

DRAFT

(Second Version)

UNV/DOMESTIC DEVELOPMENT SERVICE

DESK REVIEW

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UNV/DDS REVIEW

"Where the programme works well, it combines direct involvement in economic and social change with a wider, more "strategic", impact on local institutions, helping to improve their capacity to autonomously manage development activities. This dual role of the DDS programme is vital .. especially given the overall constraint on resources and the large number of potential beneficiaries.. the direct involvement of the fieldworkers ..provides legitimacy and credibility to ..processes of institutional development ..and means that the overall impact of the DDS is far greater than if..confined solely to direct assistance to project partners at the village level".

"DDS is seen as a holistic programme... its achievement greater than the specific entry point projects".

Quoted from Evaluations of UNV/DDS

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This review of the UNV/DDS programme is based primarily on a compilation of the information derived from eight independent evaluations. The evaluations were conducted from 1989 through 1993.

The concepts, relevance (especially as Poverty Alleviation and People's Participation have surfaced as development priorities), and the background to UNV/DDS are presented, followed by a brief account of the main achievements.

These achievements are related to the intensive work of the DDS fieldworkers with communities at the grassroot level; the valuable exchanges between host agencies, government and non-government, throughout the regions; the promotion of National Youth Programmes; demonstration and advocacy of participatory development processes; and how UNV/DDS has emerged into the mainstream of UNDP programmes.

Some of the main issues confronted and responded to by UNV/DDS are examined. These include: the ambiguous nature of the original mandates; the possible place of national DDS fieldworkers related to the international cadres; the shortfall in actually generating income through micro-funding; the finding that the capacities of most NGOs as host agencies were not as expected; the implications for strengthening them and developing a new generation of agencies functioning at the critical interface between communities and the formal planning and resource-controlling organisations; the establishment of DDS Country Specialist Officers in part to fill this gap as UNV/DDS expanded; and the role of DDS in the community in relation to UNDP and the technical agencies.

The important lessons learned as UNV/DDS evolved are that UNDP through UNV/DDS has an important and essential role to play operationally at the grassroots, and much that is indispensable for development is to be derived from local skills and capacities and the exchange between organisations and personnel at the community level; the growing realisation and need for a bottom-up top-down perception and approach to the development process; the proven and potential of UNV/DDS assisting in creating effective community foundations in order to reach up, accept, and mobilise local resources, for the whole range of available and appropriate support from technical and specialised agencies and services; the cost-effective role of DDS fieldworkers as their competence has been upgraded in micro-funding and establishment of credit facilities at the community level which is fast becoming a major contribution to development in the small-scale and informal sector; the on-going need of a strong professional support system for DDS activities along with the decisive role required from UNDP Resident Representatives and UNDP staff, as Regional Offices and staff give way to an embryonic sub-regional Advisory Service; and the value and need to enhance the TCDC contribution of UNV/DDS.

The prospects for UNV/DDS are considered in relation to the growing need for genuine participatory planning methods and processes; and the extension of the UNV/DDS concepts and activities into urban settings.

CONCEPTS

During the decades of development thinking and activity it has gradually but forcibly emerged that without the effective participation of the population at the grassroots, much effort is wasted and diverted from its purpose of raising the general standard of living and increasing the strength of the developing nations.

Such participation, it has increasingly become apparent, requires no less than a great leap in conceptual, organisational, communal and personal ways of thinking, decision-making, doing and sharing which finds itself up against deep tradition-bound conservatism and powerful anti-participatory forces.

The UNV/DDS programme was conceived as, fundamental to its whole approach, a commitment to finding ways for working through participatory processes based solidly within the communities and closely allied with indigenous community-oriented host agencies.

The modest key to the UNV/DDS's ambitious concept would be the fielding of volunteer grass-root fieldworkers. These would be drawn from the experienced community workers from the NGOs and government community development agencies in neighbouring countries within the regions ("Foreign but not too Foreign"). Assignments in which to practice and enhance their skills in involving the communities in the process of self-propelled development were to be designed and located in similar villages to those in the fieldworker's own country. In this way there would be a real Technical Cooperation between Development Countries (TCDC) - south-south - collaboration and operational networking among a stratum of workers, organisers and agencies which would be unique not only in this group of personnel but also in the way in which it involved and related to the United Nations system and governments.

Relevance of concept in a diversity of situations

This review of the UNV/DDS programme is based primarily on a compilation of the information derived from eight independent evaluations.¹ The countries in which UNV/DDS operates and those which the evaluation missions have visited are very different in their political, bureaucratic, social, and cultural structure; historical and economic development; the length of time that UNV/DDS has been in operation; and (of special significance to the programme), in the manner, tradition and degree in which grassroot communities, and non-government organisations function and participate with government, or not, in decision-making processes.

The evaluation reports, therefore, also exhibit a diversity in

¹ The evaluations were conducted from 1989 through 1993 (and are numbered and listed in an endnote starting with the most recent). Four are regional; they examine a number of countries at the same time in either Africa, Asia or the Pacific. Three concentrate on a single country: Swaziland, Zambia and Uganda. One reviews the specific situation of Micro-Capital Assistance throughout the regions.

coverage, emphasis, style and levels of sophistication. Nevertheless, each evaluation emphatically endorses as a major strength that the DDS has flexibly adapted and fashioned its programme so as to appropriately apply itself to the very diverse situations in different countries and within countries. It is recognised that the programme's approach is realistic and operates in a particularly politically sensitive area - the "empowerment" of the rural poor through participatory, "bottom-up" planning and development. This has become increasingly significant as DDS has evolved, as conditions have changed, perceptions widened, and opportunities presented themselves.

BACKGROUND

The General Assembly first mandated the establishment of "an international group of volunteers" in 1970.²

In 1976 the General Assembly considered the UNV programme "...to be a major operational unit...for the execution of youth programmes³ and at the same 31st session, noting the demise of the International Secretariat for Volunteer Service (in Paris), UNV was mandated to set up Regional advisory groups and to enter the field of Domestic Development Service. (UNV/DDS)⁴

The first Regional location for the programme was in Asia (Sri Lanka) and was launched largely influenced by the links established in consultations with non-governmental organisations (NGOs). Beginning in 1979 an exchange of fieldworkers in the region led to the first operational grassroot activities of the DDS.

In light of the progress made in Asia and the Pacific, a DDS pilot project was implemented in the Africa region (RAF/82/056), aimed at strengthening the capabilities of national NGOs and governmental organizations to plan and implement self-help projects at the grass-roots level. A regional office was set up in Zambia (later to be transferred to Zimbabwe).

Following the first review and the advent of the International Year of Youth, the Pacific Island States at an Aid Co-ordinating meeting, arguing that their situation and needs differed from that of the Asia Region as a whole, and eager to establish a "Pacific Identity", proposed separation from the UNV Asia Region (by then relocated in Kuala Lumpur). This was met by project RAS/86/057 which provided them with their own UNV/DDS region based on W.Samoa.

Although the DDS emerged with a major interest in supporting the community development work of NGOs it was never a predominantly NGO oriented programme. Accordingly, in Africa, DDS - flexible and designed to respond to conditions as they presented themselves - quickly recognised the different NGO development in the areas of

² Resolution 2659 (XXV) United Nations Volunteers 7.12.1970

³ Resolution 31/131 16.12.1976

⁴ Resolution 31/166 21.12.1976

potential DDS activity compared to the Asian experience, and the existing significance and importance of the role of government and government services in community development. By 1987 (RAF/86/061) country-based DDS projects were underway largely with African governments providing the host agency.

In the Pacific, too, DDS under government auspices became the norm. Although NGOs still had a prominent role to play, there were distinct advantages in strong DDS links to governments and closer involvement with national plans. In Asia this partnership with government agencies was later in coming.

UNV/DDS was launched as regional projects in the hands of staff from Regional Offices. They achieved much, given the pressures to get the projects off the ground and expand in the far-flung countries of their large regions. Working relationships were built within an impressive variety of situations and structures and all with limited resources and support of all kinds.

Administrative responsibilities grew with the programme and it became increasingly practical to decentralise many responsibilities from the Geneva UNV Headquarters to the Regions. This process continued from the Regions to UNDP, especially where DDS became an integral part of UNDP country programmes. Most recently, the Regional Offices have been dismantled and DDS has become integrated in UNDP country offices with residual support activities in the hands of an Advisory Resource Service organised on a sub-regional basis.

MAIN ACHIEVEMENTS

Community isolation and achievement of DDS fieldworkers

At the community level, where it is rare indeed for the poor and the disadvantaged to see, let alone have live among them, a consistently helping presence from outside, the DDS fieldworkers have been received as "the human face of the United Nations". Certainly the UNV/DDS activities have brought hope to ordinary people that their usual state of isolation and lack of identifiable signs of concern from international effort (and often from their own government) may now perhaps begin to change.⁵

DDS fieldworkers have in the (???number???) countries in which they have served:

revived flagging or moribund community groups, making them effectively operational again; stimulated the formation of many new groups who have planned and implemented a very wide range of local projects sustained beyond the enthusiasm, suggestions, ideas and presence of the fieldworker; significantly improved the profile and situation of women in many communities; identified, utilised and experimented with indigenous techniques and resources;

⁵ "... there is little appreciation within communities of where, if at all, they might fit into the priority development programmes of government, many of which are supported by UN agencies".

linked communities to external resources; trained co-workers and project personnel; informed and upgraded traditional programmes and fed information back into the monitoring and planning systems; and much else.

At this local level DDS has shown that its field workers are in a unique position to have:

- . involved communities in carrying out local surveys and information gathering of a qualitative kind;
- . involved marginalised segments of the population in decision-making processes, particularly taking into account the contribution and interests of women and youth;
- . identified priorities as perceived by the communities;
- . identified and mobilised local resources;
- . made known to communities what services and resources might realistically become available to them under what conditions;
- . assisted communities to reach up and claw down such services and resources which too commonly hover at levels unreachably above them;
- . encouraged "semi-formal" institutions, or locally based revolving loan funds, savings and credit circles etc;
- . assisted communities in making the best use of what is available by sound micro-level planning;
- . demonstrated that development need not always be expensive and exploitive;
- . observed how plans, programmes and projects actually reach communities, how effective they are or what sea-changes in intentions may have taken place between objectives and implementation and delivery;

and so

- . identified gaps and inconsistencies in programmes and policy;
- . provided their findings in ways of maximum use to planners and policy makers at appropriate levels.

Valuable exchanges between agencies

Host agencies, non-government and government alike, have benefitted from the opportunities for exchange of experiences and ideas afforded by project promotion, on-the-job training and study tours for middle-managers in the regions. This has established active networks and engendered a sense of belonging to an important

region-wide endeavour.⁶

The project's required process of identifying appropriate community-based placements, spelling out job descriptions and specific workplans by those applying for and receiving fieldworkers in the project, and the search for appropriately qualified candidates by those offering fieldworkers, have stimulated a growing sophistication and professionalisation in a field still dominated by well-meaning amateurs.

Youth

In relation to youth (which was an important focus of its earlier mandates), UNV/DDS has been the "essential support" in establishing or strengthening National Youth Councils; provided advice in setting up Constitutions; supported seminars and publications and located funding and resources. More specifically, the project clearly promoted and provided consultation leading to countries formulating, moving well into the process of, or fully adopting, National Youth Plans.

UNV/DDS as advocate of participatory development

Along with the visibility of its grassroots activities, the experience gained has provided the UNV/DDS programme with a sound basis, at community, organisational, institutional, government, donor, and international levels, for widespread advocacy of its basic concepts (such as [^]South-South cooperation, poverty orientation, promotion of self-help and community organisation, strengthening of intermediary support structures and NGOs, and emphasis on income generation in the rural areas).

Anticipation of poverty alleviation and people's participation

UNV/DDS has a growing reputation amongst government personnel who see the projects as a very welcome way of meeting newly formulated self-reliance policies. Certainly, DDS can claim that it has vigorously contributed to the changes that have been taking place in the wide field of development thinking. DDS can also be seen to have anticipated with its activities in the field, the growing and pronounced commitment, of the United Nations Development Programme and an increasing number of governments' declarations in their national plans, to the priority now being given to Poverty Alleviation and the need for People's Participation.⁷

⁶ This has been particularly noted in the island States where the exchange between these isolated new nations has been repeatedly expressed as helping to establish a "Pacific identity".

⁷ "Poverty alleviation" is a term which increasingly appears in official circles. It raises some question as to whether this accepts the idea that poverty is thought of as an inevitable and permanent condition with the object of policy being to soften its worst aspects, as charity organisations have done in the past, or whether systematic reduction leading to eradication of poverty is a primary long term aim of development.

*
Participation

UNV/DDS as a mainstream development programme

The increasing acceptance of the concept and philosophy of the programme in its approach to development and its potential role within UNDP in particular, in providing a community foundation for technical agencies in general, emerge from the evaluation documents as being a significant and fundamental achievement in its own right.

An indication of the increasingly significant role that eventually DDS might come to play in the broad aspects of the development process might be measured by the growing tendency for DDS to become included in mainstream country planning with financial support from IPF resources. It is a good sign that DDS is acknowledged as part of an integral programme and not just another of a range of tentative and perhaps short-lived project fashions in development.

MAIN ISSUES

As is to be expected of a highly innovative programme, UNV/DDS has needed to address a number of important issues. Among these has been:

1. The wide range and somewhat ambiguous nature of its mandated objectives
2. The case for incorporating national DDS fieldworkers to operate in their own country in relation to the distinctive element of the programme and the TCDC value of assigning fieldworkers to work internationally in neighbouring countries of the region
3. The doubts that "income generating" projects actually and satisfactorily generate income.
4. The realisation of the limited capacities of indigenous NGOs and government community development agencies which challenged the originally anticipated nature of the UNV/DDS partnership with host agencies:
 - a) the non-participatory approach of many host agencies
 - b) the prospective enabling role of host agencies functioning at the strategic interface for development between communities and the formal planning and resource-controlling structures
 - c) the severe under-resourcing of host agencies
 - d) the operational inadequacy of professional supervisory support for community-based fieldworkers
5. The establishment and role of Country (Specialist) Officers, and the emergence of DDS as an integral element in UNDP mainstream programmes

a) the need for development of a DDS "style"

b) micro-macro perspectives - planning

6. DDS, UNDP and the technical agencies

1. The concept: ambiguity and wide range of objectives

In respect of the stated UNV/DDS objectives themselves, within the overall mandates there appeared a wide-ranging scatter of targets and concepts: NGOs, Youth, Women, Disadvantaged Groups, Grassroots, TCDC, income generating, institution building, self-help, self-reliance, strengthening, integration, co-operation, training, data banks, and so on.

These seemed to be a collection of rallying points which had emerged in international circles over the years and spawned a variety of projects and attracted earmarked resources. They served to focus attention on different segments and suggested some kind of analytical division of labour. Enumerating them in the objectives of DDS reflected the necessary diversity of activities and operational flexibility of the undertaking. However, this catalogue may also have served to blur the underlying common factor which drew this diversity together and was to be the main aim of the project.

This situation is well illustrated in respect of the attention given to women and youth.

Target groups: women, youth, "entry points" etc.

While fully acknowledging and emphasising the value and priority in working with women's groups⁸ and organisations - the need to upgrade and support women in a male-dominated world being unchallengeable - it is necessary (while sensitively taking into account the ascribed traditional roles) to work and plan with and for women from the perspective of their being an integral part of the wider community.

Youth featured prominently as a target group in the initiation of the UNV/DDS programme.⁹ However, despite the frequent reference to the value of youth for the future of nations, it is characteristic that Departments of Youth are poorly funded and grossly understaffed. Typically, Youth Departments have little

⁸ It is interesting to note that females are rarely included actively within the classification of Youth.

⁹ As has been noted, in the first mandate (1970) the idea of "...the active participation of the younger generation..." Youth, was incorporated in the resolution; in 1976 the General Assembly considered UNV "...to be a major operational unit ..for the execution of youth programmes"; the programme gained some momentum during the International Year of Youth; and the title of the programme in the Pacific region is: "Assistance to Youth Participation in Development in the Pacific"

political clout in mainstream national development plans and decision-making. Youth organizations are frequently centred in schools or training institutions and concentrate on sport and culture. It was found that to a very great extent the local projects stimulated by UNV/DDS with youth groups were somewhat isolated from whatever might be specific community priorities. Particularly in the Pacific where the culture is traditionally and proudly ageist, the youth focus did little to help the DDS programme.

Where DDS fieldworkers, for pragmatic reasons, were located specifically with women, youth groups, and sectoral activities the tendency was to narrow the focus and potential effectiveness of operation of the programme.

The DDS response has been to characterise the various target populations, found in the early conceptual formulations, as integral parts of the whole community, and the sector as but one of a range of possible beginning activities. DDS fieldworkers were therefore expected to help the target group, to which they may have been initially attached, to become a dynamic element for development and any initial sector activities as potential "entry points" for gaining acceptance for manouvering into a wider and more fundamental community-propelled examination of their overall needs and priorities and for planning ways to meet them. This stance clarified and gave focus and emphasis to community participation in development - the underlying common factor in the multi-faceted role of DDS fieldworkers.

2. Internationals and nationals as fieldworkers

One of the distinctive features of the UNV/DDS programme has been the identification, recruitment and exchange of fieldworkers with a track record of working successfully at the community level, and placing them in the village communities in countries within their own regions. By facilitating the exchange of many hundreds of field workers, DDS has become one of the largest South/South exchanges and linking of programmes.¹⁰

Nevertheless, much discussion has taken place in regard to the possible UNV/DDS role and relationship to the promotion and development of a national volunteer programme which would recruit national DDS fieldworkers to operate in their own country.

There are examples where national volunteer groups created in the developing countries became instruments of party politics or adopted political activities opposed to the government's position. However, there is a strong argument for national volunteers, given the large number of locally unemployed or underemployed with suitable qualifications and experience who might be fielded. Financial cost, it is claimed, might compare favourably with even the modest cost of foreign DDS fieldworkers (especially when the international travel costs, insurance as foreign nationals etc. included in the United Nations pro forma are taken into account).

¹⁰ This policy has been well characterised in a video of the work of a DDS fieldworker as "Foreign but not too foreign".

The question of what the advantages are of having expatriate volunteers rather than nationals has been asked repeatedly and answered by all levels of respondents, indicating that the policy of bringing in foreign DDS volunteers from the neighbouring countries has been much appreciated everywhere.¹¹

The arguments for international DDS fieldworkers are solid and persuasive to set against any disadvantages. Nevertheless, the UNV/DDS commitment has consistently been to strengthen national capacities and to acknowledge the value of local skills. Therefore the UNV response has now been to formally adopt the policy of recruiting appropriately experienced nationals as DDS fieldworkers. Recently, what is expected to be an effective mix of nationals and internationals have been fielded with the long-range view of encouraging the establishment of national volunteer services along DDS principles and practice.

3. Micro-funding

A recurring theme in development thinking in recent times has been that of "income-generation" and this appears prominently in DDS objectives as one of the activities which fieldworkers might establish with communities. DDS fieldworkers have in fact shown ingenuity in gaining access to funds from a wide range of sources.

However, UNV/DDS, in common with most income-generating projects everywhere, has experienced that there is a serious question regarding their effectiveness in actually generating income in an on-going and equitable way. This issue is a familiar argument-generating theme in development circles and UNV/DDS has

¹¹ Among the responses can be found the following: the advantages of a foreigner are the status, independence and the impartiality brought to the job; the field worker becomes the "eye-opener" to the local people and provides opportunities for exchange of ideas on how other people carry out things; the presence of a foreigner at the grassroots breaks down the sense of isolation; the knowledge and possibility of external resources which are brought create the feeling that the outside world cares; the outsider who comes to live amongst them builds a trust which (this said repeatedly) has been forfeited and is absent in the communities' relationships, or lack of them, with national extension workers; the enthusiasm and commitment of the DDS field workers which is found lacking elsewhere; they attract the attention of local officers, dignitaries, and Ministers who come to see what they are doing and would probably not visit otherwise; foreigners are listened to, have more clout; the rare opportunity for foreign interaction at the local level which provides the opportunity for fieldworkers to practice their skills in another setting in the region and to take their newly gained experience back with them to enhance the development in their home country. (This TCDC element of the programme was a very strong plus in the Pacific where it is said that they need to know each other better in the Region).

not been the exception. In response UNV/DDS commissioned a Mission¹² exclusively to examine and learn from the fieldworkers' experience and provide guidance in these matters.

Among the recommendations were that:

- . all funding should be a response to the community's sound plans arrived at from the DDS-assisted processes of participatory learning and the establishment of social organisation, enabling the community to handle the funding procedures for itself;

- . fieldworkers can encourage "semi-formal" institutions, or locally based revolving loan funds, savings and credit circles etc. but fieldworkers should not directly provide, apply for, and certainly not administer and manage funds;

- . it is more effective for sustainable development for fieldworkers to reinforce, not duplicate, local structures and to assist in linking communities as clients to existing sources of institutional credit and to stable long-term financial institutions wherever possible;

- . where such facilities are inadequate, to find ways possibly through UNDP, of improving mechanisms for delivering credit specifically to poor people;

- . all applications should come from host agencies and funds deposited in their own special accounts;

- . careful distinctions must be drawn and criteria established for deciding on the appropriateness of the provision of grants or loans.

The evaluation recognised that at relatively low cost, DDS have comparative advantages in carrying out Appraisal, Monitoring, and Evaluation (which is participatory and not a matter of policing or controlling) of micro-funded projects.

However, it was considered that fieldworkers were not at that time sufficiently well informed and equipped to handle these matters to the most effect. There was a need for fieldworkers to be assisted to develop specific methods and skills in order to advise groups on good simple business practices and especially assessment of prospective markets and accounting. They would need to be provided with Micro-Capital Assistance guidelines citing examples of good practice and giving an annotated bibliography of sources of credit.

Subsequently, the need to increase the effectiveness of DDS in

¹² The UNV as a Channel for Micro-Capital Assistance: A Review
Pratt and Boyden Consultants, Sept-Nov 1991.

the whole funding field has been fully explored and the approach and emerging policy documented in the report of a joint UNV/ILO Workshop.¹³ This important training need has been acknowledged and responded to by UNV/DDS, especially as there is a growing insistence that any funding for income-generating purposes must be based on sound commercial lines.¹⁴

4. The limited capacities of indigenous NGOs and government community development agencies as host agencies for development

The role of NGOs was very much the focus of orientation in the beginning of the DDS programme in the 1970s. Increasingly, in recent times, NGOs have featured in the expectations and development policies and plans of governments and of the UN system.¹⁵ This has been especially the case given the recent economic conditions and the realisation that governments cannot realistically deliver rising standards of living and services, as previously proclaimed, without decentralisation and the collaboration of the non-government and private sectors.

In addition there is an emerging realisation that the success of development projects and the introduction of technologies depend a great deal on the community's participation, level of organisation, acceptance and direct management of innovation. This, along with the current climate of giving priority to poverty alleviation and people's participation, has focused attention on NGOs and a corresponding appreciation of DDS type fieldwork at the community level. Undeniably many NGOs have a long and honourable tradition of providing a wide range of activities, resources and services and working at the grassroots which is seen to well qualify them for a vital role in development.

a) the non-participatory approach of many host agencies

Even so, NGOs have tended to be specialised in orientation; geographically fragmented and confined; and usually very limited in resources of funds and staff. In addition, irrespective of the commendable work they might perform, many still operate frankly as charities, concerned with relatively isolated community casualties (social stretcher-bearers?)¹⁶; or as development agents stimulating

¹³ "The UNV/DDS as a Channel for Micro-Capital-Assistance". A joint UNV/International Labour Office workshop, Harare 5/9.3.1993

¹⁴ The attitude of Islamic cultures in the matter of interest charges (usury) and ways of handling this are addressed in the consultation report.

¹⁵ RAS/86/074 (the Asia Region) begins its title; "Strengthening of Indigenous NGOs...." and RAF/86/061 (Africa) "Strengthening of National NGOs...."

¹⁶ The specialised targets of many agencies are often the end results of the malfunctioning of society. While there is the need to make special provision for such groups both the provision and preventive measures require a broader community-based perception

self-help projects and groups which function as long as there is a continuing benefactor. These are far from embracing the philosophy, spirit, or practising the methods of genuine participation which are crucial to the DDS approach.

It has therefore not been possible for UNV/DDS to relate to NGOs across the board as if they constituted a uniform source of potential partners in the development process.¹⁷ Consequently it has been necessary to distinguish which NGOs it is likely to prove productive to work with hand-in-hand; which will need and can be "strengthened" (one of the stated objectives of UNV/DDS projects); what exactly this strengthening should mean and how it is to be achieved.

b) the prospective enabling role of host agencies functioning at the strategic interface between communities and formal structures

It becomes increasingly clear that communities no longer successfully function in isolation and the involvement of communities in development is sustainable only where there are local institutions which maintain on-going operational and participatory links between communities and external planning processes and programmes.

However, the NGO tradition is very unevenly developed from country to country and from place to place within countries. Also, at times, NGOs may be perceived by governments as adversaries and perhaps subversive of established rules and regulations.¹⁸

In addition, crucially, few indigenous NGOs are effectively linked to national development plans, processes and resources. This

and involvement. There is a parallel here with programmes which target women and youth and operate isolated from the community as a whole.

¹⁷ Although initially it was the NGOs that were thought to be the most likely agencies to successfully host and build with the UNV/DDS, pragmatically, government agencies presented a whole range of hosting opportunities. Neither NGO or government necessarily provide the better prospect. Each situation needed to be assessed on its particular merits. The one vital criterion which should determine whether UNV/DDS can establish a partnership with a government department or NGO at all is whether it appears that the organization is genuinely participatory in approach or can be assisted to become so.

¹⁸ This is in part a problem of social structures. The bureaucratic necessity is to reduce complexity and variation into defined categories for which prescribed actions are required. NGOs are concerned with the individualisation of situations so as to respond sensitively to differences and variety rather than to general categories. Nevertheless, there is a middle ground which needs to be found which can serve the goals of both partners in development situations.

has been witnessed clearly as UNV/DDS has become established. In Africa, and later in the Pacific, where the NGOs were found not to be in a position to partner the DDS programme, government departments became the host agencies.¹⁹

The DDS as part of the UN system with access to, or actually working under, government auspices, are expected to assist communities in developing their own local institutional structures and help them in establishing external links. In this regard they perhaps provide the direction for a new and essential "generation" of NGOs. This generation, while retaining their independence and freedom to initiate and innovate, would function as enablers within a wider context. Such enabling NGOs would (like the aim of DDS) help communities to become self-propelling (i.e., to identify their own priorities and their own resources and learn to effectively absorb and make use of available programmes and resources from outside). This generation would be one in which essentially the NGOs and their fieldworkers are strategically placed, functioning at the interface between communities and the formal planning and resource-controlling structures.

c) the severe under-resourcing of host agencies

However, in envisaging such a significant development for NGOs, it must be fully recognised that almost without exception, the national NGOs and NGO co-ordinating bodies are seriously under-resourced and unable to meet important recurrent costs in meeting even their present operations. They are in desperate need of secretariat facilities, management skills, inter-agency contacts and staff. The DDS experience has shown that NGOs have difficulty in even assigning counterparts and co-workers. Operationally, it has been found that many are especially lacking in providing the kind of supervision of fieldworkers that is required for the expanding development role expected of them.

d) the operational inadequacy of professional supervisory support for community-based fieldworkers

¹⁹ Working with government agencies (for example Youth services) does not however guarantee effective links with mainstream development processes either. In addition, it was rare for a government agency to field workers operating consistently at the community level.

One of the recurring problems has been that of linking DDS fieldworkers to adequate counterparts or co-workers. Counterparts are in the tradition of the UN where it is expected that the counterpart will be trained and be able to take over the activities of the ex-patriate expert on departure. It has been found that the counterparts provided (if at all) for DDS have frequently been host agency staff members who do not operate as co-workers in and at the village level, with the DDS fieldworkers. There is also a number of examples of DDS finding themselves assigned to line functions or management roles within the host agencies rather than operating at the community level.

Professional supervision of community development workers is essential. Unlike many technical personnel, they are involved always in an intense and absorbing on-going mutual learning experience, for themselves and those with whom they work.

However competent the individual fieldworker may be, close supervision becomes indispensable and requires skilled technical support of a special kind. This support must come from someone who supervises in the sense that they have super vision. Such a supervisor must have a wider perception of the overall dynamics of situations and the prospective institutional linkages than can be maintained within the horizons which close in on individual fieldworkers, who are deeply involved with, and of necessity become somewhat embedded in, local affairs.

Obviously where there existed a host agency staff member ready and able to perform such a task, then of course, that national was expected to undertake the work. However, such a situation was difficult to find.

Operationally reinforcing supervisory support of the activities of the DDS fieldworkers at the country level was early seen as an obvious need and a vital element for "strengthening" both the capacity of host agencies and the DDS programme. Together with the organisational need to assist in moving the agencies firmly into the interfacing development role outlined above this becomes a challenge for UNV/DDS

In a few situations where a prospective NGO partner, in terms of its philosophy and track record, could be productive but was poor in resources, some DDS fieldworkers have shown their worth in assisting NGOs to move in the enabling/interfacing direction. However, it can be seen that a broader approach than originally conceived by UNV/DDS needs to be evolved for such agencies and needed to be designed for DDS in the interim.

As the UNV/DDS programme grew and over-extended the staff at the Regional Offices, and the problems relating to the host agencies became more apparent and country specific, the emerging needs were pragmatically responded to by establishing DDS Country (Specialists) Officers. They were assigned in countries as fieldworker numbers mounted.

5. The establishment of Country (Specialist) Officers/UNDP Programme Officers and DDS as an integral element in mainstream UNDP programmes

These UNV/DDS Country Officers were provided a base within the UNDP country secretariat or within a host organisation. However, irrespective of where actually housed, it would seem that their professional super-visionist role was often heavily burdened with administrative responsibilities within the traditional United Nations management structure.²⁰

²⁰ The rules and regulations, MLAs, Medical Insurances, etc applying to DDS fieldworkers are very different from those of other UN staff and project personnel. Some Representatives felt that the

While having to conform to the United Nations structure, they also needed to find ways of applying management concepts that go far beyond the conventional type of "efficient" administration of resources, required by the perplexing, unfamiliar and rather ambiguous nature of the DDS programme. This includes, "networking", assessment of socio-cultural and political patterns, personnel and institutional supervision and development, and "lobbying" on behalf of powerless communities. There is also the need to play the role of "facilitators" and "catalysts" within a complex institutional environment with village community structures at one end and national governments and international donors at the other.

The Country Officers therefore find themselves having to deal with a very wide range of concerns ranging from operational performance at the field level, through management, to planning. Among the significant matters have been the following.

The UNV/DDS fieldworkers are recruited from a great variety of backgrounds and a wide range of levels of experience and are placed to serve in equally diverse countries and situations. The job description for fieldworkers could only be the barest indicator of what could be expected by the DDS. There did not exist a sufficiently extensive and cohesive DDS set of guides or on-going guidance in methods aimed at the level of sophistication that the fieldworkers were likely to encounter. Briefings and orientation had indeed been brief and limited. What was available and offered were beginnings and needed to be elaborated upon and added to.

There had been (as indicated above) an overestimation of the available capacity and sophistication of NGOs. In practice it was found that there was not much evidence that they and most host agencies utilised recognisable community development planning methodologies that activity group members could understand and continue to use. Therefore, the prospects for replicability and sustainability by the communities were poor; guidelines and materials for working with communities were lacking; and the expectation that skilled and professional supervision would be provided by the host agencies proved unfounded.

Country (Specialist) Officers found it necessary to assist the agencies in filling this gap in methods, materials, and on-going skill enhancement for the fieldworkers at the community level.

a) The need for development of a DDS "style"

There emerged a need for a systematisation of whatever methods the DDS fieldworker had brought with them; the introduction of well-tried practices and processes from elsewhere; and the cumulative use of their growing DDS experience.

need for the unfamiliar administrative attention required was disproportionate to the relatively few fieldworkers in the country. Where the Country Specialists were located in the UNDP office itself they sometimes were given line responsibilities altogether outside of their UNV/DDS functions.

DDS fieldworkers, it has been maintained, should be required to be not only the eyes and ears of the United Nations system from their unique vantage point at the community level, but systematic reporters of process and change. It was essential that the fieldwork experience be collected, discussed fully, documented, disseminated and utilised for a number of purposes: yielding material for detailed on-going consultation between fieldworker, country officer and host agency for effective supervision and development of skills and enhancing performance; providing the material for pro-active interventions rather than responding to problems after they have arisen; designing working agendas; providing material for guides and training materials; identifying specific training needs, and promotional pieces; and as a major contribution to identifying gaps and inconsistencies in policy and programmes as viewed from the "bottom-up".

The requirement was for UNV/DDS to offer and eventually institutionalise a set of methods, materials and procedures in order to gradually develop a recognisable UNV/DDS "style" of working with communities and agencies. What is meant by style is not to seek for uniformity, as the diversity of UNV/DDS activities is one of its excellent features.

Clearly, UNV\DDS would be strengthening agencies if the fieldworkers were armed with and demonstrated increasingly effective methods of community organisation, and the fieldworkers on their return home would have that much more to offer in their own country.

The UNV/DDS response has been to promote a range of proposals and instruments such as: community self-surveys; sector profiles; daily journals; directories of services and resources; catalogues of possible projects (technical aspects "translated" into who needed to do what, when); "How to..." guides for communities fieldworkers, supervisors and country officers; methods for participatory community planning, monitoring, accounting and evaluation.

b) Micro-macro perspectives - planning

The introduction of a such a system of reporting and documentation which concentrates on process and qualitative change to meet the particular requirements and wide-ranging goals of the UNV/DDS programme does not match well with the usual United Nations practices.

It has been increasingly recognised that in programmes such as DDS, which seek to bring about changes in attitudes and human behaviour and new ways of managing community affairs and capacity-building in largely tradition-bound cultures, movement is slow and indicators of success are difficult to define where success is in a group's enhanced organisational ability rather than primarily in numerical or financial terms. Methods for measurement of impact in such situations are poorly developed anywhere.

UNV/DDS has evolved in a process of "trial and error" and

"bargaining" over targets, budgets²¹ and concepts. In view of the political and administrative situations, no other approach to planning was possible. There has therefore been a high degree of uncertainty with regard to important variables such as forthcoming financial resources, number and quality of fieldworker applications, political events etc. This state of affairs hardly allowed for anything but "indicative" mid-term planning with annual adjustments and specifications.

At the core of the problems for UNV/DDS, and particularly for the Country Officers, is the fact that participatory "bottom-up" planning is not anywhere the accepted style either of governments, institutions or the United Nations itself. Fundamentally, the challenge for UNV/DDS is to find ways to effectively link up the DDS micro endeavours with macro level activities so as to contribute towards establishing a continuum of perception (bottom-up - top-down) for development planning, processes and activities.

6. DDS and the technical agencies

In the light of decades of development failure to reach the most in need, there is the growing realisation of the very great need, common for most of the technical agencies, to have animators and facilitators at the community level to ensure the full value of technical resources and innovation. However, the different sectors and agencies have often failed to appreciate the necessary broad-based community foundation required to absorb the usually externally decided and uncoordinated inputs from outside and the degree to which the communities own ideas of priority and local capacity will determine community acceptance and appropriate responses.

The DDS is expected to assist in building the basic community foundation upon which the whole range of development activities could be constructed and orchestrated.

UNV, understanding very well the principle that the technical and community/social aspects of development must go hand-in-hand, has responded within its own organisation by integrating UNV (usually mid-career technical volunteers recruited to serve with specific United Nations funded projects) and DDS (community-based fieldworkers) in a concept of "community windows". This has become an instrument of policy which increasingly involves both kinds of workers jointly and interchangeably serving community-based organisations (CBOs).

LESSONS LEARNED

a) Grassroots interventions, possible, effective and necessary

²¹ DDS support structures, have quite often been seen as overhead costs rather than an essential component of a comprehensive programme, the effects of which ought to be seen far beyond the immediate changes induced at the fieldworkers specific field location. In this sense UNV/DDS can be seen as social capital investment.

United Nations interventions at the grassroots are possible and can be effective.

UNV/DDS has shown that there is much of value to be derived from the exchange of experiences at the grassroots level by fieldworkers, community-based organisations, and non-government organisations committed to participatory approaches. Such exchanges have mobilised and creatively directed local skills, knowledge and capacities which are increasingly recognised to be essential in the processes for development.

DDS has opened possibilities for a reorientation of approaches to the development process.

b) A bottom-up to top-down perception of development

UNV/DDS, existing in its strategic location within the United Nations system, has found ways to effectively link-up the DDS micro endeavours with macro level activities. In doing so it has contributed towards establishing a continuum of perception of the development process from bottom-up to top-down). Such a perception should progressively lead to innovative and appropriate planning, programmes and projects in tackling the far-reaching, critical and sorely neglected social aspects of the development process.

c) DDS and the technical agencies

It has become vital to provide a community foundation for the contribution of most sectoral and technical agencies to development at the local level.

DDS fieldworkers can already be found operating in conjunction with United Nations and other technical and specialist agencies of all kinds. DDS thereby serves as a link between the communities at grassroots level and UNDP, donors, government and other resources.

It is evident that DDS fieldworkers, can successfully perform in meeting the common need of the technical agencies for an active presence in the community. The Resident Representatives of UNDP, as coordinators of the United Nations specialised agencies and influential members of development planning and provider groups, have a decisive role to play in advocating and promoting the DDS concept and programme with governments, agencies and donors in the countries they serve.

d) The need for a strong professional DDS support system

Local administration matters for DDS in-country have been the responsibility of the UNDP Programme Officer (frequently UNVs themselves) responsible for UNV generally and often much else. It has been indicated above that with the appointment of DDS Country Specialist Officers, some of this work, in varying degrees was shifted to them. Now that the UNV Programme Officers and the Country Officers will tend to become indistinguishable, the required professional specialist role may become diluted.

Until the recent demise of the DDS Regional Offices, the Country Officers had a direct professional support

system to assist in the development of their professional skills and the supervision of the fieldworkers. This remains an on-going and essential need, as certainly does the matter of continuing to take the numerous steps in cultivating the recognisable DDS style (discussed above).²²

Despite the increasing integration of DDS in UNDP programming, the concepts, potential and expanding opportunities of DDS have depended very much on the appreciation, active support, enthusiasm and energies of individual UNDP Representatives and will certainly continue to do so. Representatives come and go unrelated to the time-scale required for DDS development, and will continue to need a great deal of stimulation and encouragement to advance the DDS role in mainstream development programmes. A very strong support and staff development system for DDS will continue to be needed from outside the individual countries.

e) The need for a new generation of NGOs

Without exception, NGOs, (and for that matter government agencies) which are experienced in participatory community development are severely under-resourced. If they are to play the presently-envisaged crucial role at the interface between communities and the formal resource-controlling structures in the development priorities for poverty alleviation etc., then a broader package of assistance will be required than can be provided by UNV alone.

Such an package would consist of assistance in which DDS fieldworkers comprise but one element and must also contain other appropriate support for the host agency in collaboration with other contributors of resources.

It has been noted that this kind of assistance to NGOs seems to be the mandate of another UN regional project (....RAF/87/001). This is one of the areas where increasingly effective operational cooperation devising joint activities to specific NGOs might be worked out productively between the DDS and the resources of the other concerned United Nations NGO interests.

f) Micro-funding

It is recognised that DDS have important roles to play in the community in relation to funding income-generating and small-scale projects and could increasingly provide a clear mechanism for the UNDP to increase its micro-capital activities.

²² At the time of the evaluations it was proposed that the work of the Information Officers in the regional offices should contribute in a major way to the production of materials for utilisation by DDS at the community level. This would shift the emphasis of their job descriptions from mainly addressing the public at large or donor agencies and require them to play a role in providing the fieldstaff with working materials. With the demise of the regional offices it is not clear who might now perform this particular and necessary "in-house" field support service.

The DDS fieldworkers have been remarkably productive in tapping funds from a wide variety of sources to support community enterprises and in a few countries the UNV/DDS office has been successful in concentrating finance from diverse sources into a DDS fund which is placed at the disposal of the fieldworkers. Administered through the UNDP, this removes the burden on DDS to seek finance elsewhere, delays are considerably reduced and it enables the UNV/DDS office to meet obligations and so that any residual reporting can be continued when fieldworkers leave their duty station.

At relatively low cost, it has been found, DDS have comparative advantages in carrying out Appraisal (providing detailed knowledge and understanding of the communities), Monitoring (providing a direct presence, extensive contact and support activities - most donors fail to monitor) and Evaluation (verifying the actual rather than the planned impact of lending practices to local groups).

Credit facilities for the poor have begun to be seen as an important mainstream development activity and the effective involvement of DDS here is one example of the contribution it can make in UNDP mainstream programming.

g) Realisation of the full potential of DDS to TCDC

The receiving host countries have much appreciated the TCDC element of the UNV/DDS programme. The value of the enhanced experience of the DDS fieldworkers on return home to the providing countries may not yet have been fully realised. To do so requires a firmer system of liaison between the UNDP offices in the host country and that of the home country to facilitate the reintegration of the homecoming fieldworker into the most advantageous position for contributing to development in the home country.

PROSPECTS

Participatory planning

The participatory foundations and activities of the UNV/DDS programme will continue to have profound implications for development planning methods and processes. There remains a major task for the evolution of an effective planning process suited to the nature of participatory, people-oriented approaches to development and compatible with the need for appropriate accountability.

DDS extension into urban settings

Although DDS has until recently been a rural-focused programme, there is a growing interest and demand for the application of the programme to urban settings. A beginning has been made in assigning a few fieldworkers to operate in towns and cities. A major feasibility assessment is underway jointly with UNCHS and ILO to examine the potential for UNV/DDS collaboration in addressing the problems in the mega-cities in the developing

countries.²³

ANNEX

LIST of EVALUATIONS

1. Project Evaluation Performance Report.
DDS project INT/91/VO4 Uganda Mar 1993.
2. Strengthening of National NGOs and Government Organisations for Community Level Activities in the Africa Region.
Joint FRG/DDS Evaluation of the UNV/DDS UNDP project RAF/86/061 Zimbabwe, Tanzania, Benin, and Togo.
October 5th -November 4th 1991.
3. The UNV as a Channel for Micro-Capital Assistance: A Review
Pratt and Boyden Consultants Sept-Nov 1991.
4. Evaluation Report of the UNDP's DDS in Zambia
Jun/July 1991.
5. Review of UNDP UNV/DDS Programme RAS/86/ 057 in the Pacific Region.
Jun/July 1990.
6. Evaluation of project RAF/86/061 Consultant's Report
DDS Programme in Swaziland
Nov 1989.
7. Strengthening of Indigenous NGOs and Government Bodies Promoting Self-Reliance at the Community Level (DDS) in Asia Region. Report of the High Level External Evaluation on UNDP/UNV Regional Project RAS/86/074.
Nov/Dec 1989.
8. Strengthening of National NGOs and Governmental Organisations for Community Level Activities in the Africa Region.
Oct/Nov 1989.

²³ Joint UNCHS/ILO/UNV Feasibility Assessment Mission Report (Indonesia/Philippines) INT/92/011. Improving Living Conditions and Expanding Employment Opportunities for Low-Income Urban Communities (May/June 1993). This mission is an example of the growing UN inter-agency collaboration in the UNV/DDS "community windows" approach.