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UNITED NATIONS CHILDREN'S FUND  
Executive Board  
1984 Session

STATEMENT BY MR. V. TARZIE VITTACHI,  
DEPUTY EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, EXTERNAL RELATIONS  
AT THE UNICEF EXECUTIVE BOARD, 27 APRIL 1984

1. The idea that external relations is a function and not a new structure within UNICEF was given substance and direction in the year following the Executive Board's endorsement of the policy paper on external relations (E/ICEF/L.1455). Putting the policy directives into action has confirmed our earlier view that external relations concerns all UNICEF staff and their relationships with people and institutions who are involved, or should be involved, with children.

2. The first need, therefore, was for the functional and psychological realignment of UNICEF's internal relations.

3. Two important organizational and operational facts were identified in the process:

a) UNICEF representatives are the external relations officers in the field, carrying, apart from their familiar programme functions, are responsible for the work of advocacy, information and communication, media relations, fund-raising, greeting card sales, and developing collaborative relationships with National Committees through headquarters in Geneva and New York, as well as with both national and international private sector groups who operate within their countries.

In the industrialized countries, the National Committees are our partners in a wide range of support activities as mentioned in the "Report of the Executive Director" (E/ICEF/1984/2). They are equally concerned with the development of collaborative relationships with our field colleagues.

b) Communications and information, particularly educational information, are integral and essential elements of UNICEF programmes. This was a central message of the Rose Report on UNICEF's information function which led to the Board request for a policy paper on external relations.

4. The second need was for the orderly development of effective collaboration with intergovernmental bodies, other United Nations agencies, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and other relevant private sector groups as well as media.
5. The Board's adoption of the accelerated programme of child survival and development generated an intensive system-wide series of self-assessment discussions within UNICEF. The outcome has been a general appreciation within UNICEF of the importance of empowering families, through information and basic education, to become actively and effectively responsible for the welfare of their own children, and of the communication processes and techniques through which parents may recognize that fate is not destiny, that the dying and stunting of children is not as inevitable as it has long seemed to be. Such a process would not only enable people to do far more for themselves, as with oral rehydration therapy (ORT), but also to voice the demand to governmental authorities for that support that they only can give in expanding the availability of clean water, vaccines, health and nutrition education, medical and paramedical services, rehydration therapy and other basic services. It is the essence of the primary health care (PHC) strategy. It approaches the health issue from the self-help and demand rather than the supply side and gives substance and reality to such concepts as community participation because people become actors rather than passive audiences in the development process.
6. UNICEF has recognized that to bring this about, the first prerequisite is for all of us on the staff to accept the obvious fact that we ourselves cannot bring about a marked change in the health conditions of children nor an appreciable fall in child mortality. We are a small agency with limited human and financial resources, but we certainly can increase our role as catalysts of change through persistent advocacy with governmental ministries; improved collaboration with other United Nations agencies; making strategic alliances with pediatricians' associations and other groups of health professionals such as midwives' associations; with religious denominations who are in daily touch with the people; with people's organizations such as Sarvodaya in Sri Lanka, the People's Science Movement in Kerala and Naam in Upper Volta; with non-governmental organizations, particularly those who work in the villages and depressed urban communities; with business people and their organizations; with advertising professionals who are becoming increasingly interested in using their skills in transforming popular habits for commercial purposes in the area of social marketing for the purpose of human development; and, of course, with the news media.
7. This is the task we have set for ourselves. We recognize its enormity and complexity and also our limitations, but we are convinced that it is a job worth doing and that needs doing. It involves refurbishing our recruiting criteria and our staff training programmes. It impels us to adopt a different attitude towards NGOs and village movements: lip-service to their worth is no longer possible as the recognition grows that we now need them more than they need us. It persuades us to regard the media not as an occasional means of publicizing UNICEF as an agency, but as an essential ally in the development process in which its members have a direct and abiding interest. And it demands that we join with governments and people in our partner countries to create a new climate and new perceptions of

possibilities in which families, particularly the poorest, could realistically expect a healthier life for their children.

8. The State of the World's Children Report, which the world media has responded to so enthusiastically, has created the global climate for such a possibility and a widespread expectation of effective action. But we at UNICEF are keenly aware that this is only the opening call in a campaign for children which has to be carried through in nations and at the community level where the children in need are.

9. Our advocacy efforts have evoked interest and pledges of commitment to the programme ideas in the Report from a wide variety of governments in the developing as well as in the industrialized world. Presidents and Prime Ministers, health ministries and development ministries have declared their intentions to support UNICEF's call to countries to bring about a child survival and development revolution. But public pledges, however sincere, are one thing, carrying them into action is quite another. UNICEF is working hard to persuade everyone concerned to give substance and pace to those commitments.

#### Allies

10. This past year, organizations in many parts of the world responded to the message of The State of the World's Children Report.

11. It is always difficult in a statement of this nature to include all those allies who should be mentioned. However, our ally over many years and in many situations, the League of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, represented here by its Secretary-General, Mr. Hans Hoegh, has launched a magnificent initiative with its "Child Alive" programme. He was right when he said that the task is largely one of education and information, and he was right again when he said that, while these ideas are rather simple, getting them accepted and put into practice, that is not simple.

12. Other international NGOs working in developing countries, such as Save the Children Fund, are also promoting child survival revolution measures as part of their global advocacy and country services.

13. And organizations like the Boy Scouts and Girl Guides have devised imaginative projects for heightening nutritional awareness and promoting health actions by young people. International Youth Year 1985 provides a new opening for "youth in service" programmes which UNICEF is encouraging.

14. The support of professional groups is particularly important. The International Paediatric Association and the International Confederation of Midwives will be working through their respective associations to support national actions. The International Paediatric Association is collaborating with UNICEF in a series of regional meetings which will focus on the major avoidable causes of childhood mortality and morbidity.

15. The child survival and development revolution was also warmly welcomed by religious leaders. Buddhist associations, Moslem scholars and, as noted last year, the aid network of the Roman Catholic church are now advocating child survival measures.

16. Further, those movements that spring from the people themselves are increasingly the communicators and the activists who spread the messages among the rural communities and help change attitudes. We have two representatives of such movements with us in Rome: Dr. Ariyaratne of the Sarvodaya movement of Sri Lanka and Dr. Ouedraogo of the Naam movement in Upper Volta. They will address the NGO forum next week. This forum has been organized by the NGO community to show how children may benefit more through complementary and co-operative action with UNICEF.

#### Organization for external relations

17. The various sections of UNICEF working directly with the office of the Executive Director and his Deputy in charge of external relations have geared themselves during the year under review to carry through the responsibilities set out in the external relations policy paper.

18. The Board's decision last year to make Geneva Headquarters the focal point for all National Committees has already begun to yield good results. One was a discussion by European National Committees to consider expanding up their annual reunion into a global one embracing existing committees on other continents. This should provide the opportunity for a world wide, unified complex of National Committees to further support the policies of the Executive Board. Another was discussion, now at an advanced stage, regarding the establishment of the first National Committee in the Gulf, namely in Kuwait. Indeed, as you know, one of the prime movers in this endeavour, Her Royal Highness Princess Rasha Al Sabah, is with us today. In addition, discussions regarding the establishment of new National Committees in Asia and the first National Committees in Latin America, have also begun.

19. National Committees have traditionally been strong and valued implementors of UNICEF Executive Board policies. Advocacy by definition requires extensive knowledge of the complexities of country situations, and here the National Committees have played a unique role through their communication with the public, through their fund-raising, including sales of greeting cards, and by their co-operation with governmental and non-governmental agencies. As their efforts have grown, so must the secretariat respond by providing the necessary support to enable them to focus on the Executive Board's priority for the child survival and development revolution within the framework of basic services.

20. Accordingly, the Director of the Geneva Headquarters is in the process of reorganizing his office in order to be of maximum service. A head of National Committee affairs is to manage a team of desk officers who will attend to the special needs of "affinity groups" of National Committees based on cultural similarities and programme support interests. At the same time, the new structure will be designed to improve co-operation with the European Community and a wide range of other institutions.

21. And we share some observations of members of the Standing Group that the staffing capacity in Geneva needs be strengthened since, however able and hard-working our relatively small staff is, a point of diminishing returns is reached when new demands are added to an already heavy workload.

22. We look forward to National Committees' comments on these plans when we meet again in Rome, in October, at the Annual Reunion.

#### Development education

23. At the request of National Committees, the Director of Geneva Headquarters designated a working group of committee members to consider a conceptual framework for development education within UNICEF. The working group suggested a number of criteria for delineating the content of development education including that: (a) its purpose must be educational; (b) it must be carried out in a systematic and sustained way; and (c) it must reach children.

24. The process is seen as a progression from knowledge to understanding, then to a sense of identification which leads to action. This combination of cognitive and affective objectives will continue to characterize UNICEF's development education efforts. Of course, this does not preclude other forms of advocacy and participatory programmes with a wide variety of groups and institutions in support of UNICEF programme priorities.

#### Greeting Card Operation

25. The Greeting Card Operation will report in detail separately (E/ICEF/1984/AB/L.6). But I might briefly mention that in the past year the potential of the Greeting Card Operation as an important advocacy agent for UNICEF is beginning to be utilized to its fullest to promote the child survival and development revolution throughout the many countries where UNICEF cards are sold.

26. All brochures, folders and other printed promotion for the greeting cards (over 20 million pieces) carried the child survival message. Special child survival kits were developed for thousands of greeting card volunteers and voluntary organizations. A unique "Spread the Word" child survival UNICEF greeting card was produced for special distribution to UNICEF customers and friends. These imaginative new approaches will be continued and developed.

#### Programme Funding

27. Co-ordination of action between New York and Geneva has been greatly improved with two major developments in the management of the fund-raising function. First, the system for preparing and submitting progress reports to donors who have made specific-purpose contributions to 'noted' projects was strengthened during 1983. Progress reports, which are prepared by field offices, are now being reviewed by the Division of Programme Field Services in New York, and submitted to donors by the Programme Funding Office, together with financial statements prepared by the Comptrollers Division. Second, a system to monitor the preparation and submission of reports by word processor has greatly facilitated follow-up action. Adjustments are still needed in the implementation of the new systems, but it is expected to result in a more timely submission of well-prepared reports to donors.

Communication and Information

28. UNICEF's information and communication staff have had an unprecedentedly active year, stretching themselves to meet new challenges. A few of the highlights of a very productive year are worth drawing to the particular attention of the Board.

29. The State of the World's Children Report 1984 earned more media attention than any United Nations document in recent memory. Several thousand publications and broadcasting stations all over the world gave it prominence and many have made repeated commentaries on it. The State of the World's Children Report has attained a special rating in the international media. Editors now await its publication and call for it when the publication date is near. Many of them have said that they admire its content, its intelligible writing and its professional production quality. Such enthusiastic acceptance is, of course, welcome but demands for follow-up material, including television coverage, and the increasingly complex translation and distribution network stretch staff capacity to the extreme.

Another Example

30. Another noteworthy information event of the year was the media seminar held in Abu Dhabi on the child survival and development programmes which was attended by some fifty Arab journalists, concerned academics and government officials of the Gulf Arab States. It resulted in the formation of an ongoing working committee, headed by UNICEF's current chairman of the Administration and Finance Committee of the Executive Board, to pursue the programme ideas generated at the meeting.

31. The activities of our Special Envoy, His Royal Highness Prince Talal Bin Abdul Aziz, and of our Goodwill Ambassadors have been increasingly valuable as our advocacy efforts develop. You have had the honor to hear HRH Prince Talal this week, and you have all been moved by the presence of Liv Ullmann. Danny Kaye has continued, despite illness, to devote time for children and UNICEF. Special fund-raising events with strong support from National Committees have continued in the industrialized world and we are having early success with a programme of similar events in developing countries; for example, a highly successful UNICEF concert was held in Bangkok in January.

The essential message

32. In conclusion, the essential message of our external relations policy is that UNICEF alone cannot bring about the child survival and development revolution. The major challenge is to use communication and information to reach out to all partners and potential allies in this great endeavour, and through them increase not only the supply of services but also, most importantly, to increase knowledge and awareness among the people themselves. We can achieve a child survival and development revolution not simply because the techniques exist, but because people can be told that they exist, shown that they work, and encouraged to try them and make them work for themselves. A beginning has been made - an essential beginning - but still, only a beginning.

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