



Economic and Social Council

Distr.
GENERAL

E/ECA/ECM.2/8
September 1986

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR AFRICA

Second Extra-ordinary session of the
Conference of Ministers

Addis Ababa, Ethiopia
13 - 15 October 1986

THE PROBLEM OF TECHNICAL COOPERATION IN AFRICA:

A NEW APPROACH

National Technical Cooperation Assessments and Programmes

(NATCAP)

The problem of technical co-operation in Africa:
a new approach

1. In Africa generally, and more particularly in the countries south of the Sahara, the results obtained during the past 25 years by technical co-operation have given both African governments and their partners cause for feelings of dissatisfaction and frustration. It is widely recognized that the substantial financing devoted to this type of development co-operation has helped to bring sometimes remarkable advances in certain fields, such as education. However, much of the technical assistance and other measures which African governments took for the purpose of strengthening the capacity of structures in the governmental and non-governmental sectors have not resulted in sustained institutional capacity. Many structures have not remained in place. In addition, the trained African staff have often been shifted or left. Consequently, the hoped-for self-sufficiency in human resources has not progressed adequately, and national capacities for economic management seem not to have improved in many African countries. Some officials maintain that the results of many years of effort have been quite the reverse: such capacities have often proven to be fragile, or collapsed when external aid was phased out.
2. Most technical co-operation programmes tend to become a comfortable collection of long-term projects, repeated periodically or renewed without interruption; some programmes are predominated by academic, technical or professional personnel extended for long periods to meet unfilled needs. Technical assistance programmes have also been characterized by activities covering fields unrelated to one another, or selected to satisfy a particular interest of the external financing organization of the various governmental departments concerned. Interventions typically are fragmented and not sufficiently development oriented. Additionally, programmes often reflect the preferences and energy displayed by the agencies that prepare the projects rather than the African country's priority needs as they are felt by the government itself. There are, of course, exceptions to this pessimistic view whereby coherent programmes have effectively achieved sustained results; but these exceptions are too few and it is now universally recognized that the capacities created are inadequate. In sum, positive results achieved are meagre in comparison with the very considerable efforts and resources devoted to the task in the past. Remedial action is required to make better use of resources available for strengthening human resources capacities.
3. Yet, the number of donors and lenders interested in technical co-operation and the absolute amount of funds devoted to it are increasing. This is attributable to the crisis in Africa, with the humanitarian feelings it arouses. There is also growing realization that investment projects and the implementation of economic reforms themselves need to be reinforced by national capacities for execution and therefore by a further major technical-assistance input. Thus, the World Bank and some other donors are devoting an increasing proportion of their resources to technical co-operation and to the financing of budgetary subsidies and structural adjustments with the subsidies themselves creating an increasing need for management assistance.

4. These tendencies result in an impressive amount of funds devoted to technical co-operation for Africa: more than \$3 billion in 1985. This means that technical co-operation constitutes between 25 and 35 per cent of total aid, and in some African countries more than 50 per cent of the aid they receive. In individual African countries, the externally financed portion of technical co-operation totals from \$20 million to more than \$100 million of inputs annually or as much as one-half billion dollars of technical assistance during the period of a 5 year plan. At the request of African governments, such financing is used to purchase various advisory services, training, etc. but usually with the effect of providing hundreds of expatriate experts. The management of such enormous aid flows poses a significant challenge.

5. Consequently, African governments are confronted with a very significant task. The burden falls especially on African Ministries of Planning, but of necessity also require the involvement of other core and operational ministries, and the particular involvement of other governmental units, such as those which administer the public service, and make decisions about training and fellowships. There is a widespread perception - among African government officials - that the planning and management of national human resources, expatriate experts, and technical assistance aid flows is not sufficiently co-ordinated, coherent nor systematic. However, these officials often have limited knowledge about the totality of technical assistance, nor do they have adequate means to plan, manage and monitor the programmes. Donors and African governments also acknowledge that measures must be applied which alter what is presently an ad hoc, incoherent or "donor driven" approach to prioritizing technical assistance programmes.

Prior experiences

6. In the past, various multilateral organizations and bilateral donors have made efforts to improve the relevance, effectiveness and coherence of technical assistance. Experience regrettably reveals that African governments have derived little practical benefit from most of these efforts because they have been academic, restricted to particular interests or sectors, or "one-shot" initiatives.

7. For its part, UNDP has also made efforts both in its capacity as a donor organization and as a facilitator. This has been done inter alia as a part of UNDP's multi-sectoral programming, for which it sometimes acts in collaboration with other donors. Reviews of particular subjects have also been carried out by the UN specialized agencies and UNDP which aimed at establishing a coherent list of technical-assistance needs. Thus, with regard to demography and population, the United Nations Fund for Population Activities (UNFPA) has mounted exercises in the evaluation and projection of needs often going beyond its own resources. More recently, in collaboration

with the World Bank, UNDP has undertaken a series of studies including in many African countries to determine the most urgent sector in order to determine the most urgent priorities in the energy sector, irrespective of the possible source of financing.

8. In 1984/85, also in collaboration with the World Bank, UNDP undertook to examine the validity of all of the technical-assistance programmes provided to Somalia. That "Technical Co-operation Assessment Mission in Somalia" was designed to conduct a critical review of the results obtained and to investigate new methodologies for making the work more successful. Its report was submitted to the Consultative Group for aid to Somalia which met in Paris in November 1985, and many of its recommendations are being actively discussed in Mogadishu among various lenders and with the Government of Somalia with a view to implementing them.

Foundations for the NATCAP: decisions of African and other international organizations

9. The need for concerted new approaches has repeatedly been recognized by governments. Attention focuses on what UNDP calls NATCAPs (National Technical Co-operation Assessments and Programmes). NATCAPs are a response by UNDP to Africa's Priority Programme for Economic Recovery 1986-1990, adopted at the meeting of Heads of State of the OAU in July 1985. The APPER makes the success of the Lagos Plan of Action contingent on the development of the human resources necessary for the elaboration and execution of all economic activities. That declaration also calls for a critical review of the country's human resource needs and a reform of the infrastructures and institutions in which those human resources are employed. (An extract from the APPER declaration may be found in Annex I.)

10. NATCAPs are also a response to items 1 and 10 of the checklist drawn up by the OECD Development Assistance Committee in February 1985, with a view to concerted action designed to help Sub-Saharan Africa. (The text of those two items may be found in Annex II.)

11. Further impetus was given to the NATCAP approach in the "United Nations Programme for African Economic Recovery and Development 1986-1990", adopted by consensus at the Special Session of the General Assembly in June 1986. Several sections reflect the African governments' need for improved assessments and national programmes for human resources and technical co-operation. (Relevant extracts may be found in Annex III.)

12. Members of the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) and the UNDP Governing Council have supported UNDP's efforts to assist interested African governments to conduct NATCAPs. (The text of the UNDP Governing Council explicit request in 1985 to UNDP to play this role in support of African governments is found in Annex IV.) ECOSOC's resolution in 1986 "encourages the steps being taken to conduct needs assessments as a basis for the co-ordination of all technical co-operation in support of the priority programmes of the recipient government."

National Technical Co-operation Assessments and Programmes (NATCAPs)

13. In conjunction with more than 10 African governments during 1986, UNDP has begun to take a significant new approach in order to achieve a more effective contribution to the building of human and institutional capacities in African countries. Thus, UNDP has proceeded to launch a series of exercises with interested African governments whose broad purpose is:

to enable an African government, and its aid partners, to have a practical and analytical framework for the planning, co-ordination and implementation of a cohesive and effective national programme of technical co-operation, and to make the best use of national capacities.

14. In order to achieve this purpose, the exercises have as their objectives the following:

- (a) To make a brief review of available data on technical co-operation and of its impact, past or present, and to determine its place in the macro-economic framework of the country, taking account of national capabilities and of the ways to use them to maximum advantage.
- (b) To examine, from the perspective of the African country itself, the needs for technical assistance in improving national capacities for economic management, and to set up priorities for technical assistance, irrespective of the source of financing.
- (c) To launch a process aimed at better planning, development and utilization of the African country's own human resources; and to consider, for that purpose, relevant national human resource policies and practices, as well as alternative methods of execution which would improve the effectiveness of technical co-operation and enable national institutions to develop an effective, sustainable capacity more rapidly.

15. UNDP conducts NATCAPs at the request of, and in close collaboration with, the recipient country, with the aim of increasing the national capacity to plan for and to conduct such national development efforts. In this regard, most African governments usually have national plans, investment programmes, and recurrent budgets. Yet virtually none has adequate human resources development plans nor a national programme which encompasses technical co-operation regardless of the source of financing.

16. The NATCAP exercises are in fact an expression of the basic mandate of UNDP, as an organization which is neutral and impartial between different sectors and between different political regimes. As a United Nations organ

devoted solely to technical assistance, UNDP is well suited to lead in providing assistance to African governments in this matter, being acceptable to the recipient countries and the multilateral and bilateral aid organizations.

17. The reaction of African governments to the prospect of launching NATCAP exercises has been very positive. Between December 1985 and August 1986, an initial phase of the NATCAP has been conducted in seven countries. Additionally, senior officials in many other governments which recognize the relevance and potential benefits of the NATCAP exercise have requested UNDP's assistance. Following preliminary consultation with several, NATCAPs will subsequently be phased in to assist these other interested African governments. (The status of the NATCAPs is summarized in Annex V.)

A concept in the process of definition

18. Based on the initial seven "pilot" NATCAP exercises, the concept is evolving and the methodology is intentionally not rigid. The specific formula and emphasis for each NATCAP exercise is adapted to the country circumstances and to the needs expressed by each interested African government.

19. One important principle is to assure African national expertise in NATCAP exercises in order to enhance the usefulness of the conclusions. In addition, the results of the NATCAP exercise need to be internalized and applied by the government as part of its planning and management of human resources and technical co-operation. Thus, the NATCAP in Guinea Bissau is commencing with a series of studies conducted by a local consulting firm. The first phase of the Zambia NATCAP has been implemented with the important contribution of a local co-ordinator and several surveys and studies conducted by experts from Zambian institutions including the University. In several NATCAPs, including those in Central African Republic, in Swaziland and in Burundi, the international personnel has worked as a team with national expertise, or with international experts who have been working in the country.

20. The focus of NATCAPs varies. Whereas the ultimate goal is to produce a comprehensive plan to ensure improved effectiveness and co-ordination, this is achieved in phases. The initial phase takes into account macro-economic and human resources constraints on the national level, while devoting more specific attention to only a few priority subjects determined in collaboration with the government (such as management of the economy and structural adjustments, marketing and rehabilitation of existing production capacities, or the framework for one or two priority sectors). In subsequent phases, selection of urgent problems in priority sector(s) will usually provide the practical parameters. There is also a recognized need to monitor results with regard to agreed actions. Thus, for example, priority sectors for Burundi are those identified by the Government and its donor partners at the Round Table Conference, in which reforms are being carried out. The Government of Côte d'Ivoire has chosen a particularly narrow sector related to agriculture and technology. Swaziland and Central African Republic have, in the first instance, emphasized agriculture but also other aspects of economic management and public administration.

21. It is an essential principle that each phase of the NATCAP process is intended to end with the determination of priority needs and practical actions, irrespective of the source of funds. In some cases, specific urgent technical co-operation project(s) are identified, for example, to strengthen a key institutional capacity for economic management. Other needs may be met in part by government actions, without the need to resort to technical co-operation. Improvements may require commitment by donors as well as the African governments, such as with regard to modalities of technical co-operation or the priority technical co-operation programmes themselves. NATCAPs should also lead donors to act more coherently in matters of technical co-operation and to reflect priority needs in their future actions and programmes. The formulation of these technical co-operation activities contributing most to the priority development objectives in particular sectors will be the chief concrete results of the follow-through phases of the process. Another practical result of each phase is to envisage how the NATCAP, as an integral part of government's planning, will be followed by subsequent phases or reviews.

22. The broad conclusions of NATCAP assessments and programme proposals may be submitted by the African government to a consultative meeting such as a Round Table or Consultative Group, or to an in-country sectoral or special programme consultation which increasingly characterizes the Round Table process. In fact, the NATCAP terms of reference often refer to the forum in which results are expected to be discussed by the government with its aid partners.

23. NATCAPs examine the available data concerning technical assistance, the procedures and practices of the principal donors and the effectiveness of such assistance in training national personnel capable of progressively assuming full responsibilities. One way to keep the exercises cost-effective and to fully involve all parties who are ultimately expected to be beneficiaries of the results, is that NATCAPs build upon existing evaluations and studies, as well as analyses of future needs and programme ideas. For example, many donors may have individually assessed their past experiences in general or in particular sectors. Other aid agencies, such as the ILO and UNESCO may have conducted relevant studies about labour markets, certain training and education requirements; World Bank reports have also been valuable in several regards. Consultations have taken place with the staff of the World Bank, UN organizations and agencies, as appropriate, in the preparation or implementation of NATCAPs and World Bank staff have participated in the NATCAP process. NATCAP experience already demonstrates that these are useful inputs into these ongoing exercises.

24. The NATCAP exercise is normally launched following consultations with interested African governments during which their needs and interests are expressed. NATCAP preparations in-country lead to assessment and programme exercises, the phases of which typically last 4-6 weeks in-country. Usually workshops are planned with government officials, and often, interested aid partners are involved in briefings about NATCAP conclusions and recommendations. The timing for follow-up stages of the NATCAP vary, usually after an interval of several months depending on needs and the phasing of other planning and aid consultation activity.

25. In conclusion, the concept of NATCAP is flexible and action-oriented, with goals which vary from country to country. Planners must progressively identify needs for the best utilization of national human resources in priority sectors, the means to develop personnel, and ways to obtain improved benefits from technical assistance. This cannot be accomplished in one step, for one sector alone, nor with the help of one mission. A planning process is required within the macro-economic framework, policies and strategies of each country. A national view of a country's total technical co-operation, of its effectiveness, and its future shape and content needs to be adopted and the conclusions need to be justified on the basis of critical assessment and a comprehensive formulation effort conducted so that Africa governments have an improved planning and management tool for technical assistance, irrespective of the particular donor.

26. This unique combination of principles in the NATCAP approach, now being demonstrated in several African countries, suggests that NATCAPs respond to a deeply felt need for practical solutions. The response to the initial offer to assist interested African governments in launching such NATCAP exercises underscores the promising opportunities to strengthen their capacities to plan and manage this aspect of their economic development. The evidence also suggests that the NATCAP exercise can facilitate mutual agreement about medium-term technical co-operation policies, modalities and programmes. Clearly, the respective African and United Nations programmes for action with regard to African economic development place considerable attention on human resources and improved effectiveness of technical co-operation. It remains for interested African governments, with the support of UNDP and other relevant partners, to build upon and apply the lessons and the results of these National Technical Co-operation Assessment and Programming exercises.

Extract from "Africa's Priority Programme for Economic Recovery,"
adopted by the twenty-first regular session of the Conference of
Heads of State and Government of the Organization of African
Unity - Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, 18-20 July 1985

(C) Human Resources

31. The attainment of the objectives of the LPA and FAL depends, in the final analysis, on the development of the wide range of human resources required for the formulation, implementation and monitoring of programmes covering the entire spectrum and sectoral activities in the economic development process. To this end, the following measures are proposed:

32. Short-term Measures

- (i) each African country should undertake a critical assessment of the overall and sectoral manpower requirements for the implementation of its economic development plan and, on the basis of the assessment, re-adjust existing manpower development policies and programmes and institutional infrastructures;

Medium and Long-term Measures

33. The institutional infrastructure for manpower development and utilization should be streamlined and reinforced, and innovative approaches to the mobilization of financial resources for manpower development should be adopted.

OECD Development Assistance Committee - Extract from the Checklist for
Concerted Action in Sub-Saharan Africa
(February 1985)

1. Co-ordination within improved policy framework. DAC Members will co-operate fully with developing countries in the process of improved aid co-ordination now being launched by the international lead agencies, especially the World Bank and UNDP. A central new emphasis of the aid co-ordination process is to strengthen co-operation to improve recipient countries' macroeconomic and sectoral policies, investment and public expenditure programmes, and policy-making and implementing institutions.

10. Reassessments of technical assistance priorities. Recognizing that economic policy decisions and programmes designed to activate production must be developed under the responsibility of developing countries themselves and that they will be insufficient without national capacities to implement such measures, DAC Members will encourage Governments of sub-Saharan African countries to reassess their current needs, resources and priorities for institutional and manpower development and to establish national programmes in these fields. DAC Members look to the United Nations Resident Co-ordinators to instigate such reassessments and to assist in mobilizing expert assistance to African Governments for this purpose, including contributions by United Nations agencies, multilateral development banks and bilateral aid programmes, as may be requested by the Governments concerned. DAC Members are prepared to reorient and co-ordinate their technical assistance in support of such authoritative and systematically determined national priorities and to advocate in the governing bodies of international agencies a similarly responsive attitude by these agencies.

Extract from the "United Nations Programme of Action for African Economic Recovery and Development 1986-1990," adopted by the Special Session of the General Assembly, 1 June 1986

1. (d) Human resources development, planning and utilization

(i) Human resources

African Governments fully recognize that central to the successful implementation of the proposed actions is the efficient development, planning and utilization of human resources and the full and effective participation of the people in the development process. In this regard, African Governments are adopting (the following) comprehensive policies for human resource planning, development and utilization with a view to integrating these within the framework of overall national development policies and plans:

2. (iv) Participation of the people in development

Special attention will be accorded to the role played by human resources. Policies will need to be pursued to ensure the effective development and utilization of human resources in all fields and sectors ...

3. (a) Strengthening the institutional framework

Proper social and economic management will only materialize if African countries urgently strengthen their social and economic institutions at all levels. To this end, African national and multinational institutions will be made more responsive to the challenges of development through the improvement of their management systems, rationalization of their activities and elimination of duplication of efforts.

4. (v) In planning and implementing programmes of assistance, special consideration be given to the indigenous competence, expertise, experience, local conditions, particularly local techniques and equipment as well as to the training of qualified national personnel;

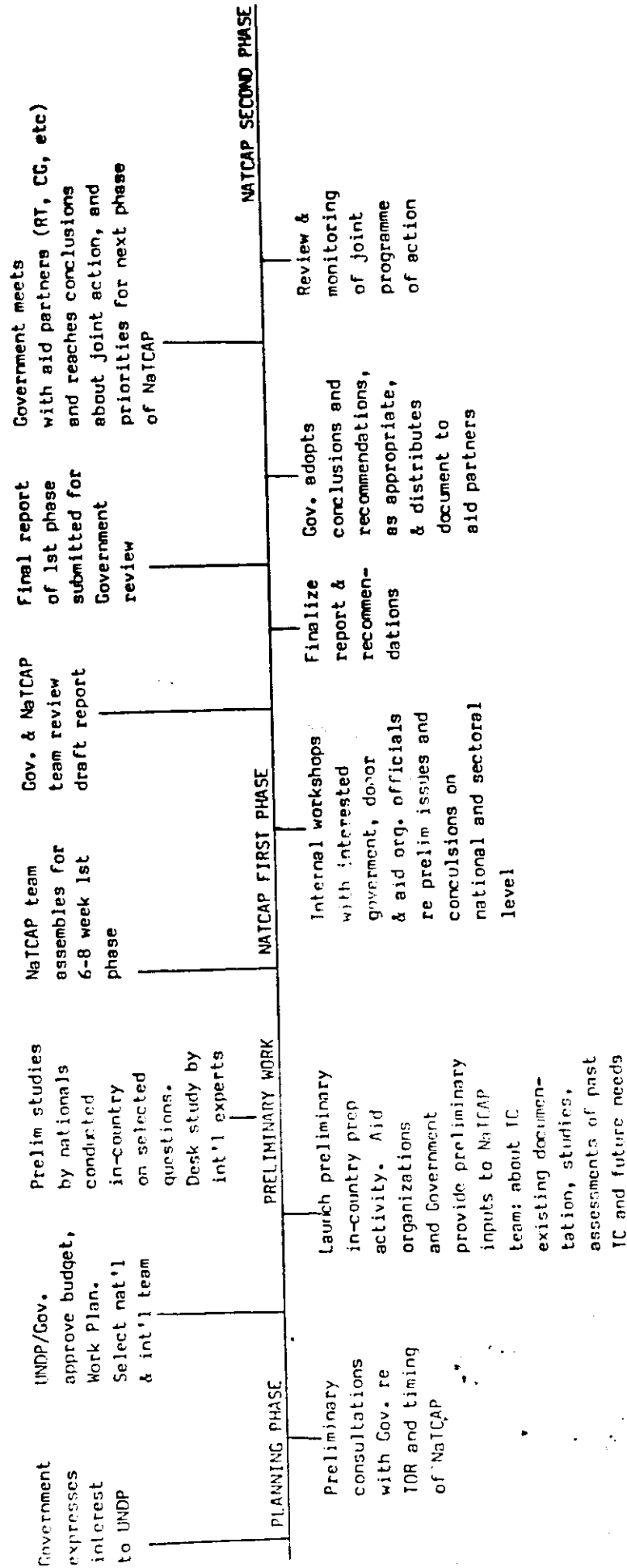
(vi) Evolve more effective and efficient co-ordination methods in order to ensure a greater impact of aid policies;

(vii) Improve the effectiveness of technical assistance and make it more responsive to the needs and priorities of the African countries;

Extract of UNDP Governing Council Resolution 85/12
"Strengthening the response to the Crisis in Africa", June 1985

"3. Further requests the Administrator to strengthen the United Nations Development Programme's assistance to African Governments, at their request, in conducting systematically the necessary assessments of technical co-operation requirements and in helping them to establish national programmes for priority human resources development and technical co-operation, which can serve, inter alia, as a basis for strengthening public-sector management and also improving the country programmes of assistance financed by the United Nations Development Programme during the fourth programming cycle and a framework for more co-ordinated and more effective technical co-operation from all aid partners;"

TIME FRAME FOR NATCAP EXERCISE



Update on the NATCAPs

1. The concept of National Technical Co-operation Assessments and Programmes (NATCAP) was derived from UNDP's experiences and consultations with governments in Sub-Saharan Africa, and from the declarations and decisions of the OAU, the General Assembly, the OECD/DAC, and the UNDP Governing Council.

2. Provisional operational information was circulated by UNDP's Regional Bureau for Africa in October 1985. Since that time, practical progress has occurred to implement the first NATCAP exercises during what is regarded as a pilot phase. Special Programme Resources are allocated to facilitate these initial NATCAPs.

3. UNDP/RBA's intention in launching the pilot NATCAPs has been to identify a group of interested African countries in which the circumstances for NATCAPs are opportune, and to execute at least the initial phase of approximately 8 NATCAP exercises in 1986.

4. Preliminary consultations have been completed between November 1985 and September 1986 with the governments of eleven African countries to determine the feasibility of carrying out a NATCAP exercise. Senior officials of several other countries have expressed firm interest to launch a NATCAP. These governments have expressed their interest to have UNDP help them conduct the requisite analyses, with national and international expertise as appropriate, and to prepare step-by-step what will eventually amount to a national programme of technical co-operation, regardless of the source of funding. Priority themes and sectors have been identified as the focus to launch the NATCAP process in each country. Relevant assessments and proposals previously prepared by the government, donors or UN agencies are systematically being taken into account, and their involvement in the follow-up is envisaged.

5. A first phase of NATCAP took place in Zambia in April-May 1986. A team worked in Burundi in February-March 1986 and further consultations as part of a planning process have taken place in July and September. Field work for the initial phase for Central African Republic was completed in May 1986. The NATCAP in Swaziland was conducted in July 1986. The first phase of the Guinea NATCAP is being carried out in September 1986 following initial technical assistance. Preliminary work is proceeding in stages during 1986 for the NATCAP in Guinea Bissau, with the collaboration of local consultants and UNDP missions. A NATCAP-type exercise will commence in Côte d'Ivoire, focusing initially on a priority sector, beginning in October 1986. Preliminary missions to plan NATCAPs are expected soon for Ghana and Sierra Leone, and thereafter for Mauritania.