff supervision and training, which suggests some progress in building sustainable capacity. In 1992, WHO gave high priority to the strengthening of a planning unit in the Ministry of Health. Proposals for the unit made at that time appear to have been driven by WHO, with emphasis on immediate activity rather than on capacity-building.

WHO staff were concerned that their mandate and relations with other agencies prevented them from giving higher priority to sanitation, possibly the most cost-effective form of PHC. They also felt inhibited in taking major initiatives in management training, which they saw as a high priority.

Many of those working in positions of responsibility in the health sector in Uganda

have benefited from WHO fellowships. Nevertheless, in the three districts visited we saw no evidence of direct WHO involvement. This was in contrast to the presence of UNICEF and UNFPA and may indicate the difference between a WHO focus on the health profession and a focus by the UN funds on people and specific needs. The approaches may be seen as complementary.

Although WHO claimed to be the major force behind the fight against six immunizable children's diseases, including support to EPI, a 1987 UNICEF report stated, "WHO presence in the EPI [and other] projects is almost non-existent". WHO staff claimed that their organization is a catalyst, formulating programmes that other agencies take over.

Due to very bureaucratic systems and procedures, WHO continues to be slow in both preparing and participating in projects. There were different conceptions of the role of WHO in the National AIDS Programme. In 1987, other agencies complained, "Local WHO staff felt that WHO should physically manage all funds and resources". [41]. Two years later, one agency felt this had been resolved, with the AIDS Control Programme better integrated with other PHC concerns by the Ministry of Health. Ugandans responsible for fighting AIDS spoke very appreciatively of the WHO response to their calls for help, especially in the period from 1986 to 1990, and saw this as the start of sustainable capacity-building.

Sustainability

Support for training at lower levels appeared well thought out and improved over the period up to 1995, as conditions made work outside Kampala more feasible. The type of much of this training changed between 1980 and 1995, from long term to short term, and from Europe to Africa. According to WHO staff, however, even with these changes, a number of Ugandan midwives and other relatively junior health care staff were taking jobs abroad.

Fellowships overseas for relatively senior Ugandan medical staff appeared to have given positive and sustainable results. Senior medical staff spoke of the benefit they had received from these fellowships, which helped build their confidence and morale, as well as their competence. The performance of senior medical staff in the Ministry of Health, especially at district level, is an essential component of and support to basic health care.

WHO has made many efforts to assist in health sector planning, through training and workshops, for example. By 1995, the success was limited, but this may have been caused by problems in the action environment rather than on the part of WHO. Continued effort to support this type appears justified, provided it is given by advisers and trainers more aware of and committed to broad development objectives than to narrow professional concerns.

WHO staff and several Ugandan officials claimed that the Alma Ata Conference helped generate enthusiasm for PHC. By 1995, this had become a priority, with funds increasing and commitment internalized. Training, and the cooperation of national and international NGOs, make support for PHC an example of sustainable and adaptable capacity-building for which WHO and other UN agencies deserve credit. There was, however, some cause for concern. For example, a health clinic was visited that had no patients, and the staff appeared to have made no attempt to take health care out to the people. There is much to be done to strengthen public awareness of the value and need for PHC. The UN system as a whole has done a great deal in this regard, but there is a need to build wider appreciation of its importance among the

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population.

There is inevitable competition for resources from WHO and other donors between basic health needs and the professional training in medical schools. Uganda appears to be graduating more doctors each year than can be employed in the country. Of past graduates—between 1980 and 1995, for example—many are working abroad. It can be argued that support from WHO and other donors for this training benefits the rest of the world more than Uganda. There were similar concerns expressed about the degree course in nursing, also supported by WHO, which attracted a number of nurses on leave from public sector posts. The graduates found no posts or pay scales in the public service to match their new qualifications. Several returned to the positions they held before, for which their additional training was judged by Ugandans in the Ministry of Health to be of only marginal benefit.

IV. CAPACITY-BUILDING BY THE UNITED NATIONS AGENCIES IN UGANDA

In general in Uganda, officials, project officers and managers talk about "capacity which as been built" or "achieved". Often the measures suggested for capacity-building were measures of inputs—training, workshops, supply of equipment, financial support or establishment of specific structures—rather than measures of outputs or continuing long-term outcomes. Capacity is thus understood and measured by what is done, rather than by its long-term use. In the following analysis of the different dimensions of capacity-building in Uganda, we try to clarify this distinction and assess the impact on capacity-building of activities of the UN agencies.

Human Resources

UN agencies have been most active in building capacity in the area of human resource development. There have been many workshops and a great deal of training in the country and abroad. In the early 1980s, the main objective was to transfer basic skills needed to rehabilitate the country's social, economic and administrative systems, which were disrupted during the period of turmoil. UNICEF, WHO, UNHCR and WFP were the most active in that area. Work was done to help individuals within districts and subcounties, but also at the central level, to strengthen the capacity of ministries in order to provide technical support to the districts. The basic health sector gained most of the benefits from these activities; basic education received hardly any support.

From the mid-1980s on, priority shifted from capacity-building of individuals to capacity-building of institutions to strengthen management, planning and monitoring, mainly at the central level. UNDP, WHO, FAO, UNESCO and UNICEF provided support to different ministries and university faculties. Training and workshops were the most common means to achieve that goal, aimed essentially at improving individual competence to perform tasks within an organization. With decentralization becoming a major challenge, more training activities were located in the districts, targeting district officers and community workers.

Payment of allowances is one of the most common means of support for local activities. In almost every project supported by UN agencies, allowances for monitoring and for outreach activities were provided. In the early 1980s, UNICEF contributed to payment of salaries of health personnel in support of government efforts to rehabilitate the health system. Some critics claimed this did not contribute to sustainability or empowerment. But this support was given in

an exceptional post-war situation, during which the need to make working conditions attractive in order to retain trained personnel was acute and government resources were not available. The health system would not have been rehabilitated without this form of donor support.

The UN system in general has contributed much to the transfer of skills to nationals at different levels. The process of national execution gives a unique opportunity to nationals to be entirely responsible for the success or failure of projects, at central or district levels, and to get high-level practical experience in management, planning, resource mobilization and monitoring. Even though it has not been possible to judge, in the framework of this evaluation, the quality of the training provided to the staff concerned, or the quality of the national execution programmes supported by the different UN agencies, transfer of skills to nationals has occurred.

The main problem for human resource development in local institutions is their low retention capacity, attributed to low salaries and poor working conditions. It is very difficult for high-paid civil servants to accept the working conditions offered in the public services. This is made worse when salaries have been entirely supported by a donor organization, as in the case of UNDP in the NEX Unit. Integration of NEX Unit staff members within the Ministry of Planning structure will be difficult after the end of UNDP support. The risk that the staff members will seek a position within other projects or in the private sector is high.

The Organization Level

In general, in the period under consideration, the efforts of the UN agencies operating in Uganda focused on "getting the job done". To achieve that, the management of most UN-funded projects took place outside the ordinary management system of government, through parallel structures such as Project Implementation Units (PIU), the NEX Unit or a project or programme secretariat located within a ministry responsible for the area covered by the project. For example, the NEX Unit is located in the Ministry of Planning, which is in charge of coordination of donor supports. The UNICEF-funded Schools Health Education Project (SHEP) project was implemented by a specific PIU located in the Ministry of Education. Project and running costs, salaries and/or allowances are supported by the agency for the duration of the funding, with a government contribution that is, in the best cases, about 40 per cent of total cost. In many cases, vehicles and fuel are provided. This type of support is welcomed by Ugandan project officers but makes little contribution to long-term capacity-building for the following reasons:

It occurs outside the ordinary government system in a parallel structure, even though located in government buildings and offices.

It is not sustainable, because there is little possibility for future funding of these structures after the end of donor support.

The relation between the structure and its mother ministry is usually distorted, because of the imbalance in power due to the material and moral advantages given to the project structure.

The structures usually come to an end after the period of donor funding, because the

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advantages they have received make the staff reluctant to (re)integrate into ordinary government structures (though they may seek new positions in other projects, in the private sector or with NGOs).

UN agencies give some form of support to existing NGOs or activities. Most UN agencies, for example, support the more than 100 NGOs that are operational in the area of HIV/AIDS control. Although the AIDS Commission structure is entirely dependent on donor funding, the Secretariat of the Ugandan Community-Based Health Care Association (UCBHCA), which has been funded for some years by UNICEF, has become self-sustaining. NGOs that have benefited from support from UN agencies to support HIV/AIDS control programmes have been able to implement appropriate control programmes in different parts of the country. At that level, it can be said that sustainable capacity has been built.

A major contrast can be found in the Family Life Education Programme of UNFPA, implemented by the Curriculum Development Centre of the Ministry of Education. UNFPA has not been able to provide the necessary funding for programme follow-up of the pilot project, which requires mass reproduction and distribution of materials for a new syllabus in the 11,000 primary schools.

In conclusion, it can be said that the strategy (training, creation of PIUs, provision of equipment, etc.) used by most UN agencies operating in Uganda has led to some success in "getting the job done" at a narrowly defined project or programme level, usually within a limited time span determined by the period of funding offered by the donor. But little has been achieved in sustainable capacity-building at the organizational level.

Task Network

The first issue to be analysed is the relation of UN agencies with the Government. Each agency has a government counterpart. Furthermore, for each project, there is a specific counterpart in the ministry in charge of the area covered. This leads to duplication and creates management and coordination problems for government institutions that have to deal with the different procedures and programming cycles of the various agencies. One result is that the planning units that have been set up within the ministries focus only on the procedures and cycles of the main donor and consider other donors as marginal. For example, the NEX Unit deals mainly with UNDP and very little with others.

At the district level, with the increasing need to strengthen capacity in line with the decentralization policy of Government, donors are individually focusing on the capacity-building of district officers and community members. Sometimes the same type of training and activities are proposed by two or three UN agencies, increasing management and coordination difficulties in the districts. Such duplication contributes little to sustainable capacity-building and strengthens dependence on external assistance.

However, some positive results were seen, for example, the capacity of districts to set up sectoral district plans. But their capacity to bring behavioural change and new practices to the communities and households at subcounty, parish and village levels is still weak. Most effort in the districts goes to seeking to understand and deal with the complex procedures and programming cycles of competing agencies and to attending meetings and training organized

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by donors. Little time is left to deal with community issues.

Institution Level

Uganda is a country where government policies take into account universal concerns, such as community participation in decision-making, gender and environmental issues, UPE modalities, PHC and poverty alleviation. Furthermore, the Government is committed to the budgetary support of development projects. Most UN-funded projects get financial support from the Government for operational costs, for example the NEX Unit (about 40 per cent) and the Functional Adult Literacy Programme (45 per cent). The salaries of the Uganda AIDS Commission staff have been taken over from the World Bank and United States Agency for International Development (USAID) by the Government. People in Uganda, at all levels, are well aware of the activities of the UN agencies. Their work has contributed in many ways to making people accept the universal goals of health and education for all and thus has had a positive impact on the course of events in Uganda.

Capacity Building in Basic Health and Basic Education

As mentioned previously, the activities of the UN agencies in basic education in Uganda were quite limited in the period under consideration. The UNICEF Basic Education, Child Care and Adolescent Development (BECCAD) programme now under way (1995-2000) is the biggest UN contribution to basic education since 1980. The other contributions were the UNDP-UNESCO Basic Education for National Development (BEND) project, the UNICEF and UNFPA curriculum development programmes (SHEP, family life) and some modest UNESCO-supported projects.

The BEND project was an emergency effort whose effect is difficult to assess. It played an important role, however, in the motivation of staff and in the improvement of education programmes at the primary level, because it was implemented at a time when help was especially needed for the rehabilitation of the education system.

The UNICEF SHEP project has contributed much to the dissemination of health education among children, adolescents and teachers throughout the country because the new syllabus, in which the new curriculum is integrated, has become part of the ordinary teaching programme and is in use in all primary schools. According to UNICEF officers, assessments made in some schools show that the messages transmitted through the new curriculum are known by the most of the pupils. However, the same UNICEF officers are reserved about the effectiveness of the programme in achieving behavioural changes in relation to HIV/AIDS prevention.

The effectiveness of the UNFPA family life curriculum development programme was mitigated because, after completing the pilot project, neither UNFPA nor the Curriculum Development Centre of the Ministry of Education have been able to provide the necessary materials for the introduction of the new syllabus in the schools. However, it helped the staff of the Curriculum Development Centre to improve their skills, even though that was not the objective of the project.

As stated previously, it is surprising that the call of education for all was not sufficient to move the UN agencies to provide greater support for basic education. However, after the

publication of the White Paper on Education in 1992 and the return of the Ugandan delegation from Jomtien, the UPE philosophy led to the mobilization of a very large aid programme for primary school education for the period 1994-2002.

In the area of basic health, much has been achieved. UNAIDS representatives claim that the infection rate of HIV/AIDS in Uganda has been decreasing since 1992, indicating that prevention messages have reached the people and awareness is increasing. In other health areas, according to a UNICEF report (Master Plan of Operations 1995-2000), "Several indicators point to improvements in the situation of children due to improvements in the delivery of basic services of immunization, ORT, water supply and sanitation, etc.".

In Uganda, many government and UN officials claim that the Alma Ata Conference played an important role in the mobilization of funds for basic health projects. In the absence of appropriate documents, this claim has to be accepted. It is easy, however, to accept that Alma Ata has facilitated greater mobilization of funds for organizations such as UNICEF and UNFPA.

As a conclusion to this section, we can say that it is very difficult to assess the effectiveness of the activities of particular UN agencies, for example to distinguish the effectiveness of UNICEF activities from those of the UNFPA, because of the complementary nature of the organizations. Also, some non-UN donors (USAID, etc.) are also active in the areas covered by UN agencies. But the long experience of UN agencies in different specialized areas, and their professional competence, makes them invaluable and necessary. Even in cases where they have not been so effective, such as basic education, they serve as a catalyst to help mobilize other donors.

Sustainability. Most UN agencies specialize in particular areas, which gives them the opportunity to provide support to a sector over a long period, creating conditions for sustainability. UNICEF, for example, implemented key activities for the entire period under consideration and is systematically improving its country programmes to integrate lessons learned from its earlier work.

Uganda has a comparative advantage in that it has a Government committed to social and economic development. This commitment is a strong foundation for the sustainability of UN- supported development activities, which are usually achieved by national execution with an increasing government contribution to the funding and management of projects.

Despite a favourable institutional context, some weak points remain. One important one is the existence of parallel structures for the management of projects. The structures are set up temporarily and are not integrated in the ordinary structure of government institutions. When the project ends, they are disbanded, which does contribute to sustainability.

Gender. Gender has always been a key issue in Uganda's national policy. During the civil war, Resistance Councils were set up by the rebels led by Museveni. Women were fully involved in the process of decision-making in the councils. Today the Resistance Councils have become community councils, and the gains made during the period of civil war have been consolidated by law. In 1988, the Government established a Ministry for Gender and Community Development to empower communities, mainly disadvantaged groups such as women, children, adolescents, disabled and elderly persons, to realize their potential and

improve their participation in the decision-making processes.

Although gender issues have been very important in the work of UN agencies, we would agree with the conclusion of an evaluation report on UNDP programmes in Uganda, which observed that, in fact, gender concerns are not widespread in the implementation of many projects. UNICEF, WHO and UNFPA are exceptions because, by the nature of their work, women have always been their target group.

A distinction needs to be made between gender issues and gender equity. Most of the agencies are concerned with clarifying, understanding and integrating gender issues in their policies. But efforts to promote gender equity—empowering women to set their own development agenda—are still limited. UNICEF and UNFPA activities, however, by providing better access to basic social and economic infrastructures, better living conditions, improved access to microfinance etc., can be considered as a necessary first step towards capacity-building for women and as strengthening demand for equity and equality.

V. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

There is evidence of a positive contribution to capacity-building in Uganda by the United Nations system during the 1980-1995 period, moreso in basic health services than in basic education. From 1980 to 1986, most that support was directed to training individuals. After 1986, greater priority was given to institution-building. These efforts, however, fall short of the full process of capacity-building, namely, increasing the ability of individuals and organizations to set goals and perform functions effectively and efficiently, with a decreasing dependence on external support.

Policy Issues

Capacity-building requires more than training and institution-building. It should be an explicit goal of UN operational activities and, where possible, quantifiable measures of achievement should be set, with target dates for their achievement. Capacity-building must be seen as a continuing process.

Capacity-building requires motivation of individuals and teams. There are long lists of workshops and training activities supported by UN agencies in Uganda, but little attention has been paid to motivation. Efforts should be made to find how best to improve motivation in support for structural changes, workshops and training.

Matters of ownership and partnership need to be resolved. Many see UN activities in Uganda, especially those in basic health and basic education, as being owned by the agencies concerned. There is a need to transfer ownership, responsibility, credit and accountability to central or local government or local NGOs. Furthermore, future evaluations concerned with capacity-building or other outcomes should identify the benefits from the activities of the UN system, but should also assess the benefits gained from national and international partnerships.

Government representatives feel under pressure to undertake projects recommended by agencies, with the number and diversity of proposals beyond the country's managerial capacity. Agency staff claim, on the other hand, that they respond to Ugandan priorities. The UN system should give priority to strengthening support for policy formulation at the levels of central

government and districts. Better dialogue between donors and recipients should be promotedand better information flows need to be established between parts of the UN system to promote transparency and transfer ownership to government or civil society.

Management Issues

Better evaluation is needed. The few available evaluations of the impact of support from the UN system on capacity-building were imprecise regarding benefits gained and the cost of inputs. Many documents gave no indication of provenance or date of issue and contained little quantitative information. Some of these problems will be lessened by the introduction of computerized management information systems, but there is a need to specify requirements clearly. Methods should be formulated to improve terms of reference for evaluations and to identify and store agency documents.

Policy makers and managers need to know what it costs to build capacity. Better evaluation should make it easier to relate the costs of local workshops, overseas visits, work experience and other efforts to an assessment of the benefits gained. A study should be made of the outputs and longer-term outcomes of capacity-building activities so that costs and benefits may be compared and used to guide future projects.

The national execution of projects helps build local capacity, but there was criticism of donor-supported PIUs and NEX Units working parallel to government departments. National execution for UN-supported activities should be increased. We further recommend a progression towards a "basket approach" for support from the UN system in which the Government, in consultation with donors and representatives of civil society, sets priorities, while undertaking full accountability for their use.

General Issues

We asked Ugandans from several walks of life what message would they wish to send about support for capacity-building by the UN system. The quotations below give examples of comments heard most often:

"The agencies should not to seek to perpetuate themselves."

"Avoid pressures that force us to divert human capacity away from our own priority goals."

"Delegate authority to agency staff in country to avoid delays from referring matters to headquarters."

The following comment was in response to a question about what would be the most effective pattern for managing the operations of the UN system in Uganda in the year 2020:

"There should be greater unity and less competition, with only a few organizations working closely together."

In anticipation of increased capacity-building in Uganda, the long-term pattern needs to be of an equal partnership in operational activities of the UN system, government and society.

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CHAPTER 8

An Evaluation of the Capacity-Building Efforts of United Nations Operational Activities in Zimbabwe: 1980 – 1995

by Kim Forss and Pelonomi Venson

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This study evaluates the performance of the United Nations system in contributing to capacity-building in Zimbabwe during the 1980-1995 period. Some $US150 million was provided for capacity-building purposes during the period, the majority used to build capacity for operational management of the development process. Beginning in 1990, the Government and UN agencies shifted the focus, identifying more interventions at strategic levels, as, for example, in national planning, debt management, civil service reform and industrial development policies.

This study gives examples of projects that were successful in creating capacity, but we estimate that far fewer than half the projects were successful in reaching their targets in capacity development. Several projects had a positive impact on capacities for community-based management. The capacity to deliver basic health services was expanded and consolidated.

In some cases, however, it is possible that capacity deployment actually had a negative impact, and we question whether current government policies that are considered detrimental were not influenced by United Nations interventions. Technical assistance may have encouraged organizations in Zimbabwe to continue operations where the environment would otherwise have forced change at an earlier date.

Generally speaking, we believe that where capacity has been created, it is sustainable. There are threats, however, to sustainability. In particular, individual capacity development is subject to staff turnover, peer resistance, organizational inertia and lack of resources. As the majority of UN interventions built capacity at the level of the individual, overall programme impact is very vulnerable to the threats to sustainability.

The linkages between types of capacity and level of intervention needs to be further explored. Capacity development at systemic and strategic levels appears to be more robust, but is also risky, as the capacitiy may, in fact, create negative effects. The most successful interventions develop capacity at all levels, either simultaneously or in sequence. Bottom-up approaches appear to be more effective than any other type.

The UN agencies, funds and programmes have not acted as a joint system. The fragmented approach to development issues has meant that opportunities to have a major impact were compromised. Most projects were too small to build any sustainable capacity. The mere fact of having more than 300 projects has imposed an administrative burden on the Government of Zimbabwe, making it spend an inordinate amount of time on activities of little benefit. The negative effects could be considerable, as there is a high opportunity cost to

management time in central government.

With some rare exceptions (that are described later in this report), the UN system has not learned much from its operations. Experiences are not properly documented, and many organizations do not maintain usable archives. Information is not disseminated, and there is a culture of hiding mistakes and avoiding criticism. The high turnover of international staff also means that most of the experience is lost, and many who come to the country are either not interested in past operations or have no opportunity to seek out lessons to be learned from previous interventions.

Our conclusion is that UN assistance in capacity-building has not realized its potential, and the results in no way correspond to the size of funds that have been expended. If the coming 15 years are to be more beneficial and constructive for the people of Zimbabwe, radical changes in approach and organization are necessary and urgent.

I. INTRODUCTION

We have understood our task to be to submit a report to member States of the General Assembly. We do so by presenting conclusions relevant to their level of decision-making. Hence, we are not addressing the management of international funds, programmes and agencies, nor project or programme staff.

Capacity-building is a term that has aroused much discussion and controversy in recent years, and there are many who view it as the new mission of development cooperation. It is sometimes argued that capacity-building transcends technical cooperation. This is a potentially difficult challenge for this evaluation, as it can be argued that capacity-building did not have the priority in the early 1980s that it has today, and thus our assessment of operational activities between 1980 and 1995 must consider that capacity-building was not a policy objective during the entire period. There is no doubt, however, that technical cooperation for development has always been a part of the mandate of UN agencies, funds and programmes. Furthermore, technical cooperation, or technical assistance, has always been defined in terms of capacity-building.

The approach to capacity-building in this evaluation assumes that there are three types of capacity that can be augmented through technical cooperation: the capacity to formulate a vision and a goal to address a particular national development issue; the capacity to formulate strategies and policies to achieve that goal; and the capacity to design, manage and implement these and to learn from the experience. These three levels express capacity-building in a chain, from formulation of goals to management of activities to reach those goals.

Training and human resource development should be seen as the first level of intervention. At the second level, capacity-building intervention can be used to create, develop or reform organizations or parts of organizations. At a third level, interventions can address the broader institutional framework of society. By institutional framework, we mean the network of interactions between organizations, the regulations and laws of society and societal norms and values. Our approach can thus be illustrated by a matrix where one dimension consists of the capacity being strengthened—from policy formulation to implementation—and the other dimensions consist of the level of organization, from individual to the system.

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	Systemic	Organization	Individuals
Goals and visions			
Strategies and policies			
Design and management			

In each cell of the matrix, we find a specific type of UN system intervention. In the upper right hand cell, the appropriate intervention would be a study tour for policy makers, to expose them to the design of parliamentary systems in different countries. In the lower right hand corner, the intervention could be a project that provides on-the-job training for counterparts in cadastral systems. Cooperation to build the mechanisms for an industrial sector via, for example, a chamber of commerce would be an example of a strategy and policy oriented project at the system level. A project designed to strengthen a ministry's strategic planning capacity would be in the centre of the matrix. Should the UN system have a presence in all cells of the matrix? Should there be an emphasis in some cells? Have there been any changes in emphasis between the cells over the years? We believe that there has been a change from the lower right to the upper left hand corner.

Methodology

The task of this evaluation is complex. We are examining events over a fairly long period, in an environment that changes rapidly, with organizations that are also in constant flux. Capacities developed in Zimbabwean society must be attributed to a large number of factors. The road from a UN project to verifiable capacity is a long one. We are looking for causal connections between UN activities and societal change, but it is necessary to depart from common interpretations of how development effects can be verified. We suggest that the links between UN assistance and capacity-building be tempered in light of the following:

Causality. Phenomenon (X) is said to cause another (Y). The strictest and most rigorous definition of a cause-effect relationship is to assert that X is necessary and sufficient for Y. In this study, we were never able to establish any such cause-effect relationship. It is also possible to determine causality when X is necessary but not sufficient for Y, for example, a UN project was necessary to build certain capacities, but not sufficient; there was a need for other inputs as well. At most, this is the type of causal relationship that can be established.

Yet a weaker form of causality is found when it is not known whether X is necessary or sufficient for Y, but both tend to be present or absent together. Most of the time when we discuss capacity-building and impact, we can establish this type of causality, but to go onwards to higher levels, one needs a fuller picture of processes than we can arrive at in development cooperation. The first of these causal relationships is commonly called deterministic causality, the second is called probabilistic causality and the third is correlation, which may not involve any causality. One of the questions we will address in this evaluation is whether the processes set in motion by UN operational activities are beneficial. The question of causality is complex,

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and it is hardly possible to establish that UN activities are both necessary and sufficient for the events that follow.

Non-linearity. In a linear model, the extent of an effect is believed to be similar to the extent of its cause. But here, a tiny event—or cause—can produce huge, unexpected effects. The failure to provide advocacy at the right time may put national policies back for years, and large investments may have very local and limited effects.

Cluster effects, qualitative leaps. The cluster effect means, simply, that all elements must be in place—recipient communities, government and civil society—before the system changes. Changes then can be achieved in a very short period of time. Against this background, there are a number of research questions that need to be addressed. UN operational activities take the form of projects or programmes. The United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) alone had 51 different projects in Zimbabwe between 1980 and 1995. The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) had 7 or 8 eight programme areas in each of its five country programmes, each of which was subdivided into several projects. Even in the broadly defined environmental sector, there were many more interventions than we could assess in a few weeks. Hence we chose projects that illustrate different aspects of capacity-building.

Our terms of reference specified the environmental sector as our area of focus. We have approached the issue from the point of view that the state of the environment has a direct relationship to most development activities. We were further guided by the position taken by the Government of Zimbabwe in their adoption of the National Conservation Strategy, which highlights the need "to integrate sustainable resource use with every aspect of the nation's social and economic development and to rehabilitate those resources that are already degraded". We selected projects in the areas of water supply and sanitation, industrial pollution, health and education, gender and poverty alleviation. We focused on projects that received UN support and their relation to the environment as follows:

Community participation, as a tool for project delivery;

Irrigation projects, for food production and security, to help ease the pressure on soil and prepare for drought;

Remote sensing, to make data available to facilitate control of adverse environmental impacts;

Gender issues, addressing the problems of women as a majority of the poor and rural, to create sensitivity and enable their full participation in development;

Energy and, in particular, efforts to search for renewable energy sources, communication of such technologies and their adoption by end users in urban as well as rural areas;

Cleaner production and factory inspections, to contribute to the control of industrial/urban pollution and safeguard the health of workers; and

Governance and democracy, as aspects of social organization, to create an enabling environment for all sectors to participate in and contribute to development.

The value of this study lies in its perspectives on a broad subject, its attempt to address

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relevant policy issues and the compilation of enlightening information that so many have provided us. The concept of capacity-building is complex, however, and our estimates of what constitutes capacity-building build on inferences that have no validity per se. Another mission might come to radically different conclusions.

II. THE CONTEXT OF UN OPERATIONS IN ZIMBABWE

The history of Zimbabwe can be traced back to the Shona kingdoms of the eleventh century. These kingdoms had significant power and built large monuments and cities with some 20,000 inhabitants. They traded extensively with groups in the interior of Africa and with Arab, Portuguese and Indian traders on the coast of the Indian Ocean. Towards the mid-nineteenth century, the Ndebele people established their state in what is now southern and western Zimbabwe. The first white residents were missionaries who arrived in small numbers in the 1850s onward. Larger numbers arrived towards the end of the century, first to look for minerals but later to settle and farm. Ndebele and Shona uprisings against the white settlers were crushed in the first war of liberation, 1893 to 1896. From 1890 to 1923, the country was administered by the British South Africa Company as a colony in trust of the British Crown. In 1923 Rhodesia became a self-governing colony where the white residents elected a parliament along the Westminster model. Orders in Council in 1894 and 1898 established native reserves where the indigenous peoples were to be confined, ostensibly so that tribes could live undisturbed by foreign culture, but actually as a way of taking the best land for the settler community and creating an artificial land shortage to induce migration of black labour to the white-owned mines, commercial farms and towns.

Discriminating land legislation followed in the next 30 years, creating an apartheid-like social order characterized by a class of impoverished peasant farmers in Tribal Trust lands, a growing working class of wage earners and petty traders in the commercial farms, mines and urban centres and an affluent class of commercial farmers, industrialists, managers and professionals, most of whom were white. In the 1960s, the British Government tried to coax the regime to accept independence under majority rule, but without success. Negotiations broke down, and in 1965 the white minority government unilaterally declared independence from Britain in an effort to forestall majority rule. After this, political unrest over the land issue and the discriminatory policies of the settler regime transformed into a bitter war of liberation which lasted until 1980, when Rhodesia became the independent state of Zimbabwe under majority rule. At that time, it took its place in the United Nations, which had not recognized Rhodesia.

Development and Growth

Zimbabwe scores rather low on the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) human development index (HDI), 120 out of the 160 countries in the survey. HDI has decreased in absolute and relative terms throughout the 1990s, offsetting the gains that were made during the 1980s immediately after independence. Gross national product (GNP) per capita in 1989 was US$650, which was lower than in 1980. Between 1980 and 1989, there was an annual negative per capita growth rate of -.8 per cent. At the beginning of the 1990s, the people of Zimbabwe could look back at almost 20 years of declining per capita incomes.

The war economy imposed heavy external as well as internal controls on trade and production. But after independence, Zimbabwe continued to have a tightly controlled economy.

After introduction of a "growth with equity" policy in 1982, the education and health sectors were rapidly expanded. Publicly supported communal farms raised agricultural production, but there was also unprecedented growth in public spending, which remains a major factor in Zimbabwe's government budget deficits. Unemployment has also grown and stands at 50 per cent.

Industry had contributed one quarter of GDP between 1970 and 1996, rising to around 30 per cent in 1997. Trade is also important to the economy (47 per cent of GDP in 1997). The main contributors to exports are manufacturing, mining and agriculture (UNIDO 1994). Zimbabwe has one of the best integrated manufacturing sectors in sub-Saharan Africa. Due to the protected environment, companies have diversified activities within one company, rather than maintaining links with other companies, and small and medium-scale industries have not been extensively developed. The competitive structure of firms has steadily deteriorated, leading to lost opportunities for growth and employment.

Until 1990, the Government intended to increase its participation in the manufacturing sector. This was done through direct purchase of private sector corporations, indirectly through investment in the parastatal Industrial Development Corporation, and by taking equity stakes in new joint ventures. These policies were reversed with the introduction of the Economic Reform Programme in the fiscal year 1990/91. The current policy is to create the conditions for market-led economic development, to stimulate savings and productive investment and exports, which in turn should promote sustainable growth and create employment. The programme, however, was hard hit by drought and international recessions, and the speed of liberalization and deregulation of controls has been compromised. There has been a fine balance to tread between what is economically desirable and politically possible.

Social and Political Issues

Zimbabwe has an estimated population of 12 million, with a heavy preponderance of children and youth. The ratio of the number of dependants (children and old persons who must be looked after) to the number in the economically active group is rather high, almost 1:1. About 75 per cent of the population are rural dwellers, but the urban population is growing at roughly twice the national average. The paradox of Zimbabwe's food security situation is that, while Zimbabwe is usually a net exporter of food, and grain sales from communal areas have tripled since independence, there are relatively high levels of malnutrition and widespread food insecurity at the household level.

After independence, the Government's commitment to improve the health status of the nation was demonstrated by increased financial allocations, particularly for women and children. Most of the progress achieved was associated with the first half of the decade of the 1980s, however. The human immudeficiency virus/acquired immune deficiency syndrome (HIV/AIDS) pandemic has affected Zimbabwe with devastating consequences.

The growth of the education sector has been phenomenal. In 1980, total primary school enrolment was 1.2 million; by 1990 it had risen to 2.1 million. The expansion in secondary schools was even more dramatic, with enrolments increasing from 73,000 in 1980 to 673,000 in 1990. The rapid expansion of enrolment, however, could not be matched by the necessary number of teachers and infrastructural developments, causing an overall decline in the quality

of education. At the same time, the Government has raised concerns over the relevance of the curricula in light of the very high levels of unemployment among school leavers and about the relative opportunities of boys and girls in the education system.

The developments in the social sectors should be seen against the background of political developments in Zimbabwe. At independence, the people held very high expectations that the new Government would rectify the inequalities in society and provide better access to health, education and the means of a sustainable livelihood. In the next few years, the Government did effect policies that satisfied these hopes. But the following years saw divisions and mutual suspicion between the Shona and Ndebele lead to a state of emergency.

Though Zimbabwe remains a multi-party democracy, the ruling party holds a strong grip on government machinery (UNICEF 1994). The room for opposition groups is limited, and newspapers have indicated election mismanagement. The political culture is one of distrust and suspicion. The status of human rights is monitored carefully by national and international NGOs, and the most recent country report by Amnesty International mentions police brutality, arbitrary arrests and detention in prison without trial.

Government spending did not confine itself to investments in education, health and social welfare. The public administration grew at a rate of 20 per cent during the 1980s and expenditures on the military forces continue to be high. The rapid decline in social services has led to large-scale public discontent, with riots regularly occurring in Harare and other major towns. The Government has responded with harsh security measures. The politically organized opposition, human rights groups and intellectuals have called for changes in government. But parliamentary elections are not due until the year 2000, and presidential elections are to be held in 2002. The prospects for the next few years appear very bleak, with the economy sliding, rapidly declining welfare, escalating budget deficits and growing political discontent.

Environmental Dimensions

The major environmental issues in rural areas are encroaching desertification and land degradation (UNICEF 1994). A 1993 survey showed that 10 per cent of the land is moderately to extensively eroded, with 23 per cent of the communal areas showing significant erosion. The forest cover is estimated to be declining by 1.5 per cent per year. The severe droughts of the 1990s have added to the environmental problems. People unable to make a living in the rural environment have moved to urban areas, creating new environmental problems, such as lack of sanitation and shelter.

Land degradation is most acute in communal areas, where population pressure has already had adverse environmental effects. Over 20 per cent of communal areas are short of forestry products, yet there are few alternative sources of fuel wood and building materials. Over 50 per cent of households have less than 5 hectares of land to work and around 10 per cent are landless. Consequently, there is an encroachment of resettlement areas into wildlife and marginal areas not suitable for agriculture.

Compared to many other countries, the effects of industrial pollution as well as the pollution stemming from mining and quarrying are considered limited. But the local effects can be considerable. Particularly in mining, the use of mercury has very negative effects. There is a growing awareness of all types of environmental issues, both in urban and rural life, transport

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and communication and the productive sectors of the economy.

Extent of Development Cooperation

Zimbabwe is often considered to be relatively less dependent on external development cooperation than most countries in sub-Saharan Africa. Bilateral and multilateral support in terms of grants and loans are normally below 10 per cent of GDP, with the exception of the drought year of 1992, when external aid rose to 15 per cent of GDP. In most countries of the region, the inflow of official development assistance (ODA) is far more than that to Zimbabwe, but in terms of per capita inflow, the difference is less pronounced. In fact, Zimbabwe receives as much—or more—aid per capita than countries considered heavily aid dependent. The inflow of donor assistance has increased by 75 per cent, and the relative importance of aid has doubled, going from 5 to 10 per cent of the GDP. Like for many other countries in the region, this period shows a significant increase in the nation's relative dependence of aid flows.[104]

Sixteen UN organizations have representation in Harare. Several of the UN agencies, as well as funds and programmes, have their regional base in Harare, for example, the International Labour Organisation (ILO), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) and the Universal Postal Union (UPU). Several large-scale regional programmes of the UN are also based in Zimbabwe.

III. UN CAPACITY BUILDING ASSISTANCE

In very broad terms, the Bretton Woods organizations were established to provide financial assistance, and the other parts of the UN system were to provide technical assistance/cooperation (the two terms are synonymous). The reality, however, is somewhat different. The specialized agencies, funds and programmes often see a need to provide investments in connection with their technical assistance and do so through trust fund arrangements and special purpose contributions. The World Bank group has come to provide more technical assistance in connection with investment projects, structural adjustment lending and sectoral programmes than do all the UN bodies put together.

The amount of UN operational activities in Zimbabwe has varied over the years. Contributions were US$16.9 million in 1990 but five years later had declined to US$14.9 million (in current figures). Overall assistance to Zimbabwe peaked in 1992, and the UN agencies have followed international donor trends. UNICEF has had the largest operational expenditures over the years, followed by the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and UNDP. UN regular budget and extrabudgetary expenditures were also significant. The latter include the special programmes of agencies such as UNIDO, the World Health Organization (WHO), ILO and others not financed by UNDP or by trust funds. (World Bank expenditures are not included here, but they are substantial in loans and grants, far higher than the rest of the UN system.)

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[104] *We use the UNDP Human Development Report as our source of information. Its first volume appeared in 1990, and the most recent volume dates from 1997. It is more reliable to use one source, in particular when making comparisons over the years, hence we limit the analysis to the years covered by the report.*

The aggregate figures should be interpreted with caution. At times, reporting on expenditure is based on commitments, but as implementation lags, the real expenditures often appear to be some 20 to 25 per cent lower than commitments for any given year. In addition, cross-financing makes it very complicated to assess what the total figures are. The UNICEF programme includes projects funded in part or fully by UNDP, and UNDP records the same project in its country programmes, but with UNICEF as an executing agency. In the best statistical data, these sources of error would be eliminated, but we cannot know if that is always the case in what we have seen. The total UN contributions to Zimbabwe may be lower than the figures of around US$15 million annually that the records show. So the total UN operational activities in Zimbabwe between 1980 and 1995 amount to around US$200 million.

How much of this amount has been allocated for capacity-building purposes? It is necessary to be precise in the use of the word capacity-building. For example, many UNIDO technical assistance projects are feasibility studies to establish refractory brick plants, expand a tannery or invest in a fruit processing plant. The feasibility studies are carried out by an international expert and presented to the Government (and the firm) for their decision on whether and how to proceed with the investment. In one sense, that builds capacity, as the decision will be taken with better information, but it has not really built any capacity to undertake or use feasibility studies. UNIDO does not consider such projects capacity-building, even if it is technical assistance, and we agree.

The UNIDO printout of technical cooperation projects lists a total of 51 projects between 1980 and 1995, at a total value of around US$5.5 million (which includes agency overhead). We assess that 11 of these projects, at a total of US$0.9 million, are not capacity-building projects. Some examples are: a feasibility study for the establishment of a citrus fruit and tomato processing plant; assessment of a second-hand Steckel hot strip mill at Surahammar; and a survey of the pharmaceutical sector in Zimbabwe.

Table 3.1 below uses the matrix presented in part I to analyse the nature of capacity-building interventions. We have used the sum of project budgets to describe the extent of interventions, which thus combines the number of projects as well as the size of project budgets in each cell. In fact, the total volume of the projects at the organizational level, and with a purpose of building the capacity of that organization in design, management and operations, amount to US$4.4 million, whereas the total amount of projects in adjacent cells comes to US$630,000 and US$425,000, respectively. The projects targeted at the strategic, systemic level amount to US$105,000.

UNIDO has been the executing agency for several projects dealing with the bar rod rolling mill at ZIZCO at a total of US$1.4 million. These projects have been concerned with such issues as metallurgical quality control and modernization of equipment. We interpret that at the level of operations for an organization. UNIDO projects in small-scale industries extension services, however, have been classified as assistance at the system level, but with operational and managerial capacity-building.

Whereas UNIDO has a fairly small share of UN operational assistance in Zimbabwe, UNICEF has the largest programmes. We were fortunate in that UNICEF has a well-organized

Table 3.1. Typology of Capacity-Building Projects Implemented by UNIDO in Zimbabwe, 1980 and 1995

	Systemic	Organizational	Individual
Goals and visions	none	none	none
Strategies and policies	limited	limited	limited
Design and management	limited	extensive	prominent

Note: The scale goes from none to limited, prominent and extensive. Extensive means that this is the type of capacity-building that dominated UN operational activities during the period.

database; it can retrieve its country programme documents since it began operations in Zimbabwe, and it has archives that yielded access to evaluations and databases with summaries of lessons learned. Table 3.2 presents the first programme of cooperation between UNICEF and the Government of Zimbabwe, between 1981 and 1982. The table shows six areas of concentration, and we found that these recurred throughout the period under investigation. But the nature of the assistance will vary. During these first years, the cooperation had a clear emergency character.

Table 3.2. Structure of UNICEF Programme of Cooperation, 1981-1982 (000 of US$ s)

Field of Aid	Commitment	Type of Aid	Commitment
Child health	875	Supplies,	
Water supplies		including	
and sanitation	750	freight,	2 495
Child nutrition	200	Training	
Social welfare		grants	600
for children	500		
Formal education	266		
Non-formal			
Education	346		
Other	158		
Total	3 095		3 095

Source: Country Programme Profile, Zimbabwe, UNICEF Programme Committee, 1981 Executive Board session

A total of US$2.5 million was used for supplies, including freight. US$600,000, about 20 per cent, was used for capacity-building, mostly for training. At the same time, the Government contributed US$20 million to the cooperation programme. How much of this

could be considered capacity-building? As the Government needed the supplies in order to carry out its programmes, the supplies were essential for their capacity to do so. Certainly capacity development could include provision of equipment, supplies and other inputs to make a system work more effectively. But it is also quite clear that assistance in mainly financial terms, or with huge amounts of equipment, would not be considered capacity-building, at least not most of the time.[105]

The health programme supported maternal and child health care efforts of the Government through provision of basic supplies and equipment to 128 rural health centres. Training was provided for 120 former military medical personnel who were to be integrated into the health system. The latter would certainly fall within any definition of capacity-building, but it is a small share of the assistance.

UNICEF began a longer-term development programme in 1982, which was then consolidated in the 1984-1986 programme. UNICEF total expenditures, as provided by the office in Harare, amounted to US$60 million over the 1980-1995 period, and well over 60 per cent of this should be considered capacity-building assistance.

Table 3.3 presents the main areas of assistance in the consecutive country programmes up to 1996.

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105 The staff of the UNICEF office in Harare did not consider these early interventions as capacity-building efforts. The interventions had their own logic and merit, but not in terms of capacity-building.

Table 3.3. Structure of UNICEF Cooperation, 1984-1996 (thousands of US dollars)

	1984-1986	1987-1991	1991-1996
Basic child health	1 345	1 632	-
Water supply and sanitation	495	1 000	1 000
Child nutrition	44	243	
Social welfare services	249		
Formal education	344	980	
Non-formal education	368		
Emergency relief and rehabilitation	902		
Other/programme support	1 047	920	700
Primary health care and nutrition*			1 250
Women in development		424	800
Education**			1 750
Communications and advocacy			250
Planning and social statistics			250
Total	4 738	6 200	6 000

*This includes the cooperation entitled basic child health and nutrition in previous programmes.
** This includes previous activities in formal and non-formal education.

Note: The table includes only the core resources of UNICEF, as presented in the source documents. The total country programmes contain other resources as well, and in fact the total budgets are close to US$60 million.

Sources: Country Programme Recommendations, Programme Committee sessions, UNICEF Executive Board, 1984, 1987 and 1991.

The different categories of capacity-building for UNICEF are presented in Table 3.4. Once the emergency operations of the early 1980s were concluded and the programme shifted to long-term development cooperation, we found a gradual movement from the lower right hand to the upper left hand cells of the table. We base our judgment on discussions, project documents and evaluations. We do not have verifiable, exact figures. But let us present some examples to show how we classify the interventions.

Table 3.4. Typology of Capacity-Building Projects Implemented by UNICEF in Zimbabwe, 1980-1995

	Systemic	Organizational	Individual
Goals and visions	Limited	None	None
Strategies and policies	Extensive	Limited	Limited
Design and management	Prominent	Prominent	Prominent

Note: The scale goes from none to limited, prominent and extensive. Extensive means that this is the type of capacity-building that dominated UN operational activities during the period.

As an example of an intervention at the system level (building capacity for strategy formulation and operational management), the National Health Information System was established to assure that health information for planning, management, monitoring, evaluation and research would be available at all levels. The data are assembled in a country-wide information system and analysed at the national and local levels.

In basic education, UNICEF collaborated with the Ministries of Education and Culture, Higher Education, Health and Community and Cooperative Development, and with non-governmental organizations (NGOs), to develop a programme in curriculum development. The capacity-building facet included national, regional and district workshops for education officers, school heads and teachers. The objectives were to improve the quality of education and health of the child and to enrich the role of women by involving mothers in health, nutrition and family life education. We have placed this project in the category of operational management at the system level.

As we have shown, both UNIDO and UNICEF provided significant amounts of capacity-building assistance, though in absolute terms UNICEF more so than UNIDO. But in relative terms, capacity-building formed a larger share of UNIDO assistance, which relates to its role as a specialized agency rather than a funding and implementing organization.

UNDP has implemented three country programmes in Zimbabwe, 1981-1986, 1987-1991 and 1992-1996. Table 3.5 presents the thematic areas of these programmes. Regrettably, the first country programme document was not available and hence we have no data from this period. The second programme was changed in mid-course, so we present that programme before and after the mid-term review. The total programmable indicative planning figure (IPF) resources used for the second programme were US$19.8 million (including carry-over from the first country programme). The third country programme contained US$18.3 million, also with carry-overs. If we assume that the first country programme was somewhat smaller than the other two, the total UNDP contributions to Zimbabwe (from indicative planning figure (IPF) resources) were US$55 million for the 1980-1995 period.

The UNDP country programme also incorporates other resources. Looking at the third country programme, the IPF resources were supplemented by other UNDP administered funds (for example, the United Nations Capital Development Fund (UNCDF), the United Nations Sudano-Sahelian Office (UNSO), the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) and the Global Environment Facility (GEF)). Other United Nations resources (UNFPA, UNICEF, the World Food Programme (WFP) and the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) were also included). During the third country programme cycle, these other resources amounted to US$54 million, or more than twice the core resources of UNDP.

The first part of the second country programme had a very clear focus on capacity-building at the operational level and focused primarily on individuals and organizations. The mid-term review shows that in March 1988 the country programme covered 84 small-scale projects. Some of the largest projects were in civil aviation, agriculture and telecommunications, but there were also projects in aid coordination and economic management.

Table 3.5. Areas of Concentration of UNDP, 1987-1995

2nd Country Programme (initially)	2nd Country Programme (revised)	3rd Country Programme
Human resource development	Planning and management	Economic management
		Income generation
Strengthening planning machinery	Agriculture (socio-economic aspects)	Environmental sustainability
Agriculture and Rural development	Transport and Communication	
Water resources development	Global thematic support activities	
Mining and quarrying		
Manufacturing industry		

Source: UNDP country programme documents, mid-term review of second country programme.

The mid-term review of the second country programme concluded that it would be a suitable objective to have five large-scale projects totaling US$15 million and six small-scale projects totaling US$3 million in the third country programme, plus a 10 per cent reserve. Regrettably, the third country programme document does not present an overview of projects, but it is quite clear that the three thematic areas presented in the table contain many projects, most of them small in scale. Let us return to the matrix that has been used above to present UNDP capacity-building activities. There was a major shift from capacity-building interventions at the individual and organizational levels, in respect of operational capacity, to strategic and policy-oriented capacity-building at the system level. Had we gone on to analyse the 1997-2000

country cooperation framework, that trend would have been even more noticeable.

Table 3.6. Nature of Capacity-Building Projects in UNDP Operational Assistance to Zimbabwe, 1980-1995

	Systemic	Organizational	Individual
Goals and visions	none	none	none
Strategies and policies	prominent	limited	limited
Design and management	limited	prominent	extensive

Note: The scale goes from none to limited, prominent and extensive. Extensive means that this is the type of capacity-building that dominated UN operational activities during the period.

Can one draw any inferences from these three organizations as regards the total UN system? UN assistance during the period we are investigating comes close to US$200 million. There can be no doubt that a substantial share of this was directed towards capacity-building. Further, interviews with other agencies (FAO, ILO, UNDP, UNFPA and WHO) indicated that a substantial share of their operations had a capacity-building intent. Regrettably, none of these agencies could provide as much detailed data as UNIDO and UNICEF. Based on what we learned of their programmes, however, we would estimate that between 65 and 75 per cent of UN operational activities were directed at capacity-building, that is, a total of around US$150 million.

The next question is what type of capacity-building. Our summary of the experience in Zimbabwe is seen in Table 3.7. The UN operational activities were largely practical and managerially oriented. They were concerned with basic skills in design (of irrigation works, factories, health systems, curriculum and other issues). They were less directed towards the formulation of development strategies and policies, and even less towards the formulation of visions and goals for development.

Table 3.7. Nature of Capacity-Building Projects in UN Operational Assistance to Zimbabwe, 1980 and 1995

	Systemic	Organizational	Individual
Goals and visions	limited	none	none
Strategies and policies	limited	limited	limited
Design and management	prominent	extensive	extensive

Note: The scale goes from none to limited, prominent and extensive. Extensive means that this is the type of capacity-building that dominated UN operational activities during the period.

Some of the interventions have been made at the system level, bringing together a number of different actors. This approach has been strengthened in recent years and it is also more pronounced in the field of social welfare cooperation. Individual training remains strong, but less so towards the end of the period under review. But interventions at the organizational level are extensive, indicating that capacity-building is still mainly identified as strengthening particular organizations.

Forms of Capacity Developed

Now that we have seen what types of capacity-building were attempted, the question is, were they successful? The issue of success, though simple and straightforward, contains many subsets of questions: to what extent have the sums spent by the UN system led to verifiable increases in capacity? Are there any differences in success rates between the types of capacities that were attempted, that is, in respect of the different cells in the matrix that we use?

The literature on development assistance usually points to the difficulties of technical assistance (Berg 1993). In recent years, many aggregate evaluation reports have pointed to success rates that are as low as 20 to 30 per cent. The World Bank has found that almost 80 per cent of their technical assistance projects fail to reach their targets.[106] Morgan and Baser (1996) argue that the World Bank, which may have the best evaluation system in the development community, is more ready than others to admit their weaknesses, but that overall success rates probably are not much different. Israel (1989), in a penetrating study of institutional development, illustrates that capacity-building, particularly at the organizational and system level, is very difficult. In fact, it appears that the more strategy and systems oriented the cooperation, the smaller the chances of successful accomplishment of targets.

If UN operational activities in Zimbabwe conform to the patterns of performance common among bilateral and multilateral donors worldwide, then fewer than one quarter of the projects reach their objectives or are completed on time, within budget. Interestingly, the recent UNDP country cooperation framework refers to a UNDP study that found that 80 per cent of

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[106] *Recent World Bank experiences are documented in Performance Indicators for Technical Assistance Operation, January 1996; the annual Reviews of Evaluation Results 1995, 1996 and 1997; and the* Report of the Committee on Development Effectiveness.

the projects funded under the old country programmes were successful. As the UN operations in Zimbabwe are rather complex, and as the environment is difficult because of the recent civil war and the destabilization of the region throughout the 1980s, we doubt that the success rate is accurate.

The sources mentioned above show what we might expect of the aggregate picture of UN capacity-building assistance in Zimbabwe. We cannot evaluate all the interventions during this short study, but we will illustrate the possible effects by looking at a number of different projects. Let us turn to the first example. Throughout the period under review, water supply and sanitation have been priority areas of UNICEF. In the beginning of the 1990s, the activities started shifting from an emphasis on engineering to social mobilization and training. New project activities in community-based management (CBM) emerged. Why did the shift came in the early 1990s, when it was already well known in the development community that services at the village level had to build on participatory approaches? The answer is that in the 1980s, the Government felt it should provide the services and take care of installations and the UN system followed government directives. We can only guess at the amount of money spent on water projects that did not have full impact because of inappropriate choice of technology, lack of social mobilization and imbalances between water supply, health and sanitation components.

Even if the projects had a very limited capacity-building effect, there were other aspects of the UNICEF operation that had a high impact. During one interview, a government representative stated, "The declaration of the water decade was very important. We modeled much of our approach to the sector on it". The preparation of the National Master Plan for Rural Water Supply and Sanitation, the formation of the National Action Committee, the subcommittees and the National Coordination Unit and other units at the provincial and district levels were important stepping stones inspired by the declaration. The capacity-building impact was higher at the system level, and in respect of policies and strategies, than in the design and management of water schemes.

Since the CBM approach began in 1991, interventions have been evaluated twice, and it was concluded that the objectives were being attained, with some setbacks. A 1995 evaluation of the Chivi district concluded, "The CBM project is a dependable alternative approach to enhancing low-cost sustainable hand-pump maintenance and promotion of community water supplies, [but] the project also concentrated more on technical aspects to the detriment of the social aspects that ensure effective community empowerment. As a result of this approach, the bush pump mechanics became alienated from the community they were supposed to serve".

UNICEF arranged a visit to one district where the project was being implemented, and we met first with the district water committee, an interdisciplinary body of the district council. The project took time to grow in the district. The CBM was to be initiated in 29 wards, but since it started in 1996 only two had been covered, and two more were about to begin. The project comes to an end in the year 2000, and it seems unlikely that the geographical coverage can be reached by then. The major reason for the delay is that the UNICEF contribution to the Ministry of Finance takes time to percolate down to the district.

The UNICEF CBM project can be compared to the Africa 2000 initiative financed under the UNDP country programme and implemented by the Ministry of Health and Child Welfare, with technical support from WHO. The objective of the programme is to assure access to safe

water supplies and basic sanitation to the under-served population. The programme started in 1994 and was evaluated in 1996, so it barely falls within the time period of our study. The evaluation found that the village concept and community participation were likely to improve the implementation of community-based water and sanitation projects. But even though villagers were motivated, the evaluation found that the seed money provided under the project was not enough.

The WHO project differs dramatically in scope from the UNICEF project. The Africa 2000 initiative covers 8 villages, but the CBM project covers several districts, each containing up to some 30 wards, each of which may contain several villages. The investments in each village are smaller, and the UNICEF project relies more on training and mobilization, whereas the Africa 2000 project relies more on direct operational involvement in each village. Capacity created by these two projects varies, according to the evaluations. But the more dispersed, less geographically concentrated and more training-focused approach of the CBM project appears to be a more cost-effective way of assisting villages.

Yet another approach can be demonstrated by FAO projects in irrigation. At independence, the country had only two irrigation engineers in public service. In 1985, FAO developed a programme to take young graduates from the agricultural university and provide them with an engineering education. Today the Government has a contingent of around 45 irrigation engineers. Two out of the total number of 55 trainees were women, which is not particularly impressive for an organization that should promote the development of female professionals. Nevertheless, there is clear and identifiable growth in the capacity to design and manage irrigation schemes.

In the late 1980s, a participative approach to the construction of irrigation schemes was taken. Meetings were held in the community in order for the planners to understand the farmers' expectations and for the farmers to become familiar with the costs and benefits of different types of schemes. The local authorities selected from among the many applicants, and farmers elected their irrigation management committee, which received training, study visits to other irrigation schemes and technical advice from FAO and the Government. They were to come up with a proposal for an irrigation scheme, a process that took about a year. The training has helped the farmers manage their own schemes, and an evaluation from 1996 notes that farmers are now asking the Government to transfer management of the schemes to their irrigation committees, even though this will result in additional costs to them. The socioeconomic impact assessment shows that the net income of each plot holder under the schemes has quadrupled since the introduction of irrigation. It should also be noted that the project reached small-scale farmers, most of whom are women.

The experience of the irrigation project is now leading to more activities at the system and strategic levels. FAO is engaged in technical support to the formulation of national action plans, master plans and the development of strategies for community-based management of irrigation schemes. The case thus shows how the collaboration between FAO and the Government proceeds from individual training to pilot-scale implementation in villages and on to strategic and system levels of planning. The sequencing of approaches is illustrated in Table 3.8, showing how capacity-building moves from "downstream" to "upstream" levels in our matrix.

Table 3.8. The Sequence of Capacity-Building Interventions of FAO Irrigation Support

	Systemic	Organizational	Individual
Goals and visions			
Strategies and policies	Third, strategy review		
Design and management	Second, development of irrigation schemes		First, training irrigation engineers

The FAO approach may be contrasted to UNIDO support to establish an industrial development policy. The UNIDO projects started at the level of the Ministry of Commerce and Industry and were designed to assist the Government in finalizing an industrial policy document. The project mainly supplied technical assistance through the provision of international experts. It was formulated in 1992 and the field activities came to an end in 1995. Our interviews with ministry personnel indicated that the working procedures of the experts were not in harmony with the ministry, and, in fact, there seems to have been little interaction. The Government has not presented any policy document yet, and thus the impact of the project must be considered very limited.

Yet another example of an "upstream" intervention is provided by an ILO project. Following independence in 1980, the Government retained most of the legislation that had been applicable to the Department of Occupational Health, Safety and Workers Compensation. It was felt that the immediate need was to upgrade machinery and equipment and train staff. Legislation, though not perfect, did not create too much of an impediment.

The first ILO project in Zimbabwe was to contribute to the "improvement of safety and health conditions of workers in industry, mining and agriculture". The project had three areas of focus: capacity-building/staff training, equipment and review of relevant legislative framework. The project achieved most of its objectives: there has been a marked improvement in machinery and equipment; staff training has gone according to schedule (but suffered a setback when qualified staff left the department after independence and some trained during the programme were lost to the private sector or other countries where salaries were more attractive); and training benefited from tailor-made courses and the training of trainers, who have since been posted to the provinces.

An increase in factory inspections and registration, as well as in the production of reports, was demonstrated. In 1996, a joint ILO-National Social Security Authority (NSSA) workshop reviewed legislation applicable to the sector. The overall achievement of the workshop was to confirm that national legislation needed to be amended to make it comply with international trends and expectations as set out in ILO Convention Number 155. A second goal was to consolidate and bring up to date all other national legislation that covered worker welfare.

Staff trained during the programme are being used nationally to train small-scale

entrepreneurs under a programme called Work Improvement in Small Enterprise. The project targets new entrants and retains contact with existing clients. This has the capacity to ensure that small-scale industries and commercial undertakings receive the support they need and stand a better chance to create employment. There was no indication of gender sensitivity in the project. Given that the participation of women tends to be lower in industry and commerce, and that small enterprises are more likely to be successful in rural and peri-urban areas, and recognizing that a majority of rural dwellers are women, the project, while achieving real impact in the urban areas, may have made very little contribution to rural development.

Since 1983, UNDP has assisted the Government in coordinating external assistance. A project entitled Assistance in Coordination of Externally Funded Development Programmes supported the Government in preparing the status report on external assistance to Zimbabwe and established a computerized management information system to integrate external assistance data with the requirements of the five-year development plans. Training was provided to junior and middle-level government personnel in the use and maintenance of computerized methods of database management. Specific training was also developed to strengthen the capacity of implementing ministries and agencies to prepare and approve projects. In collaboration with the Government and donors, a donor procedures manual was developed to assist in disbursement of assistance.

In meetings with the Government, UN agencies and donors, we found no evidence of any impact from UNDP support in aid coordination. Ministry personnel know nothing about the training. Other donor agencies do not know of the procedures manual. The UN agencies themselves do not use it, and we have not been able to locate a copy, not even in the UNDP library. The mid-term review of the second country programme notes, "It is important to make reference to the UNDP yearly publication, the Development Cooperation Report. The DCR is a substantive document which provides statistical information on external assistance to Zimbabwe". The report was discontinued in 1996 at the request of the Government, which did not think the format of the report made any useful contribution.

To sum up the review of these different projects: there is a huge range of possibilities in capacity development; there is no doubt that several interventions helped to establish vital capacity at both central strategic and policy-making levels in Zimbabwe, as well as at the level of communities and organizations, be they public, private or civil society units; and it is equally clear that many projects have failed, never reaching their targets.

What is the share of total capacity-building projects that actually assisted in creating capacity? We have not been able to identify a single project that followed its intentions in terms of timely and comprehensive development of capacity. Even the highly successful CBM projects face significant delays, which cause lost opportunities. The system of development assistance has over the years been too ready to accept administrative hurdles that impede the process of cooperation.

There are, however, projects that make significant contributions to capacity development, even if they do not fully reach their targets. The examples above illustrate capacity-building: trained engineers for extension services in irrigation, organizational capacities at the level of village water committees, equipped and trained pump technicians and organizational capacity to interact in a participatory manner for policy development. The early

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projects in training community health workers are also examples of how capacity was created in the health system of the country.

In the section above, we arrived at an estimate of total capacity-building efforts in the vicinity of US$150 million. Our judgment, supported by interviews and by numerous evaluation reports, led us to assess that less than one half of the amount spent actually led to any new capacity being developed. The discussion above has pointed to a number of projects where there was supposed to be capacity development and an impact resulting from the deployment of this capacity. But it is hard to verify capacity if no impact can be traced. Where there is an impact, as, for example, in the repair time of hand pumps, then we must accept that the capacity is there.

The Impact of Capacity Building

It is quite possible to provide anecdotal examples of positive impacts arising from capacities created through the UN system, and the examples we have pointed to above should make such an impact self-evident. In this section, however, we would like to raise some questions about the negative, or unintended, impact that arises from capacity-building efforts.

UNDP has played an important role in providing technical assistance to the Government in the formulation of development strategies, notably in water supply and sanitation, health, labour and possibly irrigation. But the Government has also developed policies that have been dysfunctional both to growth and welfare, as, for example, in the initial response to HIV/AIDS, in the field of industrial development and in the role of the public sector in enterprise and commerce.

UNDP supports the Economic Reform Programme by, inter alia, capacity-building in the areas of trade liberalization, fiscal policy, domestic deregulation and debt management. When the reform policies lead to tangible and beneficial results, UNDP would no doubt claim success and note that impacts were considerable even though projects were small. But what impact should be attributed to the projects when the policies are not successful? Needless to say, a full discussion should examine the quality of the advice provided, and perhaps the deterioration of performance would have been even greater without assistance. But, in our opinion, it is fair and honest to accept that some UN projects have been misguided and may have led to negative consequences for overall development.

In recent years, several studies have shown how donor assistance has enabled Governments to sustain development approaches that have since been proven wrong. Hyden (1985), Bigsten et al. (1994), Carlsson and Sassa (1996) and Svedberg et al. (1994) illustrate this with several examples from the United Republic of Tanzania, Zambia and other countries in Africa. In order to prove that such negative impact has arisen from UN assistance, one would have to examine in detail the interaction between UN advisers, staff personnel and government representatives. Furthermore, one would have to take into account the common wisdom of the time, the situation in Zimbabwe and external conditions that had an impact on development. In spite of these reservations, we would question whether, for example, UN cooperation in such fields as foreign investment, privatization and civil service reform have encouraged the Government to adopt strategies that stimulate economic growth with vigour and determination.

Looking at individual interventions may, like the view of the proverbial tree, hide the

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nature of the forest. There may also be aggregate effects of UN operational assistance (not to mention bilateral aid) that are hard to verify, but nevertheless likely. We estimate that total UN operational activities may be dispersed over more than 300 different projects. Each project has to be negotiated, summed up in a project document, implemented according to different UN agency rules and procedures, monitored and evaluated. Each may require at least six months of central government time just in planning, management and follow-up—not counting the actual implementation of project activities. The Government may thus have been burdened with an additional 150 years of administrative duties. Opportunities lost while collaborating with the UN may be considerable.

In conclusion, fewer than half the UN operational activities intended for capacity-building manage to create capacity. The impacts from created capacity range from the positive to the negative and the administrative burden of cooperating with the UN agencies (not to mention bilateral donors) carries a high opportunity cost. It would, therefore, be difficult to support that the overall impact of UN operational activities has been beneficial for capacity development in Zimbabwe.

Sustainability

What are the threats to sustainability? At the level of the individual, the most common threat is not having the opportunity to apply skills learned. A person who has attended a four-week programme in database management, but who will not be equipped with computers and relevant programmes, will rapidly forget knowledge learned and the capacity evaporates. Perhaps the most common reason why capacity is not used is that many individuals must use what is learned in an environment that is far from enabling. Poor management, stifling bureaucracy and lack of support from peer groups are often cited as examples of why the impact of training is less effective than expected.

Organizations also depend on an enabling environment, but the factors that constitute this environment differ. Many UN projects helped build new organizational entities—government departments, parastatal bodies, community-level organizations, industry associations, research institutes and others. Organizational survival depends on either market acceptance or continued government budget allocations—and sometimes a combination of both.

As an example of success, in the late 1980s, UNIDO supported a tannery and shoe factory in Harare with technical assistance and equipment. Funds could not be transferred as grants to a company, so the firm paid for the services, but the money was provided to a common service centre for the leather industry. UNIDO also encouraged and supported the formation of an industrial association among the leather industries in the country. The firm in question is thriving and has gone on to provide technical assistance to newly formed tanneries in Malawi and Mozambique. The profitability and market success of the company over the past six years are evidence of sustainable capacity development.

Yet another UNIDO project shows an example of non-sustainable organizational capacity. The purpose of the project was to use agro-industrial waste, converting it to bio-methane gas as energy for use in factories. The factories would reduce pollution, cut their costs in environmental pollution fees and substitute other forms of energy (electricity, fuel) by using

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gas from waste products. The government counterpart was the Ministry of Energy (which apparently never showed much interest in the project), and the project was implemented by a private company in Harare. The bio-methane gas production was set up, company employees were trained and the company took part in the investment in the equipment. But the conversion process was set up on a pilot scale and UNIDO had no money to follow up with demonstration and communication of the effects. Hence, the impact on the industrial community was limited. There are no examples of companies adopting the technology. The cause of poor sustainability lies in the conceptualization. Capacity was indeed built, but there were no follow-up activities.

In financial terms, the most important UNDP intervention in the area of the environment was the GEF-financed solar energy-based rural electrification pilot project. The project was designed to expand the local solar industry and trigger development and adoption of standards for the installation of photovoltaic systems and a code of ethics for companies. The project's revolving fund has provided more than ZD10 million in credit to the rural population for the acquisition of solar units. Around 1,500 systems have been installed in rural households, and 375 at institutions or service centres.

The project has thus worked at the system level, providing individuals and organizations with knowledge and addressing the interaction of units by establishing norms and standards. More than 80 technicians were trained in solar energy technology. But there were problems with the project design. The private sector was to take part both as beneficiary and provider of services, which led to conflicts between the development objectives and the commercial objectives of firms. The revolving fund has also been difficult to manage because of premature depletion of resources. Most significant, however, is the fact that the systems have little applicability in rural areas. They provide electricity mainly for lights and electrical appliances, whereas rural people primarily need energy for cooking and heating. The capacity has been created, and may be sustainable, but cannot address the problem it targeted.

Our final example illustrates a situation where we cannot identify any significant threats to the sustainability of capacity development. The evaluation of Sentinel Surveillance for Social Dimensions of Adjustment monitoring shows the development of strategic capacity at the system level, points to how sustainability can be achieved even in the face of external threats and illustrates very tangible impacts. The evaluators concluded, "Over time, user involvement in the surveys has increased, indicating greater confidence in dealing with the data and process.... The ripple-out process of capacity-building (from committee experts to core team leaders to provinces) appears to have worked well, although there is some doubt whether the provinces really gain confidence in what they are exposed to during the short contact with the core team members". The results of the sentinel surveillance are widely quoted and have led to precise knowledge about welfare developments in the wake of the government economic recovery programmes.

Table 3.9 sums up the argument by presenting the major threats to sustainability. We have discussed threats only as regards one dimension in our matrix of capacities, namely the intervention level. We think that the threats to sustainability differ according to the intervention level, but they appear to be the same whether it is capacity for operational management or any other type of capacity. Threats to sustainability at one level usually must be resolved at the next aggregate level. Naturally, many initiatives could also be undertaken at each level; we do not want to suggest that problems always need to be addressed at aggregate levels. We should note

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that at the system levels there is no higher level, hence the system must attend to its sustainability.

Table 3.9. Location of Capacity and Major Threats to Sustainability

	Individual Capacity	Organizational Capacity	System Capacity
Threats:	Turnover	Market failure	Systems design
	New duties	Budget reductions	Linkages
	Management	Supporting legislation	Norms and values
	Peer resistance		Legislation
	Financial resources		

IV. CRITICAL ISSUES IN CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT

Whereas the previous section presented the total picture of capacity-building through the UN system, we will now turn to a more general discussion of a number of critical issues that affect capacity-building in all spheres of society: gender, environment, government decentralization and civil society.

Gender and the Rights of Women

In 1991, the Government of Zimbabwe ratified the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women. Several pieces of legislation intended to further protect and secure women's rights have been put into place. In addition, most projects in the UN system advocate gender sensitivity and the rights of women. In spite of these efforts, evaluations conducted by the UN system, among others, confirm that in Zimbabwe, society has not adjusted its views, nor does it appear ready to accept women's equal rights. All projects confirm that societal attitudes need to be changed in order that unfair and unequal treatment of women may be eliminated.[107]

Evaluations of UNIFEM projects[108] conclude that projects are likely to enhance the opportunities of women who already have the capacity to participate in the modern sector. The effects of projects on rural and less educated women cannot be stated with the same amount of certainty. It is pertinent to point out that, even though collective findings of evaluation reports have confirmed that the source of oppression and unfair treatment of women comes from

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[107] See, for example UNICEF, 1994, Children and Women in Zimbabwe: A Situation Analysis Update; UNICEF, 1995, Transforming Social Development: The Experience in Zimbabwe 1960 - 1994; UNIDO, 1996, Integration of Women in the Leather, Footwear and Leather Production Industries in Africa - A Case Study.

[108] Women and Food Systems in Zimbabwe, SADCC Preparatory Assistance Project, Trade Development and Promotion Strategy for Women, and Support Services for Women.

"society", particularly men, programmes have not changed much during the period of the review in their content or target. Should the programmes, for instance, shift from teaching women to produce more food to training them to realize their own responsibility in changing their environment? If the gender issue is indeed basic to sustainable human development, future projects should be directed to members of parliament, counsellors, traditional leaders and the judiciary, including practitioners in and out of government.

The Environment

It is unclear what types of programmes need to be put in place to correct environmental degradation. Projects embarked upon so far have highlighted awareness of the need to stem the degradation that has occurred, but it is fruitless to create awareness about soil erosion and deforestation in communities that live off the land and the forests, without offering alternatives. Communities know that their land no longer has the productive capacity it used to have. They have to travel longer distances to collect wood and they are greatly concerned about the future. But immediate needs for food and shelter propel them further on a destructive course.

Projects in this area included the UNDP/GEF photovoltaic (PV) project and the Zimbabwe/China Biogas project. Both have potential to contribute to environmental conservation but, as confirmed in the PV project, the benefits accrued will be of limited benefit, since very few people in rural areas are able to purchase the kits or units. In addition, the PV output caters to lights and small electrical appliances, yet the priority use for energy in the rural areas is for cooking.

In 1987, the Government launched a National Conservation Strategy, but it was delayed for some years. After an action plan was produced in 1994, a joint effort between the International Union for the Conservation of Nature/UNDP and the Government established implementation structures to operate at both district and village levels. There are areas of immediate concern: the Government's contribution to project funding is not sufficient and reliance on donor funding is still fairly strong; the project does not seem to be fully integrated within government programmes; and participation at the interministerial level has not been formalized.

Environmental conservation is not going to come from the singular efforts of the National Conservation Strategy. It requires the collective capacity of such sectors as education, health, housing alternatives and energy and food production. We noted that the District Environmental Action Plan (DEAP) has as its objective "the development of a methodology for the integration of environmental planning into the national development planning process. This methodology will be based on the active participation of all segments of the population".

UNDP evaluations of projects between 1983 and 1996 listed the DEAP efforts, the National Conservation Strategy and the GEF Small Grants Programme (GEFSGP). In addition to these efforts, there were other projects and activities that, although not specifically listed under the environment heading, have outputs that will have a bearing on the environment programme, such as water supply and sanitation, food production, drought preparedness and management, work safety, regeneration of forests and plant life and minimization of industrial pollutants. In almost all projects, the overriding intention is to build capacity at the community level and improve government response capacity. Even though there were few activities under

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the programme, there was sufficient related activity to determine whether the collective results would constitute sustainable capacity.

The specific projects, DEAP in particular, were successful in creating awareness, which could not have been difficult given that the country was going through the after-effects of an extensive drought. But of significant impact was the creation of structures and processes for programme implementation, both within government and at the local level. In addition, the results of the workshop held under the GEFSGP demonstrate that the awareness of communities enables them to address environmental issues specifically and structure their demands on government accordingly.

The principal issues and areas of immediate significance are: diminishing food and water sources, the deterioration in plant and animal life and unstable climatic conditions. Secondary issues are deterioration in health, nutrition and sanitation; reduced access to food and water; and reduced capacity to produce food and have access to water supply. The UN system has put several projects in place during the period of the review to create a base that can be promoted further through better coordination and targeting.

In 1986, FAO and UNDP began a project to build capacity to predict when natural disasters are likely to occur, based on the availability of remote sensing material, programmes and equipment. The results of this first attempt demonstrated the need for remote sensing. In 1996, two other projects were evaluated. These were the UNICEF-BADC Evaluation of the Drought Recovery and Drought Preparedness Programme and the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS)-UNDP National Policy and Programme on Drought Management.

These projects fall just outside this evaluation period but have been used here to highlight the fact that neither of the two latter projects makes reference to the 1986 FAO-UNDP effort. It is of further significance to note that even though the 1992-1996 mid-term review stated that the project should be moved into the national execution method and that remote sensing would be one of the focal points, the latest country cooperation framework under its third thematic area of concentration does not include follow-up to remote sensing. The 1989 evaluation report states, "The project met the overall objective of introducing certain techniques in remote sensing that were not already in use in Zimbabwe but, because of various constraints, the immediate objective of arriving at conclusive answers that would assist in full incorporation of the transferred technology was not achieved. The full potential of remote sensing technology could not be realized owing to several reasons". Although we could not establish exactly what "various constraints" or "several reasons" in this case meant, we are of the view that the project results and these unknown factors would be worth pursuing to give the programme a clearer chance for revival or redirection.

The Africa 2000 Network and UNDP directed efforts to local NGOs in a range of activities including agro-forestry, small irrigation and grazing schemes, vegetable and fruit gardening, environmental education/awareness creation and other community-initiated, environmentally sustainable initiatives. Projects were executed in collaboration with United Nations Volunteers fieldworkers. During interviews, government representatives expressed concern with regard to the fact that assistance directed towards communities through NGOs, such as in this project, did not always achieve the desired results and did not blend in with other development efforts pursued by the Government. There is less coordination, and government

capacity to intervene or incorporate projects of this nature was quite low.

Capacity Building

Capacity building is subject to a variety of interpretations. There is a need to consider capacity-building not necessarily as growth and expansion. It is also possible to build capacity by removing obstacles and altering approaches. Within government and to some extent the NGO sector, part of the major problems in service delivery is related to the use of administrative procedures and regulations that are not readily applicable to recent government transformations.

An example of this is the report from both the health and education sectors following the Economic and Social Adjustment Programme (ESAP) introduced by the Government in 1989. In order to introduce cost recovery policies, the Government realized the need to help the very poor by assuring they continue to have access to services. However, the programme was to be implemented by teachers and nurses, mostly in rural areas, who had no criteria to guide them to select those who should benefit. Contact with headquarters was inadequate to assist them. The implementation of ESAP requirements without sufficient evaluation of current facts is considered to have contributed to the decline in the statistics for children attending clinics and schools. While capacity may have been built within government to develop and implement a policy for economic restructuring, no capacity was built to anticipate impact and prepare for it accordingly.

Democracy

The statements made in this section and the next may appear to have no direct relevance to our terms of reference; but we considered it appropriate to extend our study beyond the immediate symptoms that may have influenced the direction of UN operational activities in Zimbabwe. We are of the opinion that unless issues that are basic to good governance and sustainable development are identified and dealt with, universal aid and support may actually have negative effects.

The developed world, in its definition of democracy, stipulates the following as its attributes: people's participation, consultative processes, transparency and accountability within government, regular elections, respect for human rights and multi-party politics. These attributes, with the exception of perhaps multi-party politics, existed in many parts of the African continent before colonization. It is worthwhile to recall that African traditional forms of governance were based on collective responsibility, communal participation, freedom of speech and transparency, consultation, community consensus and collective protection of the disadvantaged. A cursory evaluation of African Governments after the attainment of independence and adoption of modern forms of governance shows a rather disturbing series of failures. It is perhaps not farfetched to conclude that these Governments, in their efforts to be modern, shed all that was African.

The UN system in Zimbabwe has stated the need to promote democracy and good governance but seems to have embarked on very few such projects during the period under review. Apart from the UNDP project on assistance in legal drafting in 1984, two other smaller projects and another on social conditions and equity, the system does not seem to have implemented any project that addressed directly the intricacies of democracy. If the reason for

this oversight is to avoid political confrontation with the Government, the UN system's history and experience in other countries demonstrates that this does not seem to have paid dividends.

It is harmful to pretend that colonialism did not create permanent injury to African pride and identity. In Zimbabwe and more recently Namibia and South Africa, it is pertinent to pay attention to the reconstruction of social integrity and perception of universal equality. The peace and social human development that the UN system seeks to promote cannot be sustained if the people for whom it is intended are still locked in a psychological slot that inhibits their participation as equal human beings. There can never be a sufficient number of clinics, schools or any other social amenities that will produce sustainable development if equality of the human race has not been reaffirmed, not only in national constitutions, but also in demonstrable programmes that the UN system selects to support.

We did not find any documentation showing that the UN system has selected programmes to deal with the after-effects of apartheid and the possible carryover that might harm efforts supporting democracy and development in Zimbabwe. We are of the opinion that democracy stands a chance only when all citizens are reassured of the existence of equal treatment and access to all that their country can offer them. Capacity built in people's attitudes, that helps them reaffirm their place as equals, could help in the setting of a more reliable and stable base for development.

Decentralization

The period this review covers reveals that development projects delivered by the Government, donor agencies and others were not coordinated. There were no formalized links of consultation or collaboration. The relationships that communities built over this period with donors or government departments depended largely on the personalities that were involved in the projects. As a result, it may not be easy to apportion credit for the way things have turned out.

The 1993 restructuring of local authorities was immediately followed by supporting activities that included a baseline survey on capacity-building for Rural District Councils and a decentralization policy that seeks to promote and strengthen democracy and civic responsibility. The policy also calls for a legislated transfer of functions to local authorities on a permanent basis.

In the 1995 mid-term review of the Government of Zimbabwe-UNDP country programme, the Decentralization Programme appears among those intended for capacity-building in government and the promotion of sustainable human development. The mid-term review shows that the programme is directed at the public service. Reference is also made to local government, presumably through the support given at the national level. If this is the expectation, then it is necessary to point out that capacity-building at the centre and the successful implementation of the decentralization programme by the Government does not automatically lead to stronger local authority. Power, funding and responsibility will have been passed on to local authorities and the relevant personnel redeployed. Capacity in the form of empowerment will have occurred, but the ability to execute functions does not exist.

The 1995 terminal evaluation of the UNDP project for Improving Government Efficiency and Effectiveness does not address local authorities, possibly because local

authorities would not be treated in the same grouping with the civil service. But if the project is intended to improve the efficiency of government at all levels, an inclusion of the local government portion might ensure that the links established with decentralization would be more effective and general service to the public improved.

Capacity-building for local authorities is a prerequisite of successful decentralization. Though the final report has not been produced, the report of the baseline study on capacity-building for Rural District Councils indicates that the survey will cover the broader issues on which effective capacity-building programmes may be designed. It refers to coordination, community participation and training to meet specific skills deficits and to create effective local government. The final report could offer direction on the type of actions that would be appropriate.

V. THE PROCESS OF COOPERATION

UN system cooperation is a difficult area to analyse. It is often the informal mechanisms, networks and points of contact that are relevant when it comes to explaining why things work or fail. Few UN staff currently in positions of authority were in similar positions in the 1980s. We will therefore concentrate attention on a few crucial issues that are of relevance both to the past and the present: the origins of collaboration and the entry points through which the UN system builds its activities; coordination among agencies; organizational learning; and the relevance of Zimbabwe's experiences to the UN system.

Project Selection and Consultation

The UN system is seen as a trendsetter in development, and generally the programmes suggested come with funding and personnel. Many countries in Africa, because of the extent of their needs, find it hard to refuse such assistance or insist that it be substantially altered. Given this, it is not easy to tell whether programmes were endorsed by the Government of Zimbabwe because they were among their national priorities or because any form of assistance was welcome. (The UN system, through UNDP, did hold meetings to discuss country programmes with both the Government and NGOs.) It is also unclear if the people representing government and communities had sufficient knowledge of development priorities; whether their input to these meetings was preceded by wide consultation to give them a full mandate; or whether they held positions in their organizations that authorized them to make decisions.

Another area of concern is the manner in which the various agencies and government departments interpret the intent of the programme and select what they consider to be relevant projects. In this review, we did not come across documentation that showed the procedures used to ensure that a common understanding of programmes was established or that specific roles or components of the programme were shared to ensure a more integrated product. It appears that once projects were approved, the various agencies each determined their approach to implementation and very little information was shared among them.

What then followed was a series of meetings convened by the various UN agencies, government departments and sometimes NGOs to consult about the project selected for implementation. These meetings are not coordinated in their timing or content. During some of the interview sessions, it was reported that communities have begun to request that project visits and meetings by donors and government departments be coordinated to reduce the

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frequency of meetings and to coordinate development in their communities.

An examination of project documents shows that most UN agencies in Zimbabwe selected similar approaches to capacity-building around the issue of community participation. Meetings were held with the identified community to brief them about the project and to accord them the opportunity to consult among themselves and elect a committee. The committee then became the link through which either the donor or the Government reached the community. Some training related to the programme could take place.

The 1995 UNICEF project evaluation on the Community Maintenance System in Chivi District noted that community participation seems to decline when project staff are withdrawn at project completion. The review also states that training was focused on the bush pump mechanics and that community empowerment was not effective. The need to refine and produce a clearer meaning of community participation is echoed in most of the evaluation reports.

At present, however, none of the outputs are linked, and evaluations (perhaps governed by predetermined formats) are based on individual projects and do not make reference to related factors that may have resulted from other projects. Even though most projects used community participation, it cannot be stated with certainty that the projects were responsible for the level of participation. It could be argued that the eagerness of the community could have been spurred on by the fact that they were receiving an essential service.

Some donors and UN agencies deal directly with local project managers and do not go through the central government. This has two possible outcomes: government staff might feel uncomfortable if development programmes bypass them and capacity is built elsewhere; and the Government may not be willing or be in a position to take over projects started in this manner since they may not fit into current national programmes. There is merit in this entry point in that it provides assistance where it is needed, in a fairly short time. A process needs to be designed, however, that will ensure that the Government is informed of the projects and has input.

We were not able to establish whether a system is in place to ensure that various lessons learned from evaluations can be made use of in future by the UN system, the Government or other stakeholders. The upcoming country cooperation framework highlights its intended use of participatory approaches but does not indicate whether past experiences using this method are likely to continue to be effective.

In all the community participation approaches used, it would be worthwhile to study the role played by traditional leaders in relation to that played by local authorities, in light of the fact that the Government considers the involvement of traditional leaders necessary. This area is out of our terms of reference, but we feel that it would pay dividends to community capacity-building if all local institutions and structures were recognized and included in community mobilization efforts. The experiences of other countries in the region would be instructive in this regard.

Coordination within the UN system

In ancient times, alchemists believed in a philosopher's stone that would provide the key to the universe and, in effect, solve all of the problems of mankind. The quest for coordination is in many respects the equivalent. There is no doubt that coordination is a powerful tool for designing effective organizations, but it is only one tool among many. It is important to recognize that there are a few things that are not necessarily implied by coordination; most important, coordination does not mean centralized decision-making, comprehensive planning or consolidated agencies. Coordination is a necessary element in all organization, and it follows automatically from any attempt to divide labour within a system. The following are four broad categories of coordination instruments available:

A. Decisions may be coordinated by transferring power to a central body. In practice, this means that one of the partners involved gives orders and the others obey. Coordination is centralized at the level that has the decision-making powers, and it is formalized. Issuing instructions and giving orders are formally recorded activities.

B. A system may also be coordinated by introducing standardization. This increases the predictability of actors and processes and, thus, the division of labour in the system is held together and the end product becomes a coherent whole. Through standardization, the coordination is no longer centrally determined, but is still quite formal.

C. In the third category, there are a number of coordination instruments that are centralized but tend to be less formalized than the former two categories. A common way for two organizations to coordinate activities is the exchange of personnel. This is done only when coordination needs are extensive, as it is rather expensive. If the coordination needs are less intense or of a more general nature, liaison posts may be established at the board level. Project groups or task forces are normally set up to solve problems and then they are dissolved. Committees or standing groups are usually more permanent coordination instruments to safeguard that information is exchanged more frequently between the organizations.

D. Informal personal contacts are the most common coordination mechanism. It is a very simple mechanism but highly efficient. When informal personal coordination does not work, it becomes very expensive and difficult for organizations to cope. Coordination often breaks down as a result. For informal personal contacts to work as an effective coordination mechanism, there is a need for delegated power to take decisions, knowledge of the other organizations and commitment.

The first decade of UN operations in Zimbabwe saw a system largely coordinated by the instruments in category B, in that the operations of the agencies, funds and programmes were expected to be standardized according to their mandate. The tasks of UNICEF, ILO, UNIDO and others were such that if each worked according to their constitutions, the system would be coordinated. But, naturally, their activities overlap, and many new development issues arose that needed more careful coordination, not least the HIV/AIDS issue.

Consequently, there has been a gradual shift towards more coordination through formal meetings, donor coordination groups, agency head meetings and similar instruments, such as in

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category C. That type of coordination is generally held to be more costly, and whether it is more effective is uncertain. Under most conditions, informal, mutual adjustment tends to be the most effective means of coordination, but it needs to be supplemented by other means, not the least working groups, round-table meetings and task forces. These provide the basic infrastructure of information that can make informal adjustment effective.

Let us now look at the causes of lack of coordination. One reason is that coordination has never been addressed systematically and comprehensively, which is in itself a management problem. There are also more generic obstacles. First, there is no common set of values and norms concerning the purpose of activities that all the actors in the system share. Second, lack of information is a tremendous threat to coordination. Many actors have much experience but keep their knowledge to themselves, not because they are in principle averse to sharing, but because there are no arenas in which to do so. There might also be reluctance to share anything but success stories—and perhaps one needs to know as much about failures. Third, in spite of the call for harmonization of procedures within the UN system, several agencies kept their own manuals and procedures during the period under study. Fourth, some instruments of coordination may be costly, and it might also be more costly to have multilateral decisions than to have unilateral decisions. We are quite sure, however, that properly designed measures of coordination save time and money.

A fifth obstacle concerns the fact that agencies often prefer projects with high visibility. This can pose a problem if, for example, agencies locate their activities in the capital rather than in rural areas, concentrating inputs for effect rather than for maximum impact on the delivery of services. The sixth and final obstacle concerns the transparency and accountability of decision-making structures. As we have said before, much of the most effective coordination takes place through personal contacts, but people need to know where responsibilities are vested and what powers different levels of decision-makers have. Financial statements and the like need to be open so there can be coordinated information flows.

Whereas the obstacles to coordination did not change much during the 15 years under review, the instruments to improve coordination did. In later years, the system came to rely more on the use of mechanisms to exchange information, in particular, regular meetings. But it is still rare to find common programming arrangements or task forces/working committees to solve specific issues. The more information is exchanged, however, the more likely is it that the informal mechanisms of coordination can come to play a major role.

An important question is whether the modes of coordination have had any effect on the capacity-building interventions of the UN system. We believe so. It is probably not a coincidence that there was a major shift from the hierarchical and formal means of coordination to the non-hierarchical yet still formal (from category A to category C, as presented above). At the same time, capacity-building interventions by the UN system shifted from "downstream" to more "upstream" interventions, and there was a trend towards more multifaceted approaches.

A tentative conclusion would be that the system has changed from one with poor to one with better coordination, although change has been slow and reluctant. Organizational literature suggests that the non-hierarchical and decentralized approach is by far the most effective when building capacity. But the UN system in Zimbabwe did not appear to have developed the thinking, let alone the practice, of such coordination by 1995.

UN Use of Capacity Building Experiences

Has the UN system been able to distil, digest and use its experiences in capacity building in Zimbabwe? The answer to this question is a resounding "no". Naturally there were differences among agencies. UNICEF provided us with ready access to a number of evaluation reports immediately upon our arrival and had a database listing evaluation reports since the 1980s that record what the main findings were. UNIDO could also rapidly provide data on the number, type and financial implications of the projects they had been engaged in, although it could not present evaluation reports with the same ease.

We examined 38 project evaluations. Most were from the 1990s, several were in fact written in 1996 and 1997 but covered activities prior to 1995, and hence they were relevant to us. But there were virtually no evaluations remaining from the early and mid-1980s. In fact, most documentation of activities seems to be lost after a period of 5 to 10 years (with the exceptions noted above). UNDP could not retrieve its first country programme document, nor its mid-term review. In only slightly more than 10 per cent of cases could evaluation reports be retrieved. In theory, however, there should be a terminal evaluation for every project.

Existing evaluation reports do not necessarily contribute to institutional knowledge. Some are sloppy, with little or no supporting data and with inconclusive findings. Those preparing the reports are at times pressured to commend the efforts of the cooperating partners. The UN system has tried to standardize evaluations using similar terms of reference and outlines. The reports are not, however, held to high standards as regards data and analysis.

Staff turnover is both a source of organizational learning and an obstacle. Although it brings new perspectives and new experiences to the work setting, as staff move to other posts, they take background and relevant knowledge with them. At present, it is almost impossible to find anyone in the UN agencies who can provide any information on projects in the 1980s from memory. Hence, the personal experience of past events is for all practical purposes gone. One way to bridge the gap would be for new staff to interview their predecessors regarding past projects. But there is limited or no overlap when staff are transferred.

Finally, for organizational learning to occur, experiences must be gathered, processed, stored and disseminated. We have not been able to trace any pattern of dissemination of evaluation reports or other documents. Some agencies do present evaluation findings in an easily digestible format, notably UNICEF. With most of the others, however, evaluations are designed to be read by a very limited group of people. We have not found any examples of reports circulating between agencies. As one interviewee said, "If an evaluation appears to be critical, the agency will keep it to itself, even if others might learn from it. Nobody is willing to loose face through a critical evaluation".

Using Experiences from Zimbabwe in Other Countries

There are many lessons from experiences in Zimbabwe, both good and bad, that could be used in other developing countries. In the environment sector, for example, the experiences in developing solar energy systems are well worth sharing. The project using agro-industrial waste for methane gas production could be used to disseminate that technology, if funds were available and follow-up projects could be designed. But in order for the UN system to be able to share its experiences from Zimbabwe with its operations in other countries, it is first necessary

to document them properly, organize the information and disseminate it. That has not been done.

The best-known example is the attempt to document the social effects of economic recovery programmes in the wake of World Bank-IMF structural adjustment loans. The steady growth in human development in the early 1980s, as well as its subsequent decline, have been well documented, and the processes have received attention in many other countries. Projects like the sentinel surveillance have had an important role in this process.

It is worth noting that the UNDP country office in Zimbabwe was designated one of the centres of experimentation in the UNDP reform process. It would thus seem vital that the processes to learn and disseminate information be developed quickly. It is not our task to analyse events after the year 1995, but suffice it to say that we were able to verify only a few examples of how operational experiences were transmitted to UN agencies in other countries before that date.

VI. CONCLUSIONS

With the benefit of hindsight, what can we now say of capacity built by the Government of Zimbabwe in cooperation with the UN system? We are interested only in capacity that serves the development of the country; that helps society formulate visions and goals for sustainable human development; that translates into strategies and policies; and that can be brought to action through design and management of development processes. The general conclusion is that the UN system has made great efforts to assist the Government in building sustainable capacity for development.

The UN system has helped to develop the capacity of individual human beings, for example, through training opportunities. There have also been interventions where capacity has been developed in organizations, be they private or public. New organizational units have been established and others have been reformed. Capacity-building has also taken place at the system level; for example, by developing horizontal and vertical links between organizations, by establishing norms and standards and through policy support.

Total UN operational activities in Zimbabwe between the years 1980 and 1995 amount to around US$200 million. It is a substantial amount of money, and we estimate that the share of capacity-building efforts is around three quarters of the total, or US$150 million. (It must be recognized that this is only an estimate.) UNICEF accounts for the largest volume of support, with programmable resources of around US$60 million; UNDP and UNFPA follow with between US$40 and US$50 million each. But these figures show only commitments, and all agency programmes have been delayed. Real expenditures appear to be 10 to 20 per cent lower. The specialized agencies, such as FAO, ILO, UNIDO and WHO, have been engaged as technical partners under UNDP-financed programmes, but they also bring their own resources to operational activities, both as core funds, funds in trust and through access to funds set aside for specific projects. A small agency such as UNIDO has been engaged in projects for a total volume of more than US$5.5 million.

Between 1980 and 1995, the UN operational system implemented at least 300 capacity-building projects in cooperation with the Government. Again, this is an estimate, as not all agencies can account for their activities during the period. Naturally, projects overlap and some

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are extensions of older ones, even though given new identities. UNICEF does not present projects in the country programme format, but, instead, has priority areas. Each country programme contains four to six priority areas, and under each of these there are a number of projects. Our estimate of 300 projects is probably on the low side.

The UN system has been very fragmented and there have been far too many small-scale projects. This has placed a heavy administrative burden on the Government, which has had to comply with the rules and procedures of project planning, monitoring and evaluation. Considering that each project may involve on average half a year of administrative time, the burden is considerable.

It also means that total UN administration, though split among different agencies, has been considerable. It would be impossible to conclude that the operational activities have been effective. The sheer number, fragmentation and small size of projects preclude this. We do not mean to suggest that projects have to be large to be effective, but in order to have an impact there must be continuity, and hence a consistent approach followed through the years. This is impossible when reviewing so many projects.

To summarize, the UN system has tried to build capacity through the allocation of some US$150 million to approximately 300 projects over a 15-year period. Was it successful? Generally speaking, many evaluations from multilateral as well bilateral agencies point at disappointing results in technical cooperation, particularly when it is of an institution-building and capacity-developing character. In recent years, aggregate reports have found that only a small minority of projects and programmes have been successful in reaching their targets, within timeframe and budget. So we should not be surprised if many of the capacity-building efforts of the UN system were thwarted.

Our perusal of evaluation reports, as well as our discussions with government, agency and project personnel, led us to estimate that less than half of the combined efforts of the UN system have resulted in any noticeable capacity development. The most common reason for this can be found in the overwhelming number of projects, which are simply too small to be noticeable. Another major factor is the lack of government commitment, which is often mentioned in evaluation reports and becomes manifest through administrative delays, lack of counterpart funds and inappropriate staffing in Zimbabwe. But the causes of the Government's poor response can often be found within the agencies, as there were examples of heavy-handed routines and initiatives that stem from the international agencies rather than from the genuinely felt needs of the Government.

What impact has capacity developed through UN cooperation had? The results in capacity-building are rather limited and therefore there can be little impact. Zimbabwe has suffered from many calamities since independence, and the effects of the bitter civil war continue to be felt. These factors should lead us to be patient with any expectations of results. Nevertheless, the decade of the 1980s saw improvements in social welfare in Zimbabwe, though the UN cannot claim to have contributed much to this. Most of the achievements were accomplished in the early years of the decade, before the long-range development programmes were launched. At the time when the different projects could have had an effect, the indicators of welfare gains and improvements in human development started to recede, and they have continued to do so since then.

Nevertheless, there are definitely examples of UN projects that have built capacity (as described in section III) and where the deployment of these capacities have had major positive impacts. Some interventions were aimed at building the capacity to formulate development strategies and policies. They were rather small, which goes to show that there is no correlation between the size of a project and its impact. Yet another important factor was that they not only supported one particular organization or group of individuals; they also worked to link various actors in society.

Are the capacities sustainable? Where we can establish that capacities were built, they have also been sustained. But will they be sustained in the future? It is helpful to distinguish between various threats to capacity. At the level of the individual, capacities erode when not used and often go unused because of personnel policies, staff turnover, lack of managerial support, etc. Given the nature of the threats and the proven inability of successfully meeting the challenges, a major part of the capacities are likely not to be sustained. At the organizational level, the major threat to sustainability lies in the continued financial viability of organizations. Those that depend on the market for survival are threatened. The economy of Zimbabwe has had negative per capita growth rates for almost 30 years, and the outlook for the near future is not good. Those who depend on public finance are probably even worse off. The public deficit is not under control, and the Government continues to cut budgets wherever it can.

Capacity building at the system level is less dependent on any particular source of financing, hence system resilience may have a greater chance to maintain and develop further. The achievements at organizational and lower levels often depend on linkages to the system levels to become sustainable, and that illustrates how important it is to consider these linkages when designing interventions.

There are many entry-points to capacity-building, and none is immediately associated with success. But the gradual development of linkages is essential, and that is what distinguishes successful interventions. Projects that entered at one point and stayed there face an uncertain future. Those that came in at lower levels but developed upstream linkages fare better, as do those that started up-stream and developed linkages at lower levels.

Finally, the UN system has changed over the years, and perhaps the rate of change has accelerated after the end of the time period we are studying. With only few exceptions, we found little evidence of any capacity to analyse experiences and disseminate the information. UNICEF is notable in having a good filing system and archives, but the other agencies cannot easily retrieve the history of their cooperation in Zimbabwe. The content of country programmes and the type of projects supported have changed, but we cannot find that these changes are based on knowledge of results and past performance. Only a small minority of the total number of interventions were evaluated.

In sum, we found that capacity-building of the UN operational system in Zimbabwe has been marginal. The system has not had any major impact that could have made life easier and better for the majority of the people. Capacity-building at downstream levels has often failed, as have efforts at up-stream levels, but where capacity-building has been successful, we could not say that the impact has been felt yet. We have also suggested that some capacity-building projects have actually had a negative impact—both at the level of the individual project and through the mass of interventions that put an administrative burden on the Government.

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