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LIFE
LOCAL INITIATIVE FACILITY FOR URBAN ENVIRONEMENT

GLOBAL EVALUATION RESULTS and RECOMMENDATIONS
Executive Summary

LIFE/MDGD/BDP/UNDP
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LOCAL INITIATIVE FACILITY FOR URBAN ENVIRONEMENT
(LIFE)
GLOBAL EVALUATION¹ RESULTS and RECOMMENDATIONS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

I. BACKGROUND: LIFE GLOBAL PROGRAMME

In 1990, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) adopted the mandate of Sustainable Human Development (SHD). The issues that are crucial for ensuring SHD are: Poverty elimination, Gender equity, Employment creation, Environmental improvement and Sound governance. UNDP defines governance as an exercise of social, political, economic and administrative authority to manage a society's affairs and a process that requires the participation of government, civil society and private sector. Good governance has many attributes. It is participatory, transparent and accountable and it is effective in making the best use of resources and is equitable.

Based on the concept of SHD, UNDP launched the Local Initiative Facility for Urban Environment (LIFE) as a global pilot programme at the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro in 1992. Its primary objective is to promote and demonstrate local-local dialogue and participatory community-based solutions to the environmental problems in poor areas and help influence policies. It uses environmental deprivation as the entry point for achieving sustainable human development. While it seeks to provide the poor with improved living conditions, it aims to strengthen community-based organizations, NGOs and local authorities; empower poor and the women by involving them in all phases of the programme and promote their social and political empowerment, participation and integration in the development and local governance processes.

PROGRAMME OBJECTIVES

The LIFE programme was designed during 1991-92, in the period leading up to the Earth Summit. Three broad objectives were identified for the LIFE pilot programme:

- To demonstrate local solutions to urban environmental problems and strengthen institutional capacities and collaborations through small-scale projects involving CBOs, NGOs, and local authorities at the neighbourhood, city and country levels
- To facilitate policy dialogue based on local initiatives
- To promote the exchange of successful approaches and innovations at the sub-regional, regional and inter-regional levels.

¹ The independent global evaluation of the LIFE programme was conducted by a team of five international consultants supported by ten national consultants. The international consultants were : Dr. Meera Bapat (Team Leader) ; Ms. Marlene Fernandes, Dr. Salimata Wade, Mr. Babar Mumtaz and Mr. George Walters

LIFE APPROACH: UPSTREAM – DOWNSTREAM - UPSTREAM

In order to demonstrate local solutions to urban environmental problems and strengthen partnerships, LIFE developed a three-stage approach: upstream – downstream - upstream that uses “local-local” dialogue to address the environmental problems of the urban poor. At the core of this approach are small projects designed, implemented and operated by local CBOs, NGOs, and local authorities. The first upstreaming phase begins by formulating a national framework and strategy for identifying and prioritising urban environmental objectives. It then moves downstream to select and provide small grants to local organizations to implement participatory environmental projects in poor neighbourhoods. These small projects act as “policy experiments” and a setting for bringing various partners together in dialogue and collaborative efforts. The results and lessons of small projects are used to initiate policy level dialogue so that they are upstreamed to influence policies that could further support scaling up, transfer and generation of new local and community-based initiatives. The “local-local” dialogue is the primary tool of the LIFE programme. Its objective is to generate extensive participation and partnerships at all levels of the programme.

PROGRAMME ORGANIZATION

In order to meet the programme objectives and to maximise learning, 12 countries with varied contexts in the five developing regions were selected. At the same time, it was considered necessary to learn from various other local participatory approaches for urban environmental improvements that are being developed and implemented by other organisations at regional, inter-regional and global level. The LIFE programme was, therefore, organized at the country, regional and global level in the following manner.

Country Level: To demonstrate and test the efficacy of the LIFE programme, 12 pilot countries were selected from the five developing regions. Seven countries were chosen in Phase I and five countries were added in Phase II (see table below).

Phases	Asia-Pacific	Africa	Latin America	Arab States	EE/CIS
Phase I 1992-93	Thailand Pakistan	Senegal Tanzania	Brazil Jamaica	Egypt	-----
Phase II 1993-95	Bangladesh	South Africa	Columbia	Lebanon	Kyrgyzstan

The efficacy of the LIFE approach is tested through implementing small-scale projects that are need-based and participatory, and deal with some of the environmental problems defined by LIFE as a priority and promote women’s participation. The maximum limit for funding provided for a project was US \$ 50,000. The results of the small-scale projects are to be used to influence local participatory process and policies.

Regional and Inter-Regional Level: Simultaneously to the country level demonstration and pilot programme, in consultation with the UNDP regional Bureaux, regional and inter-regional networks of NGOs and Cities Associations were selected to receive grants to document and share successes, innovate and test new methodologies, build regional

capacity and initiate regional, inter-regional and global dialogue on cutting edge urban environmental participation and partnership issues.

Global Level: As the LIFE approach marks a departure from the usual UNDP approach, global activities were designed to provide maximum possible support and substantive advice to strengthen the demonstration effort of the 12 pilot countries; develop partnerships for regional and inter-regional innovations and dialogue and to document evaluate and disseminate results and lessons at country and regional levels and contribute in global learning and advocacy for participatory community –based process and local governance.

FINANCIAL SUPPORT

Global financial support has come from UNDP along with governments of Sweden, Netherlands, Germany and Denmark. At the country level additional support has been provided by public and private organizations in those countries as well as international donors that have specific interest in particular countries. UNOPS provides the financial management services and monitors expenditures of the global LIFE funds.

EXTERNAL EVALUATION OF LIFE GLOBAL PROGRAMME

The present evaluation of the LIFE global programme covered the period 1992 – April 1999 and included all the activities of the LIFE programme undertaken at the country, regional and global levels in the first, second and third phases of the Programme.

Evaluation Objectives: The evaluation of the LIFE Global Programme was done with the following objectives:

- Assess the overall outcomes and results of LIFE at the country, regional and global levels.
- Identify the conditions that helped or did not help in achieving LIFE objectives
- Enable various stakeholders in making forward looking programmatic choices for improving participatory local governance and improving the living conditions of the poor.

Evaluation Procedure: The evaluation covered ten of the twelve pilot countries in which the LIFE programme has been implemented. It excluded Bangladesh and South Africa where the programme started in 1997. Three formats for in-depth information collection were developed to assist the consultants and to maintain uniformity in approach. The 10 country pilot programmes were evaluated by four independent international consultants who were supported by ten independent national consultants. Each country's results, lessons and recommendations have been reported in country specific reports. The assessment of regional, inter-regional and global activities was based on the progress and project reports and interviews of key global actors by an international consultant, who, also reviewed the evaluation results and lessons of the other UNDP global programmes on related issues such as the: GEF-Small Grants programme, Africa 2000, Partners in Development Programme (PDP) and Public –Private Partnerships for Urban Environment

(PPPUE). These lessons were taken into account while drawing global lessons and recommendations. This global report is a comprehensive synthesis of evaluation results, lessons and recommendations at the country, regional and global levels. However, the following summary of the results is being presented largely in accordance to the broad evaluation questions mentioned in the LIFE Global Evaluation Aide Memoire.

II. RESULTS AND LESSONS FROM TEN PILOT COUNTRIES

Of the ten countries in which the LIFE programme was evaluated, seven (Brazil, Thailand, Jamaica, Egypt, Pakistan, Tanzania and Senegal) started the programme in the first phase and three (Colombia, Lebanon and Kyrgyzstan) were added in the second phase. All the pilot countries uniformly applied LIFE's three - stage implementation approach to meet the objectives mentioned above. The countries represents a wide range of differences in their geographical size, demographic and economic characteristics, socio-political situation and the level of maturity of democratic institutions. Each country presents a unique case for testing the LIFE approach and methodology.

MANAGEMENT AND COORDINATION MECHANISMS AT THE COUNTRY LEVEL

At the country level, the programme is coordinated by National Coordinators who in some cases are located in UNDP offices and in majority of the cases in NGOs working very closely with the UNDP country offices. All decisions related to programme strategy, implementation and management are taken locally by the National Selection Committee (NSC) and the National Coordinator (NC). The NSC and the NC are crucial for shaping, guiding and managing the LIFE programme. The NSC in each country comprises multi stakeholders, UNDP country office being one of the stakeholders. The rationale for setting up the NSC was to introduce broad-based accountability in programme management and to select small-scale projects, facilitate the sharing of expertise, encourage partnerships, link projects to policy levels and influence changes.

How effective were National Selection Committees?

- The members in most NSC are part of individual country's intellectual capital and development practitioners. NGOs and CBOs are the highest representative sector, followed by the national government. Women have representation on the NSCs in all the countries. In the third phase, the NSC in many countries was reconstituted to play more strategic role and was renamed as national steering committee.
- The functions of the NSC given in the mandate are wide ranging, On the whole, they provided support in building capacity, monitoring projects, diffusing information, etc. However due to lack of travel funds, lack of time, the NSCs in most countries could not provide the dynamic leadership that is expected by the programme. Jamaica seems to be an exception, where the NSC led the entire LIFE process.
- With the increase in the geographic coverage and increased activities, the NSC are alone not able to cope with all the functions. There is a need to set up supporting committees. They can be in the form of an Executive Committee (as in Jamaica),

Local Steering Committees in individual project cities (as in Colombia) or Regional Committees, depending on the country context.

- Given the importance of the role of local authorities in promoting the objectives of the LIFE programme, they need to be involved more closely from the beginning in the NSC and supporting committees.
- The NSC has a crucial role in scaling up LIFE activities and institutionalizing the lessons learnt from small-scale projects. It needs to be more active towards this end and devise effective strategies for advocacy.

What was the contribution of National Coordinators?

- The NCs in all the countries have made a significant contribution to guiding the programme. Within the overall framework of the programme they have had the autonomy to shape it and focus on the concerns they consider important. Each NC has made her/his mark on the programme. In order to make their role even more effective orientation in policy matters and training to perform as policy catalysts could be very helpful.
- In comparison with the multiple demands and functions of the LIFE programme it has very limited staff. There is a need to increase the field staff so that small-scale projects can be monitored and provided necessary inputs more frequently to enhance their impact.

SMALL-SCALE PROJECTS: A MECHANISM TO REACH THE POOR

Until the end of 1998, a total of 216 projects were funded in 71 cities and towns of the ten countries. The mechanism of small-scale projects has been an effective tool to elicit and invite requests from CBOs, NGOs and local authorities to participate in the LIFE programme. By using small-scale projects related to environmental improvement as an entry point, the LIFE programme has been able to demonstrate solutions to urban environmental problems as well as empower communities to get involved in local governance. It has been able to encourage the formation of community organizations even in countries where civil society was not active. In some of the pilot countries LIFE was the first programme that recognized the role of CBOs in community development.

Did small-scale projects reach the poor and improve their environmental conditions?

- Small-scale projects reached the poor in most cases and addressed some pressing needs such as water supply, drainage, sanitation, garbage removal. Solid waste was the most common theme of the projects. In many instances they had an obvious and immediate impact on improving the environment and living conditions of low-income communities. The projects directly benefited 1,288,513 people and indirectly more than 5,298,184.
- Small-scale projects provided concrete and real grounds for building community capacity and motivated other stakeholders to come together to work.
- They demonstrated that community-based initiatives are able to influence policies, change mindsets of communities and civic officials and create new institutional mechanisms. For instance, in Jamaica National Sanitation Task Force was created. In

Tanzania to promote community initiatives, a law was passed that requires local authorities to devote 10 per cent of their revenue to support income generating activities led by women and youth. In Thailand several local authorities established community development departments to facilitate popular participation.

Did the projects contributed in improving income of the poor?

- Although income improvement was not a direct objective of the Programme, environmental improvement of degraded areas had an economic impact in terms of improved health resulting in reduced expenditure on curative health and increased productivity, thus contributing to poverty alleviation.
- Some of the projects resulted in creating a few temporary jobs. They provided, in addition to small financial benefits, an opportunity to workers to learn new techniques and skills that increased their employability. They also encouraged youth to get involved in community work and gain recognition for their contribution that boosted their self-esteem.
- A small number of projects explicitly promoted income generation activities. Other than waste recycling and reuse only a few other economic activities were set up. In a few cases such as Brazil, the income generation was an integral part of the project design. While in Senegal, after recognizing the importance of income generation for ensuring sustainability of projects, community groups requested for help in setting up savings and credit groups and economic activities such as a poultry farm, a plant nursery that would be managed by the community. It would be useful to study if such integrated projects were better sustained in the long run.

Did small -scale projects strengthen CBOs and NGOs?

- In all 216 small-scale projects were implemented. Their most significant impact was on community level organisations. They helped the formation of new formal groups and strengthening of existing organisations. The exercise of formulating projects, managing and implementing them helped build capacities of NGOs and CBOs to engage in developmental activities. Community leaders got wider exposure to new processes and actors. There are instances of community groups continuing to pursue larger and perhaps more difficult issues such as land tenure in Jamaica, peace building process in Colombia and collection of municipal tax and user fee in Tanzania.
- Community groups were able to derive credibility and prestige, especially vis a vis local authorities, by being associated with LIFE and UNDP. Successful implementation of projects enhanced self-confidence among the people and contributed to lessening of their social exclusion.
- Improved physical environment removed some of the points of friction and led to more harmonious relations between community members. This contributed to providing motivation to sustain collective action.
- In some projects, inadequate preparation and insufficient information given to communities resulted in a lack of involvement on their part. Projects that were not relevant to people's immediate needs also led to lack of interest. Greater care in project design and selection is necessary to ensure that communities are motivated to participate. A strategically supported small project of building a walkway along a canal in Thailand is an illustration of a carefully chosen project that has a potential of

creating a significant long-term impact. It helped diffuse tension between the local authority and community groups, lessen the threat of eviction of squatters living on the canal banks, turn confrontation into cooperation, motivate the people to improve the environment and, more importantly, contributed to building a larger network across several cities.

How did local authorities respond to community initiatives?

- The degree of municipal involvement in projects varied in countries, however wherever involved, the municipalities got introduced to participatory method of functioning and its advantages for effective service delivery. In Tanzania, small-scale projects provided a means of revenue generation for local authorities and this motivated their greater involvement. In Thailand local authorities responded by setting up community development departments. Local authorities in other countries such as Pakistan, Tanzania and Lebanon have shown willingness to collaborate with NGOs. This marks a beginning of instituting participatory local governance.
- The small number of small-scale projects that were implemented by municipalities tended to be somewhat limited to fulfilling the narrow objective of the projects. They did not contribute much to achieving the wider social objective of community empowerment. In order to achieve the social objectives of the programme and ensure continuity of social processes, it is essential to build the capacity of civic officials to equip them to perform the role of facilitators of community development.

How can the impact of small-scale projects be enhanced?

- The experience of some of the projects demonstrated that it is not always possible to isolate the question of improving the local environment from the larger issue of environmental protection. Possibilities of real improvements, therefore, do not always lie within the sphere of community-based small projects. Hazard-prone and inferior locations that poor communities are often compelled to occupy illustrate the linkage of their problems to larger question of exclusion and social injustice. To address such problems involvement of local authorities and other government agencies is essential. More importantly, building the capacity of communities to address such larger issues as land tenure and access to facilities needs to be built in as part of the strategy of community development. There is evidence to show that this is happening in some instances and that LIFE has contributed to such efforts.
- The design of the projects, while keeping environmental improvement as a focus could also take into account the objective of income generation and social empowerment.
- By and large, individual projects remained isolated from each other. By not making particular efforts to link them an opportunity to enhance their impact was lost. There is a need to design strategies to link the projects. Creating local committees as shown by the case of Tanzania may help link projects and create dialogue between different actors.
- A problem identified in relation to some projects concerns the possibility of the impact dying out after some time. This was the case with projects that undertook campaigns regarding cleaner environment. In the absence of facilities to put the campaign message into practice the impact did not last long. There is a need to follow up campaigns with concrete projects.

- In some cases there is a doubt regarding the long-term sustainability of small-scale projects that arises from circumstances outside the control of communities but about which project managers could have been more aware. Such a problem is likely to affect solid waste management projects in Lebanon where there are difficulties in the recycling of the collected waste. This shows the danger of supply driven development efforts and emphasises the need to design projects keeping in view the wider perspective.

DIALOGUE, PARTICIPATION, PARTNERSHIP AND LOCAL GOVERNANCE

LIFE is seeking to redefine dialogue as multi-logue of stakeholders who become partners in planning and implementing change at all levels and establishing a new basis for good governance. At the community level LIFE was able to promote consistent and substantive local –local dialogue and participation leading the poor communities to build partnerships to improve their living conditions. The extent to which they could engage in participatory governance, however, was dependent on the responsiveness of local authorities. Dialogue was found to be an important factor in bringing partners together and contributed in building partnerships. In most countries, LIFE played the role of a facilitator of dialogue and a broker of partnerships.

Did the LIFE programme promote local-local dialogue?

- In all countries the LIFE programme through the intermediary of the NC and the NSC acted as a facilitator of social dialogue that contributed to the breaking of walls between different groups. Some of the groups did not know each other before and in some cases were biased against one another or were even adversaries. In addition to CBOs, NGOs and local authorities other actors with whom dialogue was established included private foundations, universities, Chamber of Commerce, Red Cross etc.
- Meaningful dialogue was established mainly between CBOs, NGOs in all the pilot countries and with local authorities in some countries. Thailand is a good example of enhanced dialogue between local authorities and community groups. This is now happening in Pakistan also. Dialogue with local authorities and government agencies improved in several countries but not sufficiently to facilitate active involvement of communities and CBOs in participatory governance. In most countries the private sector did not show much interest in engaging in dialogue with NGOs and CBOs. There is a need to make efforts to build shared goals and vision with the private sector. Purposeful dissemination of achievements of LIFE projects may create possibilities of opening a dialogue with the private sector. Increased capacity of NGOs and CBOs as a result of participating in LIFE projects and successful completion of projects may also help in this respect.

Did LIFE promote partnerships between diverse actors?

- The LIFE programme promoted partnerships between a variety of actors. In some countries such as Kyrgyzstan LIFE pioneered the concept of partnership. In Egypt, LIFE introduced a culture of partnerships and with support from Ebert Foundation organized several events to bring various stakeholders in dialogue. This has resulted in the establishment of a national level Partners Group on environmental issues.

- In most countries the largest number of partnerships was between CBOs, NGOs and to some extent with local authorities, for example in Thailand, Lebanon and now in Pakistan. In Brazil the NC successfully matched the interest of LIFE with those of potential partners. The best example of this is the association with a private university. LIFE provided opportunities for the faculty and students to work on real community-based projects. In Colombia, partnerships is one of the strong point of the LIFE programme, where effective partnerships between private foundations and CBOs could be achieved. Largely this was possible because of the close involvement of the NC in the local social fabric, her persistence and the credibility she enjoys in society. In Thailand the Chamber of Commerce, a local branch of the Red Cross and faculty members from a university who were working together as a civil society group were supported by LIFE for some of their activities.
- In Pakistan the LIFE methodology provided a new vision and alternative to NGOs that had hitherto been largely charity and social welfare oriented. A tried and tested technique and process of solid waste management and low-cost sanitation developed by an NGO provided a model for other groups to follow. LIFE and local NGOs provided the bridge necessary to reach the poor by linking municipal solid waste management with community collection.
- In Thailand, the LIFE programme has formally integrated its budget for 1999 with that of the Municipal League of Thailand (which is composed of representatives of elected members from municipalities). They will jointly undertake the training of municipal staff, replication of LIFE projects, dissemination of information on best practices, technical support etc. This partnership has potential of introducing the LIFE methodology in municipalities across the country. If that happens it will advance participatory local governance.

CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT AND COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT

Capacity development is a key to fulfilling the objectives of LIFE. Most of the capacity building was at two levels. One, at the community and CBO level and second at the local authority and government and other stakeholders level. The nature of capacity building that was needed in each country was determined by several factors. They included the presence or absence of community groups actively involved with environmental issues, the level of experience of NGOs and CBOs and the presence or absence of mature NGOs that can impart training and guidance.

What efforts were made to develop capacities of diverse actors?

- In all countries, initially a lot of effort had to be done to build the capacity of the NGOs, CBOs and the communities to design proposals. In Kyrgyzstan since the whole process of community-based environmental improvement was a new experience, the NC and the NSC had to engage in capacity building of communities right from project identification to formulation and implementation. The need for creating formal organisations and management of projects helped empower communities. In Thailand and Senegal existing community organisations consolidated their capacities further through participating in LIFE projects.

- The experience of formulating and implementing LIFE projects had an empowering impact on the communities involved. This, however, is the first step in the process of capacity building that can lead to real improvement in the living conditions. They need to build the confidence and capacity to get involved in larger developmental issues that can contribute to sustainable human development. Experience shows that to address more substantive aspects of capacity development requires conscious efforts and strategies. In Colombia the LIFE programme started with intensive capacity building efforts as it was felt that people needed to be equipped to participate and take responsibilities in the development process. In nearly 100 training workshops that were organised more than 15000 people, 50 CBOs, 40 NGOs, 82 civic officials, 118 representatives of national agencies and 10 private organisations participated. The success of this capacity building effort inspired the Governor of Bolivar to invite the NC to take the responsibility to develop social and environmental capacity of six municipalities that are worst hit by violence.
- The LIFE programme contributed to building the capacity of NGOs that hosted the programme. They had an opportunity to coordinate a much larger programme than they normally handled. They interacted with a number of different actors and policy makers. They had exposure to new concepts and techniques.
- Community empowerment and leadership development is the strongest outcome of small-scale projects in almost all the pilot countries and it can be regarded as the most significant contribution of LIFE.

DISSEMINATION AND ADVOCACY

It is critically important that the information on small-scale projects and their achievements is widely disseminated in order to promote their replication and scaling up and advocate for policy change. In the programme design documentation and dissemination has been left to the third phase and has not progressed much till the evaluation was conducted. The dissemination efforts in the first two phases were sporadic and not planned. Whatever dissemination of information that has taken so far has occurred through word of mouth, to a small extent through exchange visits and minimally through media coverage in all the pilot countries except Lebanon and Kyrgyzstan.

How was information on LIFE disseminated and what impact did it have?

- In Lebanon the press coverage following the National Consultations and the Media Workshop held in 1998 were instrumental in spreading the LIFE message. The all women project concerning solid waste management gained national publicity. The leader of the CBO was given an award. This too caught the attention of the media. The press coverage inspired other communities to follow the women's example. Salient milestones in and completion of small-scale projects were also used for publicising LIFE and its objectives.
- In Kyrgyzstan the presence of the media at the NSC meetings was a powerful tool for gaining publicity to the LIFE programme. LIFE has also been responsible for hosting a number of events aimed at disseminating information regarding LIFE and environmental message. One impact of this has been the increase in interest among communities, CBOs and NGOs to participate in LIFE projects. In 1996 there were 65

project applications, in 1997 there were 102 and in 1998, 135 applications were received.

- The examples of Lebanon and Kyrgyzstan show that timely and effective dissemination of information could facilitate fundraising, partnership, replication and policy influence. It is important that dissemination also reaches poor communities so that they get motivated to follow good practices of their peers. Effective documentation and forceful dissemination strategies will help both these processes.
- Most countries published and distributed a brochure on the LIFE programme. Each country has developed in-depth case studies on selected small-scale projects, and is now planning to use these for systematic dissemination to advocate for scaling up and influence mind sets and policies. Brazil, Jamaica and Pakistan have developed their own web pages to widely disseminate their experiences. Egypt has a newsletter and others are professionalising their dissemination efforts.

REPLICATION AND SCALING UP AT COUNTRY LEVEL

To what extent did replication and scaling-up of small-scale projects take place?

- Local authorities and government agencies in some of the pilot countries have shown interest in supporting the replication of small-scale projects. In Colombia as a result of dissemination of information on the LIFE process the Governor of the province of Bolivar has sought the help of the NC in implementing small-scale projects in municipalities in the conflict torn zone. In Egypt the Ministry of Youth has been sufficiently impressed with LIFE to announce a grant for the implementation of youth-based environmental improvement projects in each of the 26 Governorates. In Thailand the collaboration of LIFE with the Municipal League of Thailand is aimed at introducing the LIFE methodology in municipalities across the country. In Pakistan the UNDP Country Office has taken the lead to scale up LIFE projects to municipal level.
- There are not many instances of scaling up so far. In Brazil the project concerning solid waste management undertaken by an NGO and supported by the local authority in Belo Horizonte is a successful example of scaling up. The local authority plans to increase the number of participants and amount of waste collected. The scaling up will benefit the city by rendering it cleaner and improving the quality of the environment as well as by reducing the amount of waste to be carted to dumpsites and the cost of treatment. It will allow the NGO to reach an operational scale that will enable it to sell the waste directly to recycling industries and fetch better prices.
- NSC members who have been strategically chosen have an important role in replication and scaling up. Networking with strategically located NGOs can also help in this respect. It is too early to gauge the impact of their efforts.
- In most countries projects were formulated and selected without serious thought given to replication and sustainability. As the Jamaica report states small-scale projects were viewed as demonstration projects and, as such, they were neither designed nor planned for expansion. In spite of this there are instances replication in most countries. This process could be made more effective if projects are planned with this perspective, and strategies that promote replication and scaling up are made integral to project implementation and coupled with advocacy and efforts to involve local authorities.

- Rather than leaving the function of influencing policy to the third phase of the programme as presently designed it could be more effective to start advocating the need for change much earlier in the programme. For instance, in Jamaica a policy dialogue organised in 1997 to discuss policy and strategies for providing cost-effective sanitation resulted in setting up of National Sanitation Task Force. It has gained credibility within a short time and has potential to influence policy in the country.

INFLUENCE ON POLICIES AND PRACTICE

Has the LIFE programme been able to influence national policies and practice?

- Influencing policies is a slow and a gradual process. There are a number of instances across the pilot countries that illustrate that small but significant changes have taken place that indicate the influence of LIFE on policies.
- In Thailand a number of municipalities, as a result of their interaction with the LIFE programme, have established community development departments to facilitate popular participation and to support community initiative.
- In Jamaica the Local Governments Reform Programme is using the LIFE methodology to promote community participation in local governance. The Portmore Gardens project in Jamaica is to be presented to Parliament as a model for solving settlement and land tenure problems.
- In Senegal the Hygiene service is strongly influenced by the LIFE approach and has adopted it in the areas where it is presently constructing toilets and providing potable water.
- In Pakistan the UNDP country office has taken the lead to institutionalise the LIFE approach and has started two projects that involve cooperation between local authorities and citizens.
- In Tanzania local authorities are impressed by the LIFE methodology because it has been able to change the mindset of the people and made them willing to pay for services. To promote small-scale projects a law has been passed that requires local authorities to devote 10 per cent of their revenue to support income generation activities led by women and youth.
- In Colombia the NC has been invited by the Governor of Bolivar to take part in the drafting of the Peace Plan for the province.
- These examples show that there has been a change in official perceptions regarding community-based initiatives and recognition of their potential for improving environmental situation in cities. The impact of the LIFE programme is small but significant. The experience so far suggests that the process of policy change is slow and gradual. Efforts to influence policy, therefore, rather than being left for the third phase, need to form an integral part of all the phases of the programme.

SUSTAINABILITY OF LIFE

What efforts are being made to sustain the LIFE process and programme?

- Sustainability of the LIFE programme is a serious concern in all pilot countries. The uncertainty surrounding continuation of support has been damaging. There is a need to further consolidate the gains made so far so that the process of institutionalisation

that is in its initial stages will not be inhibited. Most countries are working out strategies or have made tentative plans to sustain the programme. These strategies are unique to the countries and depend on their contexts and the window of opportunities that exist there.

- Jamaica has prepared a strategic plan to explore the possibility of using the LIFE experience of working with poor communities to market the services to the government and other clients. Another possibility is to create a Trust Fund that will ensure sustainability of LIFE.
- In Pakistan there is an "Exit Strategy" proposal under preparation by the NC that is currently under discussion and debate at the UNDP to find ways to continue partnerships and dialogue at various levels after the end of the LIFE programme. Funding for this initiative is forthcoming from one of the provincial governments and a local authority has already started the process of supporting dialogue between an NGO and the community.
- Thailand and Senegal are working on the proposal to set up a LIFE Foundation for sustaining the programme.

GENDER EQUITY AND WOMEN'S ADVANCEMENT

Women participated in all aspects and stages of the LIFE programme. In some countries such as Pakistan women's participation is low. In Thailand the participation of women is not only high but nearly a third of the projects are led by women. Except Colombia, however, gender equity is not a priority of the LIFE programme in the pilot countries. Part of the reason appears to be lack of awareness among the NCs and NSCs regarding the substantive gender issues and how to enhance gender equity.

- **To what extent women participated and issues of gender equity been promoted?**
 - Among the pilot countries special efforts were made in Colombia to promote gender equity and increase women's involvement in LIFE projects. The NC who is closely associated with the women's movement in Colombia made women's empowerment a focus of the LIFE programme. The emphasis of capacity development was on gender equity. As a result the participation of women in small-scale projects increased and ranges from 65 to 85 per cent. Women are now confident that they would be able to carry on the work even without support from LIFE. The case of Colombia can guide other countries in designing strategies that ensure enhanced role of women in decision-making.
 - In Lebanon LIFE helped women in a small settlement to organize waste collection in their area. The experience had an empowering impact on the women. Although the waste disposal problem did not get fully resolved, the women won recognition and publicity for their efforts. This inspired other groups of women to try collectively to resolve their problems.
 - In Lebanon a workshop was planned to focus on introducing the concept of gender and development, clarify ways in which gender is relevant and integral to LIFE initiatives. The experience of the workshop could become a model for other countries to follow.

- At the community level, exposure to successful cases of initiatives in which women have a central role in decision-making can create a remarkable impact on women inspiring them to participate in developmental activities and play key roles.

UPSTREAM – DOWNSTREAM – UPSTREAM LINKAGES

The LIFE approach of upstreaming – downstreaming – upstreaming has worked reasonably well in the pilot countries. The “head start” countries are in the third phase and have made a limited advance in upstreaming. The late starters are currently downstreaming and are about to enter the final upstreaming phase.

How far has the upstream-downstream-upstream approach been useful?

- All the pilot countries have had a similar process of upstreaming after the launching of the programme in individual countries. This phase started with a national consultation to set the priorities and focus of the programme. In the downstreaming phase altogether 216 small-scale projects were implemented till the end of 1998. In all the pilot countries they have contributed to fulfilling immediate needs and creating cleaner local environment. Most projects have reached the poor and have had an empowering impact on the communities. This has contributed to changing the official perception about the contribution of community-based initiatives in community development and environmental improvement. The capacity building of community groups and its empowering effect on them has contributed to lessening their social exclusion. A large number of projects have succeeded in involving local authorities in supporting community initiatives. Partnerships with other actors have been formed to a lesser extent.
- The objectives of the third phase is institutionalisation and influencing policies. Possibilities of achieving this objective are contingent upon the outcome and results of small-scale projects, and the potential for scaling up. Several small-scale projects have shown high demonstrative value and their impact on a modest scale in changing official perceptions and procedures is already apparent. The extent to which policies are influenced will depend on how best the windows of opportunity in individual countries are used and the advocacy skills of the NC, NSC and LIFE stakeholders to articulate their case. It has become apparent that advocacy for changing policies needs to start earlier and should be made an integral part of all the phases.
- Meticulous and purposeful documentation of the LIFE experience and effective dissemination of information are very important for influencing policies.

LOCATION AND INSTITUTIONAL SETTING OF LIFE COUNTRY PROGRAMMES

At the country level, the LIFE programme has to perform a dual function of relating to poor communities, CBOs and NGOs on the one hand and dealing with national institutions and international agencies on the other. This makes the question of the institutional setting critical.

What effect does the institutional setting have on the management and

coordination of the LIFE programme?

- The country in which the LIFE programme has been located within the UNDP Country Office right from the beginning is Pakistan. In Tanzania and Lebanon the LIFE programme office was shifted from an NGO to UNDP mid course. In all other pilot countries LIFE is hosted by NGOs. There is general agreement in the country reports that being located in an NGO allows the NC greater independence, flexibility and spontaneous decision-making that are necessary for effective handling of small projects, especially those involving community groups. More importantly, it affords greater acceptance of LIFE by community groups, CBOs and NGOs. Housed in an NGO it does not have the daunting and off-putting security of many international organizations and national government establishments. Some of the other similar community based UNDP programmes such as GEF –small grants programme, Africa 2000 and Partners in Development Programme also highlight similar results.
- Not being within the UNDP office can mean loss of the “UN label” and “UN ownership” that can bestow prestige and credibility on small projects and community initiatives. The resulting low institutional profile and loss of marketing advantages are regarded as factors that make dialogue with the national and international agencies difficult and reduce the possibilities of scaling up and mainstreaming of LIFE. These, however, need not be major obstacles and could be overcome if LIFE is consciously presented as a UNDP programme and UNDP staff maintained close links with it and participated in important events connected with it.
- Most country reports have mentioned the small staff as a limiting factor in coordinating and managing the LIFE programme. In order to improve these, the field staff needs to be increased and decision-making decentralised. Local level committees as in the case of Tanzania and Colombia could take over management functions and reduce the responsibilities of the LIFE programme staff and allow them more time to devote to coordination and advocacy. The LIFE programme needs to increase travel budget for facilitating more frequent visits to projects and grant at least travel allowance to those actors who are committed, attend meetings regularly and support LIFE activities.
- Whether or not the LIFE office and the UNDP Country Office are located in the same city seems to have made a difference to the links between LIFE and UNDP. Except for Colombia, Kyrgyzstan and Brazil in all other cases the LIFE offices are in the same city as the UNDP Country Office. The location away from the UNDP office seems to have hindered communication and contact between the two and contributed to the isolation of the NC. This is likely to have inhibited the possibilities of mainstreaming and incorporating LIFE with larger projects with similar scope. Being away from the capital seems to pose difficulties in bringing LIFE to the attention of national authorities, in advocacy and lobbying for support and counterpart funding in the ministries, development agencies, and bilateral and multilateral sponsors. The problem was made more difficult in the case of Colombia because there was no NSC until recently to pursue these functions.
- In a large country, with a geographically dispersed programme, any location could be said to be remote for some of its clientele. The location in the capital is seen as bestowing certain neutrality that a location in any of the provinces would not have. The larger the country the bigger the problem of reaching projects in distant cities. The

Brazil report suggests moving the LIFE office to Brasilia especially for the third phase for giving the programme a national character. The experience of LIFE does not suggest any model for overcoming the problems posed by locating the LIFE office either in the capital or in the province in which projects may be concentrated. However, some features of a more satisfactory arrangement could be suggested. Establishment of local committees to supervise and coordinate local projects would help to deal with the problem of distance. A more active NSC that manages advocacy functions would add to the effectiveness of the programme. Greater provision of funds for travel expenses, not merely for the LIFE staff but also for other actors especially poor communities would facilitate greater exchange of information and learning.

ROLE OF UNDP COUNTRY OFFICE

Managing a small grants programme that supports community initiatives directly is a new experience for UNDP. In all the pilot countries LIFE has status and credibility because of its UN base. It also bestows neutrality to the programme. LIFE, on the other hand, has helped change the perception of UNDP as being open and amenable to addressing community level needs and working with sub national and non-governmental partners.

What role did the UNDP Country Office play in promoting the LIFE programme?

- The LIFE programme has been integrated in the UNDP Country Office in Pakistan. Some Country Offices, for instance in Jamaica and Thailand, have been supportive of LIFE while others merely accommodate it. In several pilot countries the Country Office has made no particular efforts to involve itself closely in the LIFE programme. A general conclusion seems to be that the importance of this strategic institutional mechanism has not been fully explored or utilised to advance the LIFE programme. This may be because LIFE is a modest programme as compared to other programmes managed by the Country Offices and therefore has not received much attention.
- LIFE needs to look for more effective ways to enhance the role of the UNDP Country Office, much beyond the administrative and management support, especially in upstreaming and mainstreaming. . There is a need for better exchange of information between the NC and UNDP. Regular presentation by the NC of the progress of work could improve the understanding of the UNDP staff regarding the programme and the issues involved. It would also be able to provide timely support to LIFE. Presence of UNDP members at important LIFE events could help to give them visibility and enhance their impact. This could greatly advance not only mainstreaming of the LIFE programme but its institutionalisation also.
- LIFE's integration within the Country Office, in Pakistan for instance, has its advantages that flow from continuous interaction with other programmes. The dual procedures of the Country Office and UNOPS/LIFE have, however, resulted in a duplication of control and reporting mechanisms. It has resulted in a loss of flexibility that has been detrimental to the programme as it could not take advantages of opportunities as they presented themselves.

- Country Offices in Pakistan, Tanzania and Thailand have adopted the LIFE approach in other programmes in UNDP. In Pakistan the LIFE methodology has had a significant influence on the UNDP Country Office, as a result of which it started SWEEP and PLUS projects and allotted US \$ 100,000 for LIFE. The Tanzania the Country Office allocated US \$ 400,000 in 1998 for expanding the programme to four new municipalities. In Thailand too the Country Office has initiated the Thai-UN Collaborative Action Plan (CAP) that is an example of mainstreaming of the LIFE approach. Some of the communities that received funding from LIFE previously are now working with Thai-UNCAP.

ROLE OF GLOBAL MECHANISMS IN COUNTRY PILOTS

The role that the Global Advisory Committee, Global Technical Support, Global Financial management, knowledge creation and dissemination have played an important role in experience sharing and has been very constructive in strengthening country pilot programmes.

- Global Advisory Committee has been a platform for exchange of views, performance review and monitoring. It brought visibility and status to the programme and was particularly useful as a device for convincing and influencing potential partners.
- Global Technical support has played an important role in providing tools and transferring techniques and concepts.
- Global Financial management provided financial controls and management alternative to normal Country Office procedures.
- Knowledge creation and dissemination at the global level has facilitated publicizing achievements of LIFE.

III. RESULTS FROM THE REGIONAL, INTER-REGIONAL ACTIVITIES

To what extent did LIFE support regional and inter-regional projects and what value did they add?

- During the three phases, LIFE supported 17 regional and global projects implemented by 11 organizations that covered 29 countries.
- Twenty - nine countries directly participated on addressing issues related to urban environment and local governance and resulted in the creation of innovative methodologies and new technologies, documentation and capacity building of various stakeholders. These regional and global partners attended the LIFE GAC workshops where they used this venue to report, share their findings, learn from donors, national coordinators and other participants, and participate in planning the implementation of each phase of the LIFE Programme. The country level synergies between the county pilot programmes and the regional and inter-regional projects helped in strengthening capacities, learning new methodologies and helped in regional dissemination of LIFE experiences and networking.

IV. RESULTS OF THE GLOBAL ACTIVITIES

Did Global Advisory Committee meet regularly and what value did it add?

- A Global Advisory Committee (GAC), representing diverse interests, met four times. The participants in the GAC include the diverse interests who support, participate in and are learning from the LIFE Global Pilot Programme. Its contribution was repeatedly affirmed as a very useful experience and benefit to the LIFE Programme, in general and to the countries in specific, especially in terms of experience sharing, developing future strategies and learning new methodologies. Through GAC, UNDP could reinforce learning within its system and influenced other global programmes such as the Global Environment Facility- Small Grants Programme and Local Development Fund.

- **To what extent global technical support strengthened country capacity and facilitated global pilot testing, documentation, evaluation, experience sharing and global advocacy?**

The Global Technical Support (GTS) played multi-dimensional role and while providing the necessary substantive coordination and support required in each phase of the programme, it “glued” the LIFE activities at country, regional and global levels and created a global laboratory for learning. At the country level, the GTS played an important role in each phase of the programme, e.g. in launching the programme in each country; providing tools and techniques to the countries that helped build capacity for pilot testing; promoting experience - sharing between the National Coordinators; etc. However, more technical support and capacity building efforts were needed than could be provided, especially to conduct specialized tasks such as: institutionalization, mainstreaming, influencing policies – that required special strategies. GTS also played an active role in global documentation and dissemination. It produced four major global products that were widely disseminated in several events and through the LIFE web - page on the Internet. It promoted dissemination of LIFE experiences in several regional and global conferences including the Habitat II and promoted dialogue on local initiatives, local governance and the role of NGOs and CBOs. Evaluation and documentation of forty small projects in 10 LIFE countries was carried out, the cases are being analyzed to draw global lessons and recommendations. The GTSs partnerships with eleven NGOs and Cities Associations helped in broadening the scope of testing and documenting innovative methodologies at regional and inter- regional level and their linkages with the pilot countries helped in the cross fertilization of ideas and experiences. The LIFE Programme operated with a very small Global Technical Support staff (essentially one full time Coordinator and one support staff) that had to both coordinate all global activities as well as attempt to support and advice the National Coordinators in their roles. The staff strength, since inception of the programme, remained same despite the fact that the programme grew bigger and more complex in each phase. To strengthen the LIFE programme, the capacity at the global level needs to be strengthened.

To what extent LIFE generated interest in “new” countries?

- Several UNDP country offices has shown interest in LIFE, however, lack of funds did not allow to meet the growing demand. The LIFE global programme initiated dialogue with interested country offices, provided technical assistance to conduct rapid assessments and in developing project documents for starting LIFE in India, Uganda, Malawi, Chad, El Salvador and Mongolia. These countries have used different entry points to mainstream LIFE, for example, Chad is using LIFE methodology to link community initiatives and city - wide solid waste management, the initiative is being supported by the UNDP country office and the UNV. The other countries exploring the mainstreaming possibilities are: Djibouti, Mauritius, Benin and Ethiopia.

To what extent did the LIFE Global Programme fulfill the UNDP objectives and priorities of a “Global Programme”?

- The results show that LIFE programme helped countries in addressing the UNDP priorities of improving participatory local governance, improving environmental conditions of the poor and gender advancement and equity and promoted implementation of global recommendations of the Rio Summit (Agenda21), Habitat II and Copenhagen Summit and facilitating policy changes at country, regional levels. The global documentation, analysis of country and regional experiences have contributed in developing guidelines and products that are helping in mainstreaming the LIFE process in new countries. Further, the results and lessons of the pilot would assist in formulating global policies and programmes that contribute to strengthening participatory local governance for sustainable human development as well as in formulating operational tool and method to assist UNDP in facilitating “upstreaming” process in countries.

V. STRENGTHES, SHORTCOMINGS, OPPORTUNITIES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The experience of the LIFE programme in the ten pilot countries has demonstrated that small-scale projects have served a valuable purpose of creating the basis for people to come together and work towards improving the local environment. Community initiatives have brought tangible improvements in the living conditions in poor neighborhoods and built people’s capacity to address some of their immediate environmental problems. However, the larger problems of environmental protection and poverty alleviation are far more serious than what LIFE can handle as a modest programme based on dispersed local initiatives. Local authorities are beginning to appreciate the contribution of community efforts to solving the local environmental problems. The process of using the results of micro initiatives for influencing policies has just begun. The duration of the programme has not been long enough to make a significant mark on influencing the process of change that is known to be slow, in these circumstances to phase out the LIFE programme would be detrimental. The regional and global activities have helped in enlarging the scope of the programme and reaching additional 34 countries and facilitating global learning and advocacy.

The strengths, shortcomings, opportunities and recommendation that have come through the ten country reports and the analysis of regional and global activities are:

The Strengths are:

At the country level:

- Contribution by National Coordinators
- Demonstration of multi - dimensional benefits of small -scale projects
- Partnerships, especially between CBOs, NGOs and local authorities
- Capacity development, especially of communities and CBOs and NGOs
- Community empowerment
- Replication , though not uniformly across all countries

At the regional level:

- Partnership with 11 regional, inter-regional and global NGOs and Cities Associations
- Outreach to 29 countries, in addition to the 12 pilot countries

At the global level:

- Global learning laboratory and links with global and regional networks
- Experience sharing between pilot countries
- Global mainstreaming process in 10 “new” countries
- Role of Global Advisory Committee

The shortcomings are:

At the country level:

- Performance of the National Selection Committees and capacity of National Coordinators for “upstreaming”
- Linkages between dispersed community based initiatives and the larger problems of urban environmental protection and poverty alleviation.
- Linkages with other UNDP Country programmes for mainstreaming LIFE process in UNDP country programmes
- In-direct and partial involvement of local authorities.
- Documentation and dissemination of LIFE to influence “upstreaming” process.
- Country level staff strength and funds in relation to the magnitude of work and nature and number of activities and functions.
- Financial reporting that includes all contributions at country and community levels.

At the regional level:

- Linkages between country and regional activities

At the global level:

- Global documentation of experiences, best practices, etc.
- Ability to meet the growing demand for LIFE in “new countries”
- Staff strength and funds in relation to the need for global activities and support.

The opportunities present are:

At the country level:

- The small but significant impact at the municipal and national levels in the pilot countries.
- Possibilities identified and strategies that have already been devised for upstreaming and sustainability of LIFE.
- Readiness of municipalities to work more actively on community development issues and with CBOs and NGOs in the pilot countries.
- Municipal up-scaling of SSPs provides opportunities to demonstrate LIFE process at the municipal level and develop capacity of local actors for municipal level participatory initiatives.
- Strategic dissemination of existing case studies and global evaluation results.
- Possibility of using experience of community initiatives and partnerships to pilot test urban environmental solutions at municipal level and strengthen efforts to institutionalize LIFE experiences and promote participatory local governance.

At the regional level:

- Regional dissemination of LIFE lessons and existing case studies for promoting participatory local governance.

At the global level:

- Possibility of demonstrating and testing strategies, tools and institutional mechanisms necessary for institutionalizing participatory local governance in 12 countries of diverse contexts in all regions.
- Growing country level demand for interventions to strengthen participatory local governance for sustainable human development.
- Global documentation, networking, advocacy and dissemination of LIFE demonstration results and other lessons to promote participatory local governance.

Recommendations are:

For the LIFE Country pilot Programme

- Give priority to upstreaming by making best use of existing opportunities and thereby ensure sustainability of LIFE.
- Explore the possibility to pilot test urban environmental solutions at municipal level and strengthen local governance efforts to institutionalize LIFE experiences and promote participatory local governance.
- Build stronger partnerships with municipalities by giving greater visibility and recognition to their role in improving living conditions and develop their capacity to facilitate community development and working with other partners.
- Promote women's empowerment and gender equity by designing strategies that address these aspects and by making them integral to the process of project formulation and implementation.
- Improve the quality of project - related data, financial information collection and reporting on all contributions for effective marketing of LIFE achievements.
- Ensure dissemination of LIFE case studies and evaluation results to a wide audience including poor communities in order to create partnerships with diverse actors. Involve media to publicize all major events and outcomes of LIFE.
- Build capacity of NC and NSC to better understand municipal functioning; to play the role of "policy catalysts" and facilitate upstreaming.

- Increase the LIFE project staff and travel funds to develop and monitor all the various different types of activities at various levels.

For UNDP

At the Country Level for Improving the Pilots:

- Retain the support and shield of neutrality of UNDP for the programme. This is crucial for upstreaming.
- Using the possibilities available (i.e. other programmes with similar focus and beneficiaries) mainstream LIFE into UNDP country programme.
- Establish closer linkages between UNDP country programmes and LIFE and actively contribute to upstream LIFE.
- Organize orientation of the National Coordinator on policy issues and for developing an understanding regarding implications of actions in dealing with the challenge of working with grass root groups on the one hand to national and international agencies and a range of stakeholders on the other.
- Along with Headquarters review the procedures for transfer of funds in order to avoid bottlenecks and delays.

At the HQ Level for Global Support and Activities:

- Develop capacity of NCs and NSC to become more effective actors in upstreaming LIFE and promoting participatory local governance.
- Provide technical assistance to create country specific strategies for upstreaming project experiences and ensure that the countries incorporate the recommendations of the evaluation.
- Disseminate the LIFE experiences, results and lessons regionally and globally.
- Analyze and document best practices of methodologies, tools and strategies to help develop capacity of the pilot countries in promoting institutionalization and sustainability of LIFE.
- Promote advocacy to mainstream LIFE in new UNDP programme countries.
- Develop an electronic global knowledge and learning network to promote participatory local governance comprising 12 pilot countries, local, regional, inter-regional and global networks of NGOs, Cities Associations, other related UNDP programmes and donors.
- Strengthen capacity at the global level to effectively meet the demand for technical support at the country level and to expand and sustain the global learning "laboratory" created by LIFE.

For Donors

- Encourage greater involvement of donors in the LIFE approach and methodology by participating in LIFE events.
- Facilitate closer contact of donors with the National Selection Committee and the National Coordinator.
- Design and establish a monitoring system to provide a feedback to donors on the progress and achievements of LIFE in each country. This system would also be beneficial to NCs to monitor the progress of work.

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