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UNITED NATIONS CHILDREN'S FUND  
Executive Board

GENERAL PROGRESS REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

The First Twenty-Five Years of UNICEF:  
A Summary of Policy Evolution \*/

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\*/ This addendum presents in somewhat more detail the evolution of UNICEF's main policies briefly sketched in the Introduction to the Executive Director's General Progress Report, E/ICEF/608, paras. 3-18.

(14p)

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### Origin

1. UNICEF came into being in December 1946, at a time when millions of children were in a serious condition of malnutrition and deprivation as a result of the war. The United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (UNRRA), which had been endeavouring to meet the worst of that need, was coming to an end. Foreseeing that great suffering would result for children if no further provision was made, the Council of UNRRA recommended that a fund be created for continuing aid to children through the United Nations, and that part of its work be financed from the residual assets of UNRRA. The General Assembly resolution establishing UNICEF (57 (I)) provided that UNICEF was to be financed not only from these residual assets but from voluntary contributions of governments and individuals. The resources of the Fund were to be used "for the benefit of children and adolescents" and "to assist in their rehabilitation" and "for child health purposes generally", with priority to be accorded to children of countries which were victims of aggression or which had been receiving UNRRA aid.

### The early years

2. During its first several years, the Fund's resources were devoted largely to meeting the emergency needs of children in Europe for food and clothing. At the peak of UNICEF operations in Europe, some six million children received a daily supplementary meal through 50,000 centres in twelve countries. In addition, clothing and shoes, processed from raw materials provided by UNICEF, were provided. More than eight million children were vaccinated against tuberculosis and aid was provided for various other types of health programmes. Some of the milk collection facilities, dairies and milk processing points which were destroyed or had deteriorated during the war were rebuilt with UNICEF assistance.

3. Outside Europe, UNICEF began providing aid for health and feeding programmes to China, and then to other Asian countries. In 1948 UNICEF began providing emergency relief for Palestine refugee mothers and children, and the next year

it began extending aid, mainly for BCG anti-tuberculosis vaccinations to several countries in the Eastern Mediterranean area and North Africa. Aid to Latin America for feeding and health programmes was first approved in 1949.

4. By the end of 1950, UNICEF had spent over \$112 million in direct assistance. Of this amount, \$92 million, or 82 per cent, had gone to Europe, and \$12 million, or 10 per cent, for the Eastern Mediterranean area, mainly for Palestine refugees.

#### The shift to developing countries

5. With recovery in Europe well under way, the future of UNICEF was discussed in various United Nations bodies from the middle of 1949 to the end of 1950. It culminated in a decision by the General Assembly in December 1950 (417 V) to extend the life of the Fund for three years, shifting its main emphasis toward programmes of long-range benefit to children of developing countries.

6. By the time the General Assembly again considered the future of UNICEF in 1953, this shift was well under way, with over one half of UNICEF aid going to Asia and about one fourth to Latin America. Long-range programmes accounted for 80 per cent of the aid, with remaining 20 per cent for earthquake, flood and famine relief in various countries and for aid to Palestine refugee mothers and children.

7. In October 1953 the General Assembly decided to continue UNICEF indefinitely (802 VIII), reaffirming the broader terms of reference which it had established for the Fund in 1950. The words "International" and "Emergency" were dropped from the name which now became the United Nations Children's Fund. However, the initials "UNICEF" were retained since they had by now become a well-known symbol.

Fields of aid

Disease control campaigns

8. The first aid to developing countries was mainly along the lines of previous UNICEF experience in Europe - supplementary child feeding, milk conservation and mass anti-tuberculosis vaccination campaigns. Later UNICEF also began aiding mass campaigns against other diseases largely affecting children in developing countries - yaws, leprosy, trachoma and malaria - which could be launched largely using auxiliary personnel.

Basic health services

9. Assistance to health services was at first mainly focused on improvement of individual maternal and child health centres and on simple training of traditional birth attendants who received a UNICEF midwifery kit. Later it broadened to an effort, still going on jointly with WHO, to help establish and extend basic health services, with an emphasis on maternal and child health, and including immunization, environmental sanitation (especially safe water), health and nutrition education, and since 1967, family planning. In recent years emphasis had been placed on retaining the gains made in the disease control campaigns by consolidating and integrating them into the basic health services.

10. It was hoped that the basic health services, with the aid of UNICEF, would achieve country-wide coverage. Because of lack of finance and staff, however, probably not more than one child in twenty is currently within reach of health services, in the developing countries as a whole. UNICEF is now seeking to help new ways of extending coverage. This includes the training of para-medical and auxiliary staff, the increased participation of other services such as education and rural development, and greater participation by leading members of rural communities in promoting community health. The need for country-wide MCH coverage is beginning to assume an additional importance in a number of countries because it is a pre-requisite for successful family planning.

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### Child nutrition

11. UNICEF aid for child nutrition, which first took the form of supplementary child feeding and aid for local dairies, began to take on new aspects in the mid-1950s. For urban and peri-urban areas where milk was not sufficiently available, UNICEF began helping countries develop, produce, distribute and promote the consumption, on a large scale, of low-cost protein-rich food mixtures for weanlings and pre-school children. It also began aiding "applied nutrition" programmes which use channels such as community development, agricultural extension, schools and health services to stimulate and help the rural population to grow and to use foods required for better child nutrition. More recently, UNICEF, FAO and WHO have been encouraging the development of national food and nutrition policies which include child nutrition as an essential element. Although in special situations UNICEF provides imported milk or special food mixtures for children, the days when UNICEF was supplying imported milk powder on a large scale are now past. Some of this has been taken over by the World Food Programme and voluntary agencies.

### Family and child welfare

12. In 1959 the UNICEF Board approved a policy of aid for family and child welfare services for children through day-care and neighbourhood centres, parent education, family counselling and youth clubs. In rural areas, aid was provided for programmes (originally called "mothercraft/homecraft") to give mothers new knowledge and skills, through informal training, for better child rearing and home and community improvement. This was done through womens' clubs, community centres and various self-help and income-producing activities.

### Education and pre-vocational training

13. Aid for education and pre-vocational training first began to be provided in 1961, in co-operation with UNESCO and ILO. In education the main emphasis was in helping countries improve the quality and relevance of teaching through training of teachers and supervisors, curriculum reform, use of technology, and a new concept of the school, especially in rural communities.

In pre-vocational education the emphasis has now come to be the provision of young people with simple skills, relevant to their occupational future, involving not only special schools but the regular school system and group activities such as youth clubs, community centres, young farmers' clubs and young women's groups.

#### Training

14. The availability of trained staff is crucial in all these long-term fields of aid. For this reason UNICEF now devotes about one third of its aid to help establish and strengthen within-country training institutions and schemes for all levels of work: planning, directing, teaching, supervisory, auxiliary and volunteer. The greatest emphasis is on training of middle-level and auxiliary staff. UNICEF believes that more attention needs to be given in the future to the relevance of the training to local conditions, to the preparation of trainers, to supervision as a form of in-service training, and to local production of suitable teaching aids.

#### Emergency aid

15. While since 1950 the predominant emphasis has been on long-range aid, UNICEF nevertheless had continued over the years to be responsive to the need for emergency aid. In recent years it has preferred to concentrate on restoring permanent services for children and mothers. However, when UNICEF is in a better position than others to render speedy help, or when other help for children is insufficient, UNICEF provides immediate emergency aid.

#### Combining humanitarian and developmental objectives

16. In the early years UNICEF aid had naturally been conceived of in a rather short-term perspective. In the second phase of UNICEF's evolution, as it shifted its aid to developing countries, projects were increasingly related to long-term needs but they still remained relatively isolated endeavours, except for the important mass disease control campaigns.

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17. A third phase began in the late 1950s as new approaches for UNICEF began to be proposed. These were based mainly on the premise that projects benefiting children would be more effective if they took account of the interrelations between health, nutrition, education, community development and social welfare services; and also the interrelations between these and other aspects of national policy. Influenced by this view, and also a global survey of children's needs undertaken by the Executive Director which revealed that many developing countries placed a high priority on some children's needs not eligible for UNICEF aid, the UNICEF Board in 1961 decided to increase the flexibility of UNICEF's approach to children's problems. It would be better, the Board decided, if each Government determined its own priorities and strategies in meeting the needs of its children, with UNICEF aid being provided for whatever situations were agreed to be the most important and most ripe for action in a particular country, whether or not they fell within a field previously helped by UNICEF. Prior to this time, UNICEF aid had been confined to programme categories which had first been approved in principle by the Board.

18. This decision has several important consequences. It meant that UNICEF would no longer itself set priorities for assisting various fields of aid. The situation of children in each country had to be studied, with UNICEF help, if needed, so that priorities could be set by the Government. UNICEF could now be concerned not only with the physical needs of children but also their intellectual, emotional and vocational needs. UNICEF aid for education now became possible (see para. 13).

19. The new orientation of UNICEF was further broadened by the Board at its 1962 and later sessions. Requests for UNICEF aid, the Board agreed, had to be evaluated from the point of view of their benefits to children; however, the problems of children could not be solved in isolation from their family and community. UNICEF-aided projects should reflect a comprehensive view of the child, both in terms of his vulnerability to hazards and hardships and as a future agent for economic and social change. The projects should form an integral part of the country's

over-all development effort, both contributing to this effort and enabling the young to benefit from it. Wherever possible, projects should grow within the framework of a systematic national policy for children and youth. This should include pilot projects and innovative approaches in order to find faster methods for reaching significant numbers of children, suitable to countries with limited resources. Each government ministry should not only give serious attention to children in its own work, but in addition have close links with other government ministries in which joint or complimentary programmes could be developed. Programmes should be designed to meet the specific protection and development needs of different groups of children. This was true for various age-level groups, none of whom should be neglected, and also for children in various social and economic groups and geographic areas (e.g. in rural areas, peri-urban and shanty-towns, out-of-school children, etc.). Government funds and government machinery were, of course, essential, but they were not enough; it was important that the projects also mobilize other resources and release local community energy through motivating and educating parents and stimulating action by local community leaders, volunteers and non-governmental organizations.

20. The role of UNICEF, in the light of the above, was seen as being much wider than the total volume of its assistance might suggest. It was seen as a catalyst and adviser within the over-all efforts of countries and of outside aid, focusing attention on the critical needs of children, stimulating efforts by each developing country on behalf of its own children, and providing programme support with a "multiplier" effect, i.e., reinforcing and spurring other elements in social and economic development, as well as leading to additional experience and more trained staff. This UNICEF hoped, would prepare the country's base for substantially expanding the areas of service to children both in quality and coverage, which, in turn could stimulate further investments of substantial size from other sources.

21. This broadening of policy set the basis for evolution away from individual projects, seen more or less as separate entities, to a "country approach" with comprehensive programmes, often involving the services of several ministries in a mutually reinforcing way, and benefiting children and adolescents as part of the mainstream of national development.

22. In this evolution UNICEF follows three main approaches. The first, direct programme support through material aid (see paras. 25-26), is coupled with increasingly important responsibilities assumed by UNICEF field staff (see paras. 31-32). In recent years UNICEF has sought to give relatively more aid to the least developed countries.

23. The second main approach, increasingly interwoven with the first, is addressed primarily to planners and senior administrators, both in sectoral ministries and those concerned with over-all planning. Focused on the orientation of development policies to take adequate account of children and adolescents, and on ways in which this might be translated into action, UNICEF has helped to support regional and national conferences and workshops, training courses, advisory services, the preparation of better national statistics on children, and project-oriented research.

24. In the third approach UNICEF has sought to enlist the greater deployment of outside resources (international, multi-national, bilateral and non-governmental sources) for programmes benefiting children and adolescents. At the same time it has sought to arrange its own assistance in effective relationship to large-scale development aid.

#### Forms of material aid

25. Supplies and equipment, accounting for over 80 per cent of UNICEF aid, have been the predominant component of UNICEF assistance since the inception of the organization. The number of different supply items - now totalling over 20,000 - considerably increased when UNICEF moved from supplementary child feeding and disease control campaigns into support for more complex long-range programmes. In 1962, a UNICEF Packing and Assembly Centre was established in Copenhagen, and substantial economies are now made through bulk purchasing, project packaging and the consolidation of shipments. UNICEF is also beginning to provide more equipment to encourage local production of supplies needed for programmes benefiting children. While supplies and equipment provided continue, in the main, to be imported, UNICEF is beginning to adjust its practices so that where supplies of good quality at reasonably competitive prices are produced locally in assisted countries, UNICEF will be buying more in those countries.

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26. Originally countries were expected to meet all the local currency costs required for a project. This policy proved to be an obstacle as UNICEF began moving into programmes which require strengthening of local training schemes which required cash outlays for training stipends and teaching staff. The realities of local budgeting processes often meant that local funds not only for training but also for other strategic elements of a project might not be available when needed. Beginning in the 1950s, UNICEF policy began to be broadened, and local funds can now be provided by UNICEF for whatever elements may be needed to make a project viable and are not available from other sources. Where recurrent outlays are required, it is expected that they will be taken over locally after a period of time.

#### Co-operation with other organizations

27. A system of co-operative relationships has been in effect for many years between UNICEF and various agencies within the United Nations family in the provision of joint aid to individual projects. Under this system the United Nations Division of Social Development and several specialized agencies - ILO, FAO, UNESCO and WHO - furnish technical advice to UNICEF and, at their request, to assisted Governments. In recent years, UNICEF has also been strengthening its collaboration with the UNDP, the World Food Programme, the World Bank and the UNHCR. Having tried to apply the "country approach" to its assistance during the 1960s, UNICEF welcomes joining in with United Nations system-wide activities of country programming set into motion under the leadership of UNDP resident representatives.

28. The fact that about 25 per cent of UNICEF's income is derived from non-governmental sources is evidence of UNICEF's direct links with the public, in a large part through UNICEF National Committees and non-governmental organizations. In addition to fund-raising and the sale of greeting cards, National Committees for UNICEF, established primarily in industrialized countries, have played an important role in promoting public understanding of the needs of children in developing countries and the work of UNICEF.

29. Recently UNICEF has been trying to develop closer relationships with international non-governmental organizations in ways which would promote the objectives of both UNICEF and the organizations. One of these is to encourage the use of resources which might be available from non-governmental organizations (both locally and through outside aid) in programmes benefiting children and adolescents which UNICEF is also aiding and which Governments of developing countries welcome as advancing their efforts toward national development. Many NGOs are also increasing their efforts to develop greater understanding among their members on the needs of children, and have helped in a number of ways in fund-raising. Some NGOs have provided information, opinion and recommendations to UNICEF on matters in which they have special competence and experience.

A universal appeal

30. The statistics on the millions of children protected against disease with UNICEF aid, the hundreds of thousands of workers trained, the tens of thousands of health centres equipped, do not indicate the less tangible aspects of UNICEF's work described above, in being both an advocate and supporter of efforts in the third world to protect and prepare the rising generation. Nor do they indicate the other intangible values which were referred to by the Secretary-General in September 1970 in the introduction to his report on the work of the organization as follows:

"Activities on behalf of the young are a sound basis for human solidarity, and the work of the United Nations Children's Fund has a special universal appeal. It is highly acceptable to Governments and welcomed by the people. The specific and humane character of its activities has helped the "man in the street" in both industrialized and in developing countries to appreciate the role of the United Nations in the laborious process of building peace" (A/8001/Add.1, para. 88).

Field responsibilities and organization

31. The progressive movement from a project to a country approach had added some new dimensions to the work of UNICEF, affecting particularly the responsibilities of UNICEF field staff. The older function of direct co-operation in projects which included preparing plans of operations and supply lists, calling forward supplies as needed and field observation, continues. At the same time greater help is being given in project preparation, and it is important to ascertain how a proposed project fits into the country's general pattern of services benefiting children, and how it might lead to an expanded national and local effort. This imposes on UNICEF field staff the need for a more careful study of development opportunities for improving the situation of children and youth, and a more careful consideration of country priorities. It had also led to many more multi-disciplinary projects, requiring the co-operation of several ministries as well as several international agencies. In line with this, UNICEF representatives try to encourage more use of national resources for project preparation and better periodic reviews of project operation. In addition, in some cases the rehabilitation aid emergency requires additional operational work from UNICEF staff. It is also necessary for UNICEF to report back more fully on projects for which special contributions are being used, and generally to expand UNICEF relations with the appropriate services of donor countries.

32. UNICEF now has thirty-three field offices in which work about two thirds of UNICEF's international staff and about four fifths of its local staff. UNICEF currently has a total international staff of about 200 and a local staff of about 650. There has been a trend in recent years toward decentralizing programming

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responsibilities, and as much as possible of the field work is done by UNICEF representatives' offices which serve several countries, or, in some cases, one large country. In addition there are eight resident directors' offices (three in Africa, two in Asia, one each in the Eastern Mediterranean and the Americas, and one for Europe and North Africa)<sup>1/</sup> which provide co-ordination and supervision to a group of UNICEF representatives' offices. The resident directors' offices also perform the functions of the UNICEF representative in the country in which they are located.

#### Financing

33. The voluntary basis of UNICEF financing was established by the General Assembly at the outset. It was generally recognized that government financing would have to be the major source of UNICEF income. The number of Governments making regular annual contributions has risen over the years, and the list of over 120 includes virtually all Governments of developing and industrialized countries. A number of Governments have periodically increased the level of their annual contributions. While in the 1950s, government contributions constituted over 85 per cent of UNICEF income, in recent years it has constituted about 75 per cent. This reflects the more rapid rise in income from private sources - mainly from the sale of greeting cards and a variety of fund-raising campaigns, both carried out for the most part by UNICEF National Committees.

34. Over the years there have been two main changes in UNICEF financing. Prior to 1961 it was the practice of UNICEF to set aside the funds required to fulfil a two or three-year, and sometimes longer, commitment to a project. In 1961, the Board decided to move from this practice of "full-funding" to the financing

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<sup>1/</sup> Much of the work of the Europe and North Africa office relates to Headquarters' functions - fund-raising, public information, relations with National Committees, relations with specialized agencies, procurement and finance, etc.

of current expenditures from current income. This allowed UNICEF to expand its aid at a more rapid rate than its income for several years, drawing upon funds-in-hand, and was an important factor in the Board's agreement in 1961 to widen the fields of UNICEF aid (see para.17 above). Funds-in-hand and receivables from Governments represent UNICEF's working capital, and the guidelines set by the Board is that the amount of these should not be less than half the expenditure expected during the following year.

35. The second main change in financing was made in 1968 and 1969 when UNICEF made it possible for Governments to make special contributions for specific projects or fields of assistance, in addition to their normal contribution level. It had become apparent that a number of Governments were prepared to make earmarked contributions (in addition to the regular annual contributions) if it were possible to attribute them to specific activities which especially interested them. This possibility of "adoption" of projects (or project elements) was also open to non-governmental organizations. Safeguards were set up to avoid distortion of the over-all pattern of distribution of UNICEF aid by programme categories or countries. Special contributions were also acceptable for new projects (or extension of old projects) which were "Noted" by the UNICEF Board as worthy of support but for which UNICEF funds were not otherwise available.

36. Since this policy has been in effect, the extensive use of special purpose contributions, including funds-in-trust contributions, has become a significant element in UNICEF's income. The availability of such contributions has made it possible for UNICEF to undertake substantial emergency relief and rehabilitation programmes without reducing its aid for on-going regular programmes.

37. There is general agreement that under the present methods of "built-in" co-ordination UNICEF has the capacity to double its programme of aid with relatively little strain for the United Nations system as a whole. UNICEF's income in 1970 was \$59.4 million; its target is \$100 million to be reached in 1975.