

# **IMPLEMENTING THE UNDP GLOBAL PROGRAMME ON POVERTY ERADICATION AND SUSTAINABLE LIVELIHOOD**

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**Report delivered February 15, 1997**

The Team has been invited to put forward a proposal for Implementing the UNDP Global Programme on Poverty Eradication and Sustainable Livelihoods, cf. Terms of Reference (undated). With only 2 weeks to perform the task, the Team has found it necessary to limit its tasks considerably.

Besides the Terms of Reference, the Team has based its report on Statement by Anders Wijkman of January 16, 1997, a comprehensive set of documents provided by BPPS on different aspects of the UNDP organization and issues related to the task ahead, «Crusade for a world without poverty», by James Gustave Speth (undated), and about 15 interviews with the staff at BPPS and other persons within the UNDP.

The first objective of the Team has been to sort out some of the many issues presented in the documents and the interviews. As a result the Team has decided to focus on the following 3 major issues:

- Discuss some of the basic values in the UNDP which can give guidance to a Global Programme on Poverty Eradication and Sustainable Livelihood, thereunder making visible some of the dilemmas and choices the UNDP is confronted with when designing a Global Programme
- Discuss some of the more obvious organizational challenges the UNDP is facing if a large scale program such as the Global Programme is to be carried out successfully
- Present concrete proposals for the Global Programme, and discuss activities to help develop and implement the Global Programme.

In the following the Global Programme will simply be called the Programme, while the organization referred to will be UNDP and Headquarters (HQ), irrespective of the actual office(s) in charge of the different elements of the Programme. The term Country Offices (CFOs) will be used for all outside offices, including regional and national offices. The

Team is quite aware of these simplifications, but chooses to overlook them in this report. Poverty eradication will be referred to as poverty reduction (due to the Team's perception of this as a more realistic expression for the time being).

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Team is arguing that in order to implement an ambitious Global Programme on Poverty Eradication and Sustainable Livelihoods, UNDP needs to develop a coherent philosophy for poverty reduction which can be used as a basis for the development of concrete and efficient poverty reducing strategies on a global scale.

The Team recommends a set of organizational changes to facilitate the implementation of a Global Programme.

The Team emphasizes accumulation of knowledge, since knowledge is a prerequisite for adequate action.

The Team has drawn up a set of frameworks, formed as 8 proposals, which integrate and develop further present UNDP activities directed at poverty reduction and suggest new activities. The proposals are as follows:

I. UNDP as the focal point for global knowledge about poverty. That a global database for all available knowledge about poverty be created within UNDP. That a Yearly Report on Global Poverty Development be developed as a part of the official UNDP profile.

II. Global strategies for poverty reduction. That UNDP takes responsibility for monitoring the relationship between globalization and poverty, and for the development of international strategies for poverty reduction.

III. National strategies for poverty reduction. That a systematic description of the different national UNDP strategies be developed and workable models for poverty reducing strategies on the national level be made available. That the potential role of the different states in poverty alleviation be analyzed more systematically.

IV. Monitoring poverty development trends. That the present social indicators be expanded to better reflect the lives of the poor, be supplied with regional indicators, be directed more towards developing countries, be directed also at poverty producing factors. That monitoring procedures become more central. That also the Global Programme be subjected to evaluation and monitoring.

V. Poverty reduction and the environment. That access to water becomes a focal point for a poverty reducing strategy, since water is a precise and powerful indicator of several kinds of poverty in developing countries. That projects on access to energy and land use can be developed along the same lines as described in the project on water.

**VI. Networking as a strategy for poverty reduction.** That target-oriented networking be established as a way of transferring knowledge about poverty issues to and from UNDP. That already existing networks be fortified and linked together to support the UNDP objectives for the Global Programme.

**VII. Advocacy as a strategy for poverty reduction.** That a network of partnerships be formed for advocacy. That strategies of advocacy be developed. That a special unit within the HQ be established, to monitor and coordinate the UNDP advocacy, and take into account ethical issues involved.

**VIII. Capacity building.** That 3 areas of capacity building be established, on the level of HQ and CFOs: Develop a learning environment within the organization; Prepare the ground for poverty expanding knowledge; Provide technical skills to increase task performance.

Finally, and as requested, the Team has described those contributions which CROP, The Comparative Research Programme on Poverty, can make to the implementation of the Global Programme.

## CHAPTER 1

### UNDP: AN AGENCY WITH AN ATTITUDE?

The question of the objectives of UNDP has been brought up in several of the talks the Team has had with staff members. There seems to be a certain confusion as to which values UNDP stands for, and what can legitimately be done in the name of UNDP.

Global poverty reduction is going to be at the core of UNDP activities for the next cycle, and hopefully also beyond. Poverty can no longer be considered only a national phenomenon. With increasing globalization, in particular in the economic field, causes of poverty are becoming linked to international developments. Therefore, it is important that a multi-lateral agency such as the UNDP makes poverty reduction a priority. Efficient poverty reduction calls for concerted efforts from many actors. This in turn calls for coordination by an international agency with a high degree of legitimacy.

However, poverty reduction is a conflictive issue because it can not be obtained without the transfer of economic, social and political resources to disadvantaged groups. All transfers will have an impact on the established social structure, and may therefore be considered threatening. The size of the transfers will affect the conflict potential, as will the purpose and source of the transfers. It should be noted that even limited transfers may be conflictive due to their symbolic value.

When UNDP engages in poverty reduction, it will need to have a vision, a more concrete policy or a basic philosophy on what is meant by poverty reduction and how far the organization is prepared to go to reduce poverty. Redistribution can mean everything

from giving out foodstamps to pushing for a more equitable national income distribution. Empowerment of the poor, for example, can mean anything from getting the poor involved in local affairs to mobilizing them to social unrest through a social movement which changes the social structure in their favor. The activities involved in advocacy meet with the same dilemma as to how far UNDP can push an issue before it backfires. Other activities, such as capacity building and creating new employment, can be considered less conflictive.

Three examples may demonstrate some of the ambivalence built into UNDP attitudes concerning poverty reduction.

a. The last issues of the Human Development Report are quoted by some of the people interviewed as their reference point and background for their work. At the same time, the Human Development Report is officially defined as an independent operation which does not reflect the policy of the UNDP.

b. The concept of sustainable livelihood has become an overriding concept for UNDP activities. It is not clear what it actually means, neither in ideological terms, nor in operational terms or in relation to poverty reduction. While everybody agrees that it emphasizes a more healthy relationship between the individual and the environment, the nature of that relationship was open for individual interpretations all through the units interviewed.

c. The ideology embedded in the World Bank is adopted by some of the people interviewed and carried into projects. Others modify the Bank's views (as for example using the Bank's household surveys and adding on human development indicators), while still others strive to establish a counter-expertise to bring forward a different picture of poverty than that of the Bank. The Structural Adjustment Programs in particular is a target for attack.

The concept of poverty is sensitive to implicit and explicit values, and whatever concept of poverty is chosen, it will reflect the underlying ideology. When a certain type of poverty reducing strategies are selected, out of hundreds of possible strategies, such choices may also reflect values embedded in an ideology.

The Team is aware of the fact that the quasi-neutrality of the UNDP is donor driven and may be necessary to increase the organization's credibility vis-à-vis some governments. The use of loosely defined objectives also gives the organization more operational freedom. However, it is difficult to imagine how the Programme can be implemented if basic objectives are not spelled out clearly and conveyed to those responsible for carrying out the Programme, both on the headquarter level and on the country level.

*Recommendation:* That a dialogue be initiated across HQ units on these issues, that values guiding the Programme be identified, and if possible, that some kind of internal consensus be established.

For those engaging in poverty reduction there is one perspective which should not be overlooked. That is the utilities of poverty for the non-poor, and the role the non-poor play in producing and sustaining poverty. Poverty reducing strategies and advocacy

measures take a basic assumption that there exists a moral willingness among the non-poor to participate in these strategies, once the non-poor understand what poverty is really all about. That may be so.

But it should not be overlooked that influential groups in a society, as well as the population at large, also have certain gains in sustaining poverty. For some, these gains are sizeable. The use of poor people as a mobile, unorganised, and low income work force, working as migrant and temporary workers, is among the more well known and acknowledged utilities of poverty for the non-poor society. The pressure towards wage demands formed by the availability of cheap labour, is likewise a well known advantage for the wealthier part of society. Poverty forces poor people to perform the dirty and menial jobs that non-poor shy away from. The poor have to buy second-hand goods and food of low quality, thereby prolonging the products economic usefulness. Politicians in some countries depend on a critical mass of poor people as “clients” for their political basis. Bureaucrats and others can create a power base when they act on behalf of the “silent majority”. Poor people can be used to take the risk for non-poor people in illegal behavior, whether thieving or drug peddling. Poor people can be used as symbolic underdogs whose behavior stresses the “correct” behavior of the majority. These utilities of poverty is a hidden realism which needs to be made visible and managed if poverty reducing strategies are to become more effective, and advocacy measures are to become meaningful.

*Recommendation:* That utilities of poverty and the impact they have on poverty reduction be identified on a country basis. That strategies be developed taking such utilities into account. (The Team is not underestimating the political difficulties embedded in this perspective, and the change it will call for in the UNDP profile, if carried out).

The constellation in the Terms of Reference and otherwise, of the concepts *poverty reduction* and *sustainable livelihood*, is difficult to grasp. The two concepts are of a different nature. The first one expresses a goal which can be operationalized. The second one expresses a diffuse ideology about principles which so far have received little analytical attention in the context of human development. All the 4 «pillars» inserted in the expectations to a Global Programme suffer from clarification. The Team is aware of the historical and political reasons behind the constellation of these concepts, but find it difficult to bridge the operational and intellectual gap between them, and to link them together in a logical framework.

A wide range of activities and projects are carried out through HQ and CFOs. The different units have created their own separate objectives and work with different methods to obtain their objectives. The Team has tried to create a set of proposals which incorporate some of these objectives and set them into a larger and more coherent context. Developing new and concrete projects without a context creates increased fragmentation. If integration of the different activities is a keyword, a context should be established before new projects are launched.

Many demands are being pushed forward to be inserted in the Programme, both from above in direct forms, from below through interests expressed as expectations, acquired expertise in a certain field, and already ongoing activities, and from outside UNDP. Several of these demands are in direct conflict and can not be fulfilled within the same

Programme. Also, there is no way even a fragment of all the demands and interests can be included in the Programme, and some harsh criteria have to be established to keep the coherence of the Programme and select a set of activities to be included.

As a starting point the Team has used the following criteria for selecting issues to be addressed, trying to make them reflect what we perceive as some of the basic concerns of UNDP, and what we believe ought to be the concerns of the organization.

The Programme shall:

- reflect the vision of a «Crusade for a world without poverty» and help develop a recognizable UNDP «profile»
- identify a set of perspectives and activities which clearly address country needs and responses to such needs, with emphasis on poor and developing countries
- be based on a time horizon which goes past the present cycle, thereby enhancing capacity building in HQ and CFOs
- produce dependable knowledge and bring out new issues in poverty understanding
- be action-oriented
- built on activities and topics already in HQ and CFOs
- draw upon the expertise already in HQ and CFOs and link units within HQ wherever possible
- not address issues which can be done better within another institution
- bring together all available knowledge about the causes and manifestations of poverty, seek expertise wherever it is found, and make UNDP a focal point for knowledge about poverty reducing strategies and new perspectives
- be sufficiently modest to be realistic.

## CHAPTER 2

### ORGANIZATIONAL CHALLENGES

If a large scale Programme is to be implemented successfully through the UNDP, it seems necessary to discuss also some of the organizational skills which need to be improved.

One of the key words in the UNDP documents is *communication*, and it is stressed that communication between the actors in different parts of the organization has to be increased. Likewise, the Team sees improved communication as vital for the success of the Programme.

There are least 5 different sets of actors to be taken into consideration.

One set of actors participate in the internal communication in UNDP. While the diversity in philosophy is creative in many kinds of context, it may not be so in the Programme where there will be a strong need to send more precise messages to the

surroundings of what the objectives of the Programme are. To streamline the internal communication, consensus ought to develop on the contents of concepts and strategies necessary for the implementation of the Programme.

*Recommendation:* That the internal communication be enhanced in order to reach a joint philosophy, or as a minimum requirement, that consensus be obtained on basic concepts and strategies used in the Programme.

A second set of actors are those within HQ who communicate with the CFOs. The communication from HQ to the CFOs is different from the communication going from CFOs to HQ, both in form and content. HQ has the knowledge about the Programme, a fairly wide insight in the poverty situation in several countries, and the power to decide which information will give access to resources. The CFOs have specific knowledge about their own country, and may or may not know how to construct sufficient, and relevant, information to obtain one of several available funds. This kind of communication is best described as asymmetrical. Although HQ may not be interested in using its power, it is still perceived as a powerful institution which controls not only resources, but also information. Such asymmetrical relationships are seldom conducive for smooth communication.

*Recommendation:* That the information gap between HQ and the CFOs be minimized. That the artificial language of UNDP not be used for communicating with the CFOs. That the terms for obtaining resources be simplified (not meaning that the criteria for obtaining funds should be lowered). That the objectives of the Programme be stated clearly, so those Programme staff with less experience in interpreting "UNDP language" can relate to the objectives.

A third set of actors are the CFOs and the way they communicate between themselves. The Team has little information about how feed-back on country projects is communicated between the CFOs and the extent of inter-regional networks. There must be an enormous learning potential in bringing those actors together, either directly (which is costly, but effective), or indirectly through electronic media (for those who access Internet).

*Recommendation:* Work on electronic communication is under way at HQ. It should be a priority to equip CFOs with the necessary infrastructure (where possible), develop structured talk groups and get the communication processed so as to extend the learning knowledge. Regional meetings of the CFOs should be a priority, as should the development of written material based on country experiences with poverty reduction (see below).

A fourth set of actors are the actual implementers of poverty reducing strategies, such as politicians, bureaucrats, governmental and non-governmental institutions, media and the public at large. All of these groups will need to be part of the communication process, if poverty reducing strategies are to succeed. But they call for different types of communication.

*Recommendation:* That communication with those groups be described and inserted in the Programme. That strategies be developed to work closer with these groups (see below on networking).

A fifth set of actors are those whose knowledge forms part of the poverty reducing strategies, i.e. the researchers. On the one hand, they need more concrete knowledge about how UNDP operates, what kind of knowledge is already available within HQ and CFOs, and where the needs are for more information. On the other hand, UNDP needs systematized knowledge and reliable analysis from the researchers. Communication between the two parties is not always optimal. This is partly because UNDP does not have a core staff with sufficient training and experience in research design and methodology, and therefore, staff responsible for dealing with research institutions, often do not know how to ask the questions. Partly it is due to the fact that researchers do not have the first hand knowledge of UNDP operations or know how to communicate with bureaucrats and relate to issues of importance to the organization. But more than anything else: It is necessary to accept the fact that there are huge gaps in the research based knowledge about poverty reduction which it may take a very long time to close.

*Recommendations:* That a close relationship be developed between HQ, CFOs and researchers working in the area of poverty. That a small core of staff in HQ be trained in research methodology and theories in the area of poverty so as to be better equipped to judge the research needs of HQ. That both applied and basic research be left to established research institutions outside the UNDP. That outside consultants used by UNDP be linked to established research institutions, wherever possible. That a better monitoring system be developed for both researchers and consultants employed, in order to ensure a closer fit between the objectives of UNDP and the input provided by the researchers/consultants (see below).

## CHAPTER 3

### PROPOSALS FOR THE GLOBAL PROGRAMME

Given the resources available for the Global Programme and the present organizational capacity for the Programme, the Team is putting forward 8 major proposals, each containing a set of projects and activities. The proposals are not ranked according to priority. On the contrary, they are closely linked, and the success of one depends on the implementation of the others.

#### I. UNDP AS THE FOCAL POINT FOR GLOBAL KNOWLEDGE ABOUT POVERTY REDUCTION

Knowledge is the basis for action. Without reliable knowledge, no poverty reducing strategy can be expected to be effective. UNDP has made the fight against world poverty Job Number One. If the fight is to be successful, it is necessary to know how to achieve



this goal, to understand and be able to follow the developments in the complex and dynamic poverty patterns, to know exactly where the major obstacles to such a goal are located, and to be aware of which instruments are available or need to be developed to achieve the goal. Unless these elements are in place, time and money will continue to be spent on poverty reducing efforts which so far have yielded too little.

There exists an enormous amount of information about poverty in official documents and plans, statistics, research studies, local projects, reports from international and national organizational, professional organizations, NGO's and others, historical documents, literary presentations, and commentaries and analyses in the media. Spread around in UNDP at HQ and CFO's are an unknown number of reports, papers and memos with valuable and hidden information on poverty projects. The many documents leading up to the WSSD, as well as those following up the Summit, need to be systematized. So far, there is no natural home for all this knowledge. All those engaged in poverty issues are in constant search for relevant information, and whatever is retrieved, is always incomplete.

- UNDP ought to become the focal point for the storage of global knowledge about poverty
- A special unit within UNDP should develop a professional filing and electronic retrieval system for all these documents
- The retrieval system should be organized in such a way that it can be accessed by all parties working with poverty issues
- Key words for the retrieval system should be developed in cooperation with interested parties
- Priority should be given to documents already located within the UNDP and to documents related to the WSSD (given the special responsibility UNDP has for the follow-up of the Summit and the national WSSD activities)
- Priority should be given to recent documents, working the filing system backwards in time.

The database will be also an important instrument for carrying out several of the other proposals made by the Team.

The Human Development Report 1997 should be followed up. The topic for the Report this year is global poverty. Next year the topic will be different, and much of the momentum on poverty created by the Report will be lost, if not followed up. Therefore,

- UNDP ought to publish a yearly Report on Global Poverty Development
- The Report shall be part of the official UNDP profile on the poverty crusade
- The Report shall be so dependable in the facts and policy statements presented that it becomes a standard reference for media, politicians, school teachers and researchers alike
- Examples of content: Ongoing statistics on poverty development, including a discussion of the measurements used; Presentation of projects on the country level, including an analysis of lessons to be drawn; Presentation of new research results, including a critical review from a different source; Discussion of new perspectives on poverty reduction; An overview of where the national WSSD activities stand; Show how the UNDP funds are used; Follow-up of issues brought out in the 1997 Human

Development Report; Document why an organization like UNDP is needed to fight poverty; Tell what other agencies are doing to fight poverty; Exemplify the current UNDP concerns; etc.

- Start with a modest Report and build it up incrementally
- Use a language which is accessible for ordinary people
- Make certain of a wide distribution, through subsidies and translations.

There is little doubt that such a report is badly needed by people in the field as well as by UNDP itself and the public in general. Once the report has been going for a while, it will establish itself as part of a collective memory on poverty understanding.

## II. GLOBAL STRATEGIES FOR POVERTY REDUCTION

UNDP is a multi-lateral agency. As such it has a special responsibility for following the global development in poverty reduction and the interaction between new forces developing on the global level and their impact on manifestations and causes of poverty.

The political discussion of the last few years on the impact of multi-national companies, liberalization of the market, international division of production, new technology, and the speed of economic transactions across national boundaries, is now moving into the research arena. But it is a long way moving from political issue raising to an empirical description and analysis in a field which has hardly been touched by research. So far there is a scarcity of data as well as the lack of an adequate methodology. Still, it is important to try to understand what is going on.

- UNDP should develop a watch function and set up a working group to follow closely the impact of globalization on poverty, through workshops and literature studies. The aim should be to become an agency with knowledge in the forefront of issues raised about the relationship between globalization and poverty.

A multi-national agency like UNDP has the advantage of an international perspective which can be put to use on poverty reducing mechanisms as well. One of the trademarks of UNDP's activities could be to emphasize the use of international strategies in poverty reduction and engage in their development and implementation. Two examples of such strategies can be mentioned:

- One strategy is the 20/20 proposal which was launched at the WSSD. If implemented in line with the intentions, it is going to be a powerful instrument towards poverty reduction for some of the most deprived groups. The instrument is simple in construction and fairly easy to monitor. Politically, there is quite a bit of work to do to have it accepted
- Another strategy is the use of human rights in the reduction of extreme poverty. Two kinds of arguments can be put forward here. On the one hand, it can be argued that the right to adequate food, shelter and personal security is a human right, along with other kinds of human rights. On the other hand, it can be argued that persistent poverty in its most extreme form can be paralleled to physical torture, and as such needs the same kind of protection in the international legislation as do the victims of physical and psychological torture. The direct aggressor in extreme poverty can not

be named, as can the torturer. This may be one of several legal obstacles to be clarified further. Research in this area has been initiated in several places. UNDP should take the lead in supporting such activities.

UNDP has been given the responsibility of following up the Social Summit and to become the focal point for all national WSSD activities. As it is well known, the inputs to the Summit were very heterogeneous; as were the outputs. Development issues were mixed with poverty issues and many other issues, and the level of precision in concepts and recommended policies were all over low. Therefore,

- The proposals and decisions from the WSSD should be carefully sifted to sort out a few issues which are both of relevance for poverty reduction and can be operationalized in a sensible way. (The Team is aware that there are both internal and external politics to be taken into consideration here, but still warns that on-loading the entire package from the WSSD is not a useful move if poverty reduction is the issue)
- Plans for implementing and monitoring a few of the strategies, such as the 20/20 proposal, should be made, for the use of CFOs and implementers on the national level
- Models of national plans for poverty reduction should be developed, based on those national plans already in existence which seem to be successful
- Systematic and documented inputs should be made to UNCSD about poverty issues and adequate strategies for achieving poverty reduction.

### III. NATIONAL STRATEGIES FOR POVERTY REDUCTION

The deprived individual is to be the final receiver of the outcome of poverty reducing strategies. But the direct line between a poor individual and a poverty reducing strategy has several stops and roundabouts.

There is a whole array of poverty reducing strategies available. Transfer of economic, social and political resources in a broad sense are key words here, as is the creation of opportunity structures in the labor market and in education. Capacity building, health care and empowerment, access to micro credit and asset building, are other key words, just to mention some.

The Team has not been able to locate a complete overview of the strategies HQ and CFOs have put to use for poverty reduction, through its country projects and otherwise. It has been difficult to get a precise description of several of those instruments and an indication of their effects. One reason is a certain conceptual confusion on the difference between "development" and "poverty eradication". Another reason is a systematic lack of feedback from CFOs to HQ and the absence of a uniform filing and retrieval system.

- A sorting process should be initiated, describing the different national UNDP strategies and their operational objective
- Ask whether these objectives are in accordance with the desired UNDP profile
- A description of a selection of strategies which seem to work, should be produced. This is not an attempt of an evaluation in the strict sense. It is more a way of gathering some of all the knowledge which is now located with the individual staff

member. The description should include information about the context in which the strategies have been used

- A description of a selection of strategies which definitely did not work, and some suggestions as to why this was the case, should be produced
- An institutional memory based on these reviews should be organized and presented in such a way that it can be used for capacity building in HQ and CFOs
- Develop a set of models for poverty reducing strategies, based on these reviews
- Try out these models in different countries, and follow up their effects.

Poverty reducing strategies are delivered on different levels, such as the community, the state, on the international level, and through different kinds of organizations. Each level is built on a specific perspective on causes of poverty and has its own logic. This is reflected in the use of different strategies for poverty reduction and the targeting of different poverty groups.

The general tendency so far has been to give preference to poverty reducing strategies on the community level. There are several kinds of logic behind this, some of which have little to do with poverty reduction. Decentralization is en vogue. Action on community level is politically easier to maneuver than action on the level of the state. Action on the community level is easier to organize because the units are smaller. Action on the community level is cheaper than transfers directly to the individual. These ideas mingle with the fact that poor individuals (and the rest of us) need collective support, they need to develop collective skills for overcoming poverty, and they need to be in contact with the non-poor part of society. Decentralization can also be a mixed blessing in other ways. Where decentralization leads to social cohesion in the community, it is a powerful poverty reducing strategy. Where decentralization leads to social exclusion of the disadvantaged also from their own community, it is a powerful poverty producing strategy.

One of UNDP's major thrusts is to encourage and assist governments to develop national poverty eradicating strategies and plans of action (Speth, p.3), and many of the UNDP projects are already directed towards supporting government strategies.

That is in line with the notion that a more comprehensive distribution and redistribution in favor of disadvantaged groups, call for national and collective action. This brings the role of the state in poverty alleviation in focus. In some countries the state has used its powers to create a fair distribution of economic, social and political resources through explicit transfers to disadvantaged groups (cf. a recent report on poverty in the Nordic countries where it is documented that poverty has been eradicated and substituted by the notion of low income groups). Other states have neither the legitimacy for such poverty alleviating measures, nor the power, the expertise, the bureaucracy, the will, the infrastructure or the resources. While still other states are in the stages of developing expertise, democratic institutions and an economic growth which under certain circumstances may benefit the poorer part of the population.

- UNDP should take the lead here and commission a set of papers outlining the potential different kinds of states have for implementing poverty reducing strategies

- One set of papers should examine experiences with poverty reducing strategies in a historical context and ask if there are lessons to be learned for other countries
- One set of papers should discuss the construction of democratic institutions, empowerment and participation as a prerequisite for effective poverty reducing strategies
- One set of papers should examine the legal, social and moral links between the state and its citizens under different kinds of poverty strategies
- One set of papers should address the very crude question of how to use the state as a vehicle for poverty reducing strategies when the state in itself is seen as a problem
- One set of papers should examine the relationship between privatization and decentralization and their impact on the role of the state in poverty reduction
- One set of papers should examine the relationship between economic growth and the national efforts of poverty reduction
- One set of papers should examine the role of the World Bank and its impact on the state in developing countries as vehicles for poverty alleviating strategies
- The UNDP unit on governance should play a part in the process of exploring the boundaries of the role of the state.

The role of the state in poverty alleviation is another field in which the stereotypes blossom and concrete data and sophisticated analysis are scarce (except for very thorough analyses of the welfare states and some of the semi-welfare states). The papers mentioned here can be considered a starting point for gathering knowledge which can be used in policymaking.

- A set of workshops should be carried out on a regional basis so field workers, HQ staff, politicians, researchers and others can meet to discuss the papers and work out the concrete implications of the findings.

#### IV. MONITORING POVERTY DEVELOPMENT TRENDS

There are several ways to monitor development trends.

In most of the documents reviewed and in the talks with the staff, the need for a more comprehensive picture of poverty development in the different countries came strongly across. A need for feedback on whether the UNDP projects had had the desired impact, was likewise expressed. The use of social indicators was seen as an answer to both these problems. The Team shares both these concerns and stresses the need for a more systematic approach to both the monitoring process and evaluation of concrete activities, as well as a need for a further development of indicators portraying the specific concerns of UNDP. Although the 3 kinds of needs seem to coincide, it should be kept in mind that the kind of indicators needed serve different purposes and should be kept analytically apart to avoid confusion.

The use of social indicators is strongly represented within UNDP, and a considerable amount of in-house expertise is already in place. A sizable amount of work using social indicators is being carried out, also in collaboration with other institutions. The following issues to be investigated can be considered an addition to this ongoing work.

- Develop further indicators which reflect the lives of the poor, cf. also the latest publication by Robert Chambers on “whose reality counts”, and have these indicators included in household surveys, cf. the comments above on the addition to the World Bank indicators
- Develop indicators also on the individual level, to catch issues on gender in particular
- Be aware that many of the present indicators are initiated in a Western context and do not necessarily give an adequate description of poverty in poor countries, cf. the importance of the backyard economy for the poor, and the example of access to water, see below. In practice it means that the present set of indicators should be supplied with region-specific indicators
- Consider if there are indicators which can be identified as “UNDP indicators”, that is, indicators which are particular for the UNDP objectives, and which can be used to send signals to the outside what the UNDP wants to achieve
- Develop indicators on the community level which reflect the current UNDP initiated projects on poverty reduction carried out by the CFOs
- Develop indicators which support the understanding of the poverty *producing* forces and *utilities* of poverty
- Set up a group which functions as an evaluating and monitoring unit for input and output in the use of these social indicators.

The proposals put forward under III. NATIONAL STRATEGIES FOR POVERTY REDUCTION can be seen as a more qualitative form of evaluation and monitoring.

The Programme and its proposals shall also be subjected to evaluation and monitoring. In CHAPTER 1 is a set of 10 criteria setting out the objectives of the Programme. For example, the effectiveness of the Programme should be assessed on its ability to serve the needs of its main users (regional bureaux and the CFOs).

- Following a customer/client satisfaction approach mid-point through the Programme's life cycle, a review of its coverage and effectiveness should be made
- Modifications and adjustments should be made to make sure the Programme remains relevant to country needs (including CFO needs)
- There should be a mid-term and an end-term evaluation, covering the 10 criteria and the intentions set out in the concrete proposals.

## V. POVERTY REDUCTION AND THE ENVIRONMENT

Poverty as tied to the resource opportunities in the environment is a perspective which can give impetus to renewed poverty understanding. Access to water for the poor can be used as an example. Water is but one of several powerful variables, and it has the advantage over many other variables that it can be defined and measured precisely. There is already much expertise on the environmental side within UNDP. Tying the concept of water closer to the idea of sustainable livelihood may help operationalize the latter and turn it into more concrete terms.

Access to potable water can be considered a human right, and access to fresh water is a necessary means for developing human resources and productive activities on a broad scale.

Shortage of water is closely linked to poverty and issues of gender. Empirically it has been shown that the poor pay more per liter of potable water than the non-poor in the same region; that the poor invest more time in fetching water; that the poor are more vulnerable to all kinds of disabling diseases due to unclean water; that the poor are the first to be deprived of water when water becomes scarce; that food security of the poor is endangered when agriculture on small plots and backyards is deprived of water.

Issues to be investigated:

- Access to water is a powerful indicator of poverty in developing countries. A definition of poverty should be developed which includes access to water
- A set of indicators should be developed to reflect both time, price and access to potable water for the household. Such indicators can be included in current household surveys
- Crop production is a water-intensive activity. Access to water for poor people engaged in small scale agricultural production should be investigated. It will call for separate studies until a broader methodology is developed. A first step could be to invite the communities to create a warning system, see below
- Water is a distributional issue. Knowledge from theories of distribution is already being applied. But particular emphasis should be made on the consequences for the poorest part of the population
- Distribution/redistribution is a conflictual issue, and distribution of water is no exception. Such conflicts should be included in the analysis and made visible in order to secure effective distribution of the water resources. However, it should be added that potable water security for the poor is likely to raise fewer moral objections than economic security for the poor, and so may be a more approachable issue.

Other variables such as energy and land use related to poverty, can be investigated in the same realm. Knowledge about energy and land use has sprouted during the last few years.

- UNDP should use every opportunity to link poverty issues to ongoing research and ideas coming from fields which at the outset may have little in common with poverty problems. The utilization of satellite photography in studies of land use, for example, can be extended to estimate the changing size of slums, while issues of gender and poverty can be inserted in the analysis of changing patterns of land use.

## VI. NETWORKING AS A STRATEGY FOR POVERTY REDUCTION

Knowledge is a prerequisite for the construction of effective poverty reducing strategies, and knowledge should be sought wherever possible. Active networking with knowledge partners is one way of transferring information about poverty issues to and from UNDP. Basically there are two paths to follow: One is to link on to already existing networks. Another is to create a new network which is specific to the objectives of UNDP. While the latter is more efficient, it also calls for large investments in administrative resources, time and money. A third alternative is to use already existing networks and slowly turn part of their interests towards the objectives of UNDP.

- Decide on the UNDP objectives for which partnership is needed
- Distinguish between networks for transfer of knowledge and networks for the purpose of advocacy (see below). The two kinds of networks are likely to have different objectives and should be treated as such
- Develop partnership for transfer of research based knowledge on poverty. Examples of partners are national research institutions, a few internationally oriented research institutions such as the World Bank research unit and WIDER, and several research institutions working more broadly with development issues such as the Nordic Africa Institute and the Nordic Asia Institute; international research networks such as CROP (see below), regional research networks such as ASSREC, CODESRIA, CLACSO; research committees under international disciplinary organizations such as the International Sociological Association's Research Committee on Poverty, Social Welfare and Social Policy; fact oriented national planning commissions, national bureaus of statistics, fact finding specialized agencies, etc.
- Develop partnership for other kinds of poverty knowledge. There is an abundance of knowledge of many kinds located in more or less formalized groups all over the world, including the poor themselves, NGOs, activist groups, politicians, field workers, bureaucrats, humanitarian groups, media, artists and specialists in the cross-cutting between their field of expertise and poverty
- UNDP needs the diversity of inputs to be provided by the many groups. But it has to be done in an orderly way and the flow of information maximized to fit the intended objectives of networking
- It is necessary to create or sustain separate and fairly homogenous networks for these groups. They have different perspectives and different interests for participating in a network with UNDP. Networks without a common objective are not likely to survive over time
- Enforce and maintain each of the networks, through frequent communication with UNDP and between the members, using among other things a «network bulletin» and bringing in members for consultation
- Create an arena where these networks can meet from time to time, through face-to-face meetings on joint projects where knowledge can be exchanged, disseminated and formed
- Make use of non-pecuniary rewards (linking for example the prestigious name of UNDP to one of their activities, such as a publication, an idea, a project, a prize).

#### **CREATING A NETWORK: The example of CROP, The Comparative Research Programme on Poverty.**

CROP was initiated by the International Social Science Council in 1992 as an arena for interdisciplinary and comparative research on poverty in developed and developing countries. Today it has a network of more than one thousand researchers within the social sciences, some of the humanities, medicine and psychology, as well as institutions working on poverty issues. Close to half of CROP's members come from so-called developing countries.

The major goal of CROP is to further poverty research through a strong and viable network. Some of the strategies which have been useful for building a network (as well as promoting comparative studies on poverty) are the following:



- make poverty research the focal point (i.e. define the common objective)
- provide an open arena where all poverty researchers, no matter their cultural or political background are invited to join, and include researchers from all disciplines and paradigms (i.e. define membership)
- explicitly support researchers from low-income countries (i.e. make certain that inequalities in resources do not exclude important participants from the network)
- aspire towards the development of high quality poverty research (i.e. make participation attractive for the members)
- organize regional workshops (i.e. provide an opportunity for face-to-face communication to strengthen the network). So far 11 workshops and 2 international conferences have been arranged, involving more than 400 participants
- distribute a newsletter and provide an updated webpage (i.e. keep the members informed)
- promote publications with articles from researchers within the network (i.e. provide incentive for participation)
- distribute information to the scientific community, policy-makers and the media (i.e. circulate the results of the members' work)
- initiate comparative research projects (i.e. increase active participation among the members)
- develop a database on ongoing research projects (i.e. ease communication among members)
- develop tools for carrying out poverty research, such as state-of-the-art-reviews and a glossary (i.e. make the task of the network function more smoothly).

The core instrument for coordinating the network activities is the CROP Secretariat. Here members of the network are linked, files are kept and updated, workshops are prepared and organized, publications and projects are coordinated and followed up, newsletters are produced and distributed, webpages are being updated, a massive correspondence is being carried out, and scores of inquiries are being answered.

Much of the experience from the CROP network can be of use also in expanding communication between the CFOs, as well as for developing national networks built around the UNDP objectives and strengthening communication with networks located outside UNDP.

## VII. ADVOCACY AS A STRATEGY FOR POVERTY REDUCTION

The network of partnerships can also be used for advocacy, depending on the messages to be advocated. The messages need to be fairly precise to have an impact. It is not enough to call for a more positive attitude towards the poor, a more enabling environment or more employment for the poor.

Several kinds of messages can be subject to advocacy. A national CFO report can be circulated to a national network which can help advocate for the implementation of the results. A model for a best practice in creating new jobs in a rural setting can be circulated through a regional network to help put it to use in several places. The idea of asset building as a poverty reducing strategy can be circulated worldwide, because it is a strategy which is

relevant also for western countries. A new vision for UNDP and the crusade for a world without poverty should be spelled out and circulated as a basic document for everybody. Most of the ideas mentioned in this Programme proposal, if brought to fruition, can be turned into messages to be used for advocacy.

- UNDP has to decide which messages are to be advocated
- The messages have to be targeted to those networks where it is perceived as relevant and can have an impact
- Information material should be developed which is sufficiently precise to lay the foundation for action.

All good forces should be enrolled in advocacy, but they should not be enrolled for the entire menu of UNDP activities. Where networks can enforce each other on a certain activity, they should be linked together. Where networks have objectives which do not concur, their advocacy should be kept apart. Advocacy directed at the World Bank, for example, is a world apart from advocacy directed at a local community to increase the empowerment of a disadvantaged group. Advocacy to prepare a state for strategies for poverty eradication is closely linked to advocacy for a change of attitudes in the population at large, but the two call for different networks and approaches.

Advocacy can take many forms. It can be a simple dissemination of information about UNDP through interested networks. It can be used to mobilize groups of poor people, as part of an empowerment. It can be an active form of co-optation of neutral networks. It can be a comprehensive campaign, bringing in media, PR-consultants and well known people using their names as ambassadors for UNDP. It can be a direct appeal to those who are most against poverty reduction, making direct and personal contact to convince them to change their attitudes and interests in sustaining poverty.

As mentioned in CHAPTER 1 there are groups of non-poor which have a vested interest in sustaining poverty. It was recommended that the utilities of poverty on a country basis be identified, as well as which groups benefit from sustaining certain kinds of poverty. These groups can be considered as a major obstacle to the efforts made by advocacy for poverty reduction.

- The concrete link between a message, the network and the form of advocacy to be used has to be established
- The different forms of advocacy will call for different strategies and carry with them different potential for conflict. For example, co-optation, cooperation, exclusion and diversion are based on divergent logics.

One of the most effective kinds of advocacies is what can be termed interactive advocacy, that is a process where both parties participate actively and exchange information and views. For example, through the CFOs best practices and development of indicators can be discussed and national networks be brought in and involved in the process. Through case studies done in collaboration with CFOs, discussions can be initiated across sectors (e.g. education, health, housing), thereby creating an arena for networks which can focus on issues of importance for UNDP. Papers can be commissioned, competitions organized, courses offered, etc. to widen the active participation and create a foundation for the UNDP vision.

- A special unit within HQ should be established to monitor UNDP advocacy, link messages to relevant networks, handle inquiries and conflicts, have contact with media, evaluate the effects of advocacy, and keep an eye on the ethical aspects of the advocacy process.

### VIII. CAPACITY BUILDING

Several kinds of capacity building are of relevance to make UNDP fully equipped to mobilize a concerted effort towards the eradication of poverty and provide more direct assistance to countries and communities. The skills called for through the proposals in the Programme put forward here, are but one set of skills. Capacity building should be in at least 3 areas, both on the level of HQ and CFOs:

- Develop a learning environment. There is a massive amount of knowledge already within UNDP, but a system for sharing of this knowledge needs to be developed. Through its interviewing of staff the Team came across people working in the same area who would benefit from a closer relationship and mutual learning. A learning environment needs the tools of knowledge mentioned earlier, that is a database for knowledge already accumulated within UNDP, and a systematic review of strategies and methodologies in use. A learning environment needs to participate in an on-going discussion of the objectives of the organization and an analysis of the concepts and strategies used to attain such objectives. A learning environment needs an open and critical dialogue where proposals coming from inside and outside can be scrutinized and tailored to the needs and objectives of UNDP
- Poverty expanding knowledge. Causes and manifestations of poverty have a general as well as a cultural component, which provide both global perspectives and insights for country studies. New data are being published on the effects of different poverty strategies. Indicators on poverty development come in many versions. New issues of poverty understanding are constantly brought forward, and publications on poverty issues are increasing rapidly. Staff within HQ and CFOs needs to be updated on the latest research in this area and apply it to country studies and projects. Some of this knowledge may be induced directly, through courses made specifically for HQ and regional meetings of CFOs. Some can be presented through the proposed Report on Global Poverty Development. Some can be presented through occasional lectures, papers and an internal (electronic) newsletter. As a minimum requirement it is recommended that a regular seminar be organized for the staff at HQ on poverty expanding knowledge. Another way to go can be to invite an expert to work with UNDP over a period of time. The CFOs are likely better served with courses offered in their region. This will help secure a regional perspective and enforce the networks. A core of thematic courses should be developed for CFOs and others, and a «traveling college» be established who can develop relevant material and work in close cooperation with the local milieu
- Technical skills to increase task performance. The different units under UNDP have different tasks and need different skills. Those responsible for advocacy will need other skills than those working with a project in the field. Etc. It is recommended that a analysis be performed for what kind of technical skills the different units need, and a plan be established for developing these skills, either through courses offered within UNDP, or through courses offered outside UNDP. The best investment for knowledge about a

complicated field like social indicators, for example, may be to send one of the staff members outside to one of the major research institutions for a longer period.

The many different activities proposed under the Programme will request all the 3 kinds of capacity building. At the same time, participation in the activities can in itself be considered capacity building. A large learning component is built into such activities as an analysis of concepts, a systematic approach to the use of poverty reducing strategies, an evaluation of performance, and construction of models of intervention.

## APPENDIX

### THE ROLE OF CROP IN UNDP ACTIVITIES

In the Terms of Reference and in meetings with the Principals of the Mission, it was stressed that CROP should make explicit the contributions CROP can give to the Programme.

CROP can offer the following, and would be happy to do so, since one of the objectives of this network of researchers is to work closely with policymaking institutions:

- Organize for members of the CROP network to collaborate with UNDP in its poverty relevant activities
- Contribute to a yearly Report on Global Poverty Development
- Provide a resource group which can function as a sounding board for analysis, provide inputs for UNDP activities and contribute to a learning environment
- Provide experts to help develop projects and examine ongoing projects
- Develop courses on poverty related topics for HQ and CFOs
- Take responsibility for the academic part of the project on the role of the state in poverty alleviation (CROP is already involved in such a project)
- Promote UNDP activities through the CROP network
- Organize joint workshops with UNDP, other networks and CROP.