

project itself; it must be taken into account that this was the first national arrangement to be negotiated and there were then pressures to initiate the process as soon as possible). The «National Futures Commission» has slightly more than 100 members. Its membership list, which includes members from different sectors, was submitted to presidential approval before being officially installed. According to the chairman of the Commission, forty to sixty of its members do participate actively in their meetings.

The implementation status of the project is as follows: **Phase I of the methodological guidelines has been completed.** National aspirations were obtained through a questionnaire which was applied to 1000 persons (aged 18 or more years old) selected according to quotas based on the latest population census. Members of political parties and worker's unions were added afterwards. The survey included some 100 questions. Final results of the survey were produced in November, 1993. **Technically the survey and the interpretations made of its results have important deficiencies.** Most of the questions included refer to past or present situations, not to the future or to desires. Many of the questions are posed in such a manner that they leave no room but for one obvious answer. Some questions seem to be designed to validate current government policies. The survey itself as a whole limits the issues to be considered as possible aspirations by those surveyed (most questions included specify the topics and issues and offer only a set of fixed possible answers). Biases can be easily detected in the interpretation of the results; for example, answers which were favored by less than five percent of those surveyed are included as «important aspirations» of the population. No comments are made on apparent contradictions between answers to different questions. The regional team made different comments and suggestions during the process, but although the national team apparently accepted that these were valid and useful, it disregarded them in practice. For this reason, the regional team decided to commission a detailed independent analysis of the survey and its results. However, it seems unlikely that at the time being much can be done to correct the situation. Nevertheless, the experience gained is being put to profitable use by the regional team in other countries (eg, Gabon). **Phase II of the methodological guidelines has also been completed in Côte d'Ivoire.** Retrospective studies in a few topics were done or commissioned by the national team. Topics included were: Demography; society; space; economy; and environment. The approach and analytical framework of the reports produced differ from one another. Their quality is also heterogeneous, and they do not seem to follow a common paradigm or have sufficient common elements as to be able to tie them into a comprehensive view. The national team has also produced (February-March, 1994) a document which pretends to merge and be a synthesis of the results

obtained on the national aspirations and the retrospective analysis. This «Synthesis» document defines a set of eleven so called «Key questions for the future», which are proposed as the major axis of analysis for the construction of scenarios. A further document (mars-avril, 1994) produced by the National Team, entitled *Main topics*, expands on these eleven selected «key questions for the future», which are: (i) Human capital development; (ii) Science and technology development; (iii) Agriculture; (iv) Industrialization promotion; (v) Institutional reinforcement and development management improvement; (vi) Private sector development and the role of the state; (vii) International context, growth of foreign markets and economic regional and subregional integration; (viii) Development financing and economic growth; (ix) Decentralization; (x) Environment; (xi) Sociocultural factors of development. The stated intention of the national team is to commission a study on each of these topics «to propose and detail alternative solutions» to some open questions posed for each of them as a kind of possible table of contents in the document *Main topics*. These studies are planned to be done by consultants and the results to be examined by specialized commissions or interdisciplinary groups. A draft document consolidating the results of these studies is expected by November 1994, when it will be submitted to the «National Futures Commission» and be used as the basis for an open debate. It is the view of the evaluation mission that the «Main topics», as stated, could have been possible axis of analysis at the start of the project, with no need for Phases I and II of the project. **There is no clear indication as to how they were derived from the results obtained in the previous two phases**; that is, there is no clear and evident connection between the national aspirations and the retrospective analysis and the main topics proposed. This is not to say that the topics selected are not important or even crucial, but simply that **they seem to accommodate an *a priori* scheme**, predetermined by the government, which has now been «justified» or «validated» through the NLTPS exercise. Again, if the proposed studies are done by different consultants, **there will be no way to ensure a systemic, holistic view**. Each consultant may use a different paradigm, information base, basic assumptions, evaluation criteria, etc, which will most likely render impossible the task of merging the results in a comprehensive view. Further, **the proposed approach practically eliminates the possibility of formally incorporating independent views in the process**; ie, it suppresses or at best limits the participation of key actors and potential agents of change in the construction of the futures images. Under these conditions it is not clear how the NLTPS exercise will differ from a more or less standard governmental planning exercise. The regional team is aware of the situation and has made some efforts to change the course of events, with little or no success up to now. When some of these points were raised by the evaluation mission with the national team members. They apparently agreed with some

of the opinions expressed to them, but showed no indication of concern or signs of possible modifications to their programme accordingly. From comments made by the regional team members, this seems to have been a constant throughout the project: Suggestions are made to the national team, the team apparently accepts them as valuable, but the course of action is not modified. During our meeting with the chairman and other two members of the «National Futures Commission», the question of their adoption of the national team's documents and proposals with no serious criticism, was raised by the evaluation mission leader. He pointed out to them that attention had not been paid by the national team even to some of the suggestions already made by members of the commission (for example, including unemployment, wealth distribution and the informal economy in the analysis).

(ii) **Gabon.**

Initial contacts with the Gabonese government were made during June, 1993. A two day seminar was held in Gabon to help in the sensitization process (75-80 participants, with press coverage). The exercise was officially launched in July 30th, 1993. An initial training session was held in July (15-17 participants). The national team was established in September 1993, being composed of four members: An economist (team leader), a geographer, a sociologist and a historian. They are all lecturers at the National University of Gabon, and are well known. Their technical capacity and commitment to the project are excellent. Additionally, the team has a manager (who works for the Ministry of Planning) in charge of the administrative matters and logistics. Two additional consultative bodies have been set up: (a) Steering Committee, chaired by the Minister of Planning (he does not attend the meetings, to avoid giving the impression that the exercise is being manipulated by the government). The acting chairman is a respected professor (ex-General Secretary of ACCT). The Steering Committee has 12 members, nominated by a presidential decree, representing different sectors of the gabonese society. The Steering Committee and the national team meet once a month to review the progress made; and (b) A Consulting Board on Prospective, constituted by around 80 members from different sectors and provinces of Gabon. This Board has met so far only once.

So far, **Phase I of the methodological framework (national aspirations) has been completed.** National aspirations were obtained through a survey. A questionnaire was applied to 523 persons during March-April, 1994. Most of the respondents were selected according to quotas derived from the latest censal information. Experts in specific fields and leaders of opinion (Assembly members, leaders of opposition parties, religious leaders, industrialists) were added to the sample polled. The survey

included 40 questions, some about the past, some about the present, some about the future. A report with the results of the survey has just been completed and it will be presented in a national seminar, in order to discuss it and validate it. Results will also be disseminated by the mass media. **No main technical or methodological difficulties were observed** during Phase I, although implementation was diffculted by the long time elapsed between the sensitization seminar and the actual beginning of the implementation process (approximately 5 months) and by political events (presidential elections) occurring at the time of implementation. The regional team's experience in Côte d'Ivoire was helpful in avoiding some technical mistakes.

Phase II of the NLTPS project has already been initiated. Some retrospective studies have already been completed. Previous retrospective studies, done in the 1980's (in particular those elaborated for the latest National Development Plan), have been used as a starting point. The studies are being done with no interference from the government (one prominent member of an opposition party has participated in the effort because of his technical capacity). Results and documents from other national and regional projects which have long term implications have been incorporated in the process (eg, the National Environmental Plan). UNDP's Resident Representative has been very active in the promotion and activities of the project and this has been of great help. The methodology proposed by the regional team has posed no difficulties to the national team. The minor adaptations which have been felt necessary have been successfully made with help from the regional team. Activities are proceeding reasonably close to the programme timetable. If this continues to be the case, **the report corresponding to Phase II of the project could be ready by October 1994** and could then be submitted to an open discussion process during November, 1994. The evaluation mission further estimates that **Phases III (construction of scenarios) and IV (strategies) will be well advanced by the first three months of the next year. The whole exercise is expected to be finished in March-April 1995, 21 months after the launching seminar.** According to this assessment, **Gabon's NLTPS is a good candidate for a «success story».** Its main weakness could be of an external nature; ie, possible changes in the government or in government officials, who up to now have been very supportive and respectful of the exercise.

(iii) **Guinea-Bissau.**

First contacts between the regional team leader and Guinea-Bissau's government were made in May, 1993, when the Project Document was signed. The national team was established in September, 1993, when a training seminar was held in Bissau. This national team is constituted by five members, including the team leader, with academic backgrounds in

economics, sociology and anthropology. Team members seem very capable and a strong team spirit can easily be appreciated. Commitment to the NLTPS project and enthusiasm by team members is very high. The team could probably profit, however, if an additional member was included with a sound background in technology and the hard sciences.

The team is based at INEP, the only independent research institution in the country, which has some 20 associate researchers. One member of the team is still formally with the National Plan Directory of the Government, and serves as a natural informal liaison with this governmental office. INEP has a great convocation power and credibility within the country, so no major difficulties are foreseen to achieve a good degree of participation in the exercise by all segments of society. Although the team was ready to start working in September, 1993, the exercise was not launched until January-February, 1994, due to lack of funding. Funds were finally provided by the Dutch Ministry of Cooperation for a 25 months period. This arrangement gives the national team total administrative and management independence from the regional team. A plural Steering Committee has also been set-up to guide the exercise. There are no visible «champions» of the project among the members of the Steering Committee; all Committee members are interested and open to the exercise, but up to now they have not played a determinant role. Relations between the national team and the Steering Committee are good, although meetings between the two have been infrequent because the Committee members have been too busy; they will probably remain so during at least the following three months, due to the coming presidential elections. The government sees the exercise as important and relevant, and is convinced that it will be able to base a four year plan on it. The UNDP Resident Representative has had no active participation in the project, but seems willing to passively support it. **Phase I (national aspirations) of the NLTPS project has already been finished.** A formal report was about to be released when the field visit took place. To obtain the national aspirations, four meetings were held in Bissau (a fifth meeting, with a military group, was planned, but it seems unlikely that it will take place), and four more were held in different regions of the country. An average of 40 to 50 people attended each of these meetings. Open discussions were held on the future challenges of the country, possible actions to be taken, and futures visions and desires, both for the country as a whole and for its different geographical regions. Each meeting lasted for approximately five hours, and minutes of the discussions were kept for each meeting. After the results of these meetings were in, the national team decided to proceed with a validation procedure for them (using population samples). The final report of Phase I should already be available. **Work has already begun on Phase II of the methodological guideline.** The national team expects to have the