

- (a) That the project extension includes a mandate to the regional team to devise a phase-out programme of the current sponsoring agencies, their role to be replaced by local governments and private sector organizations and/or regional bodies and agencies by the end of the extension period. The phase-out programme should allow, after a reasonable period of time, the local maintenance of prospective activities in the African countries involved on a permanent basis and the survival of a certain infrastructure to sustain these activities, both nationally and regionally.
- (b) The establishment of a Trust Fund to finance the whole project is not the most appropriate solution to avoid the limitations inherent to the current situation. A better arrangement seems to be to provide additional funds, beyond what would be the case under a situation similar to that which prevails today, to items «17.97. National experts» and «20. Studies fund» of the regional project budget. These additional funds could be provided through, but not necessarily be limited to, setting up a special trust-fund.

F.2. Final Comments.

- (1) It is clear that many of the difficulties encountered by the African Studies project stem from an African environment which is not conducive to the implementation of participatory long-term envisioning and strategic planning processes. This is so in spite of the recognition by most leaders of the African countries involved in the project of the pressing need to develop the capacity to think and plan in long terms and of doing it incorporating in the process a diversity of social demands (ie, using a participatory approach). Thus, the question of how can an NLTPS study be best implemented in such an environment is pertinent and relevant. Unfortunately, in our opinion, there are no clear-cut answers to this question. Beyond its methods, techniques and tools, futures studies are essentially an «attitude», an «orientation», a «state of mind», which is (or is not) rooted in the cultural texture of a given society, belonging (or not) to the realm of its cultural values. In this situation one can attempt to: (a) modify the environment; (b) modify the implementation process; or (c) modify both. It should be obvious that the third alternative (attempting to modify both) would be preferable. However, inducing social or cultural changes usually takes longer than the execution time of any given project; thus, it cannot be expected that any one project, including African Futures, will be able to substantially modify African societies' attitudes at large towards long-term futures in the short term. On the other hand, regardless of how a futures project is implemented, one must accept that it will inescapably require that those involved in it invent, evaluate, select and adopt long-term futures images.

In spite of what has been said, the following items could be helpful:

- (a) Stress always the fact that the future is studied above all to better understand the present, and make this a permanent guiding principle during the development of the project.
- (b) Emphasize at all times that the main purpose of futures studies is to help decision makers to make better decisions today; ie futures images are valuable in as much as they contribute to improve today's decision making processes, for example, by opening new alternatives, helping to better evaluate the consequences of today's choices, determining possible bottle-necks and neglected areas, gaining a systemic viewpoint, etc. It is because today matters that the future should be analyzed. If this is taken at heart by those doing the project, they should be able to link all long-term futures images to current or immediate trends and sets of actions.
- (c) Permanently remain everyone in contact with the project, or with the results of the project, that they will spend the rest of their lives in the future, and that, of all times, only the future is the territory of change and possible improvement. Not envisioning alternative feasible futures is to deny ourselves the possibility to change what we don't like about our present state of affairs.

On a more practical level the following suggestions could be made:

- (i) Select a futures team leader of the highest possible recognized intellectual leadership. This will enhance the credibility of the project and its proposals and will facilitate rowing against the current.
- (ii) During the discussion of ideas and/or results of a futures study an effort should be made to bring future events or situations closer in time to the present, in order to give them a sense of urgency. It should be remembered that generally more attention is paid to «urgent» matters than to «important» matters.
- (iii) The global futures issues should be translated as often as possible into sets of decisions to be taken in the immediate future by those decision makers for whom the results are targeted.
- (iv) Select only a few forceful ideas to show the usefulness of the study and center the discussions around these, instead of burdening decision makers with all the details of the analysis (detailed analysis should be available, however, to support the main points made whenever this is required).
- (v) Make as explicit as possible the role that the different main actors will have to play in the development of the alternative futures scenarios.
- (vi) Statements referring to possible future trayectories to be followed are preferable to images which refer only to the state of affairs in any one particular time in the long-term future.

This short list of suggestions is not intended to be exhaustive. The most honest answer to the crucial question of how to best implement an NLTPS project in an environment not conducive to its implementation would have to be: Be creative, experiment and adapt to circumstances.

- (2) Regarding the potential impact of the NLTPS projects on capacity building, a few concluding remarks are in order. Clearly only a handful of African professionals have been incorporated as staff members of the regional or national teams (generally 3 or 4 in each country). Although by the end of the project many others will have participated in the process and the discussions generated by it, basically only the members of staff will have gained my degree (as limited as this may be) of expertise in long-term futures studies and strategic planning. In spite of being small in numbers, if these professionals were to remain working in these fields, a first and very important seed would have been planted to enhance Africa's capacity to imagine and evaluate its alternative futures and eventually build its own desirable future. However, the impression of the evaluation mission is that, unless further and sustained actions are taken, the teams thus far formed will disintegrate and their members will take other jobs which will likely be unrelated to these areas of knowledge. Measures to reduce the danger of this happening and for enhancing more permanent structures should be devised as part of the NLTPS project. It should be stressed that in these fields of knowledge, more than in relatively better established ones, continued first hand experience in the job is extremely important.
- (3) One can easily argue that the possible contributions of NLTPS projects to the Sustainable Human Development (SHD) goals of UNDP could be multiple and extremely important. On one hand, NLTPS projects could help to quantify the possible long term demands on Africa's natural resources base and their possible impact on the environment. On the other hand, they could help in the definition and design of alternative development paths (and thus sets of policies) based on more rational and conscious societal structures. Further, they could be instrumental in determining possible future crisis if current patterns of development were to be followed with no changes. They could even provide essential inputs to define more precisely what sustainable development is, and further, they could contribute to enhance the level of social commitment to policies more likely to lead to a sustainable development. All of this is possible, but it should not be taken for granted, even if NLTPS projects were executed at perfection. The issues of «quality of life» will in all likelihood be raised during the NLTPS projects; but beforehand, it is difficult to state that during the various consultation processes this and related issues will be included among the priorities of desirable futures, in ways compatible with the SHD goals of UNDP. For example, some countries may reach the conclusion that for the next 25 to 30 years a traditional industrialization policy, based on an intensive use of energy and resources, will bring greater benefits to the inhabitants of those particular countries and may thus include such a policy as part of their desirable futures. It is true that the national teams

can (and probably will) introduce sustainability issues in their long term futures analysis, and that this could insure that at least these issues are not disregarded by omission. But it is also true that this would be the most which is advisable to do, if one is to avoid interfering with the participatory process to define national aspirations, goals and preferred futures. Nevertheless, in the end, even if UNDP's SHD goals were to be partially or totally ignored or rejected in the NLTPS resulting futures, this would be a very valuable information for UNDP to redirect its efforts in those areas which it deems important.