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UNITED NATIONS CHILDREN'S FUND  
Executive Board

SURVEY ON THE NEEDS OF CHILDREN  
REPORT BY THE BUREAU OF SOCIAL AFFAIRS

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## I. INTRODUCTION

1. The survey of children's needs undertaken by the Bureau is focused upon the social welfare aspects of the needs of families and children of all age groups, and the report deals with the implications of such needs for social services and for the relevant components of programmes of community development, housing and physical planning, social defence and social research. In addition to the social needs generally recognized, attention is also called to the potential consequences for children of the impact upon them, their families and communities of accelerating change in all sectors of society, as for example, such phenomena as rapid urbanization and population growth, measures for economic growth and development such as industrialization, land reform, and other measures for national development.
2. As agreed with UNICEF, no attempt has been made to carry out a systematic new survey of the social needs of children for this purpose. Accordingly, the report is based upon an analysis of the relevant information and data otherwise available which is supplemented to some extent by recent observations and consultations by various members of our staff, as well as the reports of certain seminars and expert meetings held during the past year that throw light upon this subject.
3. During the years since the establishment of the United Nations (and even before), much study and attention have been given to the needs of children, culminating on 28 November 1959 in the adoption by the General Assembly of the United Nations Declaration of the Rights of the Child in which agreement was reached on the widest possible basis about the fundamental needs of children.
4. In a report entitled "Possibilities of UNICEF aid for Social Services for Children" (E/ICEF/377) presented by the Bureau of Social Affairs to the Executive Board at its meeting in March 1959, the fundamental social welfare needs of children were presented. The report also discussed the major social problems which influence the well-being of children, and particularly those who need care outside their own homes for various reasons or those who lack the legal and social protection required for normal physical, social and spiritual development.

5. It seems unnecessary, therefore, to elaborate in detail the information contained in that report. It will be recalled that this study and its recommendations went beyond the methods of care outside the home to stress the fundamental importance of assisting in the improvement, extension and establishment of comprehensive national systems of social services and related programmes to strengthen the family, improve family levels of living and provide children with the needed care and protection.

6. It would have been desirable to provide accurate statistical evidence regarding the extent of the various social welfare needs dealt with and to make valid generalizations or comparisons as to the relative urgency of specific needs. However, this has not been possible because of the inadequacy or lack of relevant information and reliable data. It is obvious, however, that although the needs of children are the same everywhere, how and to what extent these needs are met varies from country to country and even from community to community.

7. The needs of all families and children are not fully or adequately met in any country. Personnel and physical resources are often insufficient and, unfortunately, existing resources are not always fully utilized. Recognition by Governments of their responsibility for meeting the needs of children is most encouraging. Most of the new and amended national constitutions contain explicit references to the welfare of families and children. While this does not assure that the required services will be provided, acceptance of the principle that the welfare of the child is a major concern establishes a firm base for advancement.

## II. ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL PROBLEMS AFFECTING CHILDREN

8. Because of the impact on the well-being of families and children made by inadequate levels of living, the growth and movement of population, increasing urbanization and changes in the meaning of "family" resulting from the quickening trend toward industrialization in all parts of the world, it is essential that national programmes of social services for families and children should form an integral part of balanced programmes of economic and social development.

9. The welfare of the world's children is threatened by tremendous social problems and developments.

Poverty: A great hazard to families and children is the wide prevalence of inadequate levels of living. Insufficient food and poor nutritional practices are responsible for considerable illness, disability, death and family disorganization. It is well nigh impossible for families and children to make other social gains when destitution continues to take such a heavy toll.

Population growth: The present high birth rates, particularly in the newly developing countries, may aggravate the present problem of poverty unless real progress can be made in economic development so that family levels of living may be raised and the resources made available to provide the educational, health and social services required by the increasing numbers of children.

Urbanization: The process of industrialization, and recently awakened hopes and expectations among the peoples in the newly developing areas of the world have resulted in greatly accelerated urbanization. The individual who moves from the security of his village, his family or his tribe into the town or city has many new and strange experiences to face. He must adapt to new ways of making a living, a money economy, a radical change in physical setting and many impersonal relationships replacing warm family contacts. If he has left his family behind, his mobility between the city and his village may affect the stability of his employment and hence his income. The family left behind is faced with the economic and social strains of separation. If they accompany him, parents and children are likely to be bewildered by the new surroundings, badly housed and deprived of the warmth and support of the extended family group. The social disorganization, manifest in acute problems such as child labour, separation or divorce, delinquency, is far beyond the ability of the family to control. Such social problems are the more serious in those countries with inadequate or no legislation to protect the rights of mothers and children.

Housing: The problem of providing better housing has assumed staggering proportions under the impact of rapid industrialization and urbanization. Yet adequate family housing with amenities such as decent sanitation is essential not only to the improvement of living conditions, but also to the healthy development of the family members. The shanty towns and temporary housing which are

multiplying rapidly in the newly developing countries are a serious threat to the wholesome development of family life. The provision of more adequate housing is seriously affected by the scarcity of resources and rising costs of materials.

### III. SOCIAL WELFARE NEEDS OF CHILDREN

10. In the light of the problems facing many countries in the present phase of transition from a more static form of society to a new and dynamic society, there is an urgent need to develop national programmes to assure that the desired economic progress is accompanied by social progress as well. Programmes are therefore required to meet needs in several fields of child welfare:

(a) Family and child welfare

Social services to families and children are designed to meet the following objectives:

- (i) the preservation and strengthening of the family as the social unit wherein the needs of children can be fulfilled most effectively and completely;
- (ii) the development of a social environment in which children's needs will be adequately met. This includes programmes which will promote social development as a whole, and help to eradicate community conditions such as inadequate housing, poor sanitation, inimical to child development and the well-being of individuals and family groups. At the same time, emphasis should be placed on the development of those services which will prevent family breakdown or disintegration. Such programmes should be directed to both urban and rural populations and bring into play the efforts of families themselves to improve their levels of living and family stability.
- (iii) the provision of a legislative framework in which the integrity of the family can be protected, and the rights and responsibilities of both parents defined and the status and needs of children, legitimate and illegitimate, for care and protection be spelled out.

(b) Community development

Community development programmes in both rural and urban areas have a tremendous contribution to make in meeting the social needs of children and in improving the environment in which they live. There is a close inter-relationship between community development programmes and family and child welfare services which are recognized as basic technical components of such programmes, together with health, home economics, education, agriculture, etc. Such programmes must be strengthened as a specific method of protecting the family and of raising levels of living and helping the populations concerned to gain experience in assuming responsibility for improving their own ways of life.

To achieve these objectives, national programmes of community development are required; programmes must be established in both urban and rural areas; and the cooperation of voluntary groups should be sought, all adapted of course to the human and financial resources of each country. Multi-purpose services should be established and priorities determined with due consideration of economic, social and cultural factors.

(c) Social defence

Problems of crime and delinquency are inherent in rapid social change, and positive steps are required to limit their incidence. Family and child welfare services, particularly if they are preventive in emphasis, are especially valuable in this respect if they are able to maintain and strengthen the stability of the family group. Improvement of housing conditions, educational opportunities including vocational training and employment possibilities are also significant preventive programmes. The development of such services, especially for the rapidly increasing youth population in many countries is therefore of extreme importance.

Where children are adjudged delinquents, early treatment and rehabilitation are needed although many delinquent children need not be isolated from society. There is need in many countries for legislation to protect young delinquents through creation of juvenile courts and probation services.

(d) Urbanization

To alleviate or minimize some of the negative aspects of urbanization as it affects family life, it is necessary to provide a variety of community services to help the family adjust to a new pattern of living. Here urban programmes directed especially to women are of the utmost importance because of the significance of the mother's role in the family. Programmes such as Homecraft-Mothercraft and related community development activities are essential and should be more widely developed as a means of helping the women improve methods of homemaking, including improving the nutrition of the family, providing better child care and training, and to make the best possible use of the community's facilities. These programmes must be broadened to include help to women in their role as citizens as soon as this seems possible.

(e) Housing

In the interests of family well-being, it is essential that slum clearance and relocation of low income residents be undertaken as part of the long-range programme of housing and urbanization to which the United Nations is committed. In such programmes, promotion and development of the necessary community services and facilities including social services, playgrounds, clinics and educational facilities for adults and children, must be taken into account by the overall planning bodies if the rehousing is to be of maximum benefit.

IV. GAPS AND WEAKNESSES IN SERVICES TO MEET THE  
NEEDS OF CHILDREN

11. Greater integration of all skills within the child welfare field is urgently needed. On the one hand, any one of the recognized needs of children can rarely be met by the use of a single skill or with knowledge unique to one particular discipline. As children are human beings they do not lend themselves to being "divided up" in accordance with professional lines. Moreover, in the literature of all the helping professions, there is an increasing acceptance of the concept that "the whole person" must be provided for or treated. However, this concept has by no means been fully integrated into the planning or implementation of services

designed to meet the needs of children, despite some very positive and encouraging steps in this direction, internationally, nationally and locally. The lack of such an integrated approach is reflected in the way in which national programmes for children are being developed in some countries. There is a tendency to proceed pragmatically to meet an immediate concern, but without any long-range plan to provide for over-all needs and often with little consideration of the place of a particular service in a comprehensive plan for meeting children's needs.

12. The inconsistency between the generally accepted concept of the child as a whole person and the fragmented organization of services for him is a serious weakness in our present services to children and also places organizational and financial strains upon the limited resources of governments. This is not to underestimate in the least the vital and distinctive role of the various disciplines involved in the many facets of comprehensive child welfare services, but it is to make a strong plea for a genuine and adequate team approach among them.

13. While there is a continuing need to strengthen services to children who are deprived temporarily or permanently of normal home life, there is need for more attention to be given to the needs of the family as a whole, which is universally regarded as the best environment for the nurture of children. While internationally and nationally it may be necessary to give primacy to the seriously disadvantaged groups especially in the newly developing countries, the long-range objectives of raising the level of living for all will only be partially fulfilled unless resources can be provided in greater measure for preventive services of all kind and for direct services that will help the family to more adequately discharge the functions for which it is intended.

14. Attention has already been drawn to the inadequacy or actual lack of relevant factual information and reliable data available regarding social welfare needs of families and children, and of effective methods of dealing with such needs, specially in newly developing countries. This is a continuing problem that is urgently in need of more attention.

15. In many parts of the world, the necessary legal framework to protect the integrity of the family and the equal rights of its members has still to be established. Such legislation is urgently needed, as had been pointed out by a number of regional seminars, including the Workshop on the Extension of Family and Child Welfare Services within Community Development Programmes, held in Accra in November 1960. At that workshop it was pointed out that such legislation was required to ensure such basic needs as the legal status of marriage, registration of births, divorces, marriages and deaths, legal status of all children and the statutory obligations of spouses to each other and to their children.

16. Commendable advances have been made but a gap continues to exist in many countries between the extent and quality of services available to meet the needs of rural children as compared with their sisters and brothers in urban areas. In this connexion, there is need to increase and intensify child and youth welfare services in rural areas especially associated with programmes of community development. This would involve strengthening the social welfare component of such programmes including not only further improvement and extension of such projects as homecraft and mothercraft, but promotion and development of other activities for the social advancement of women and girls, and the training of young people of both sexes, in appropriate vocational skills as well as in social responsibilities. The number of urban community development programmes requires expansion.

## V. IMPLICATIONS FOR UNICEF AND THE SPECIALIZED AGENCIES

### General

17. The Bureau is most appreciative of the exhaustive review of children's needs which has been presented by the Executive Director of UNICEF. We wish to record our unqualified approval for the recommendation that the focus in programmes receiving UNICEF assistance should be on children in need, and that the Board's policies should be flexible enough to give appropriate assistance to countries receiving aid to meet the needs as they see them.

18. The needs of children and the necessity for rational use of available resources demand a comprehensive approach to planning for children. Therefore, countries should be encouraged and enabled to make a comprehensive approach to their overall child welfare problems. However, it seems to us further that it is equally essential that UNICEF and the specialized agencies (including the Bureau of Social Affairs) together set an example to member states by developing more adequately than has been done thus far, a similarly comprehensive approach at the international level. Such an approach is fully consonant with the co-ordination objectives of the General Assembly and the findings of the Committee on Programme Appraisals:

"Beyond the preventive approach - the avoidance of overlaps and conflicts - the need is increasing for joint future planning of programmes, ever closer co-operation on all levels, and programmes of concerted action. This emerges with great force from the appraisals. They reveal a large number of fields in which the various organizations have a common interest, which lend themselves to intensified co-operation, and where, indeed, such co-operation is imperative. Two recent factors accentuate this need:

- (i) The growing recognition of the interrelationship of economic and social factors and of the need for balanced or complementary economic and social development which calls for a co-ordination of programmes and activities in breadth and in depth. As never before, co-operation is required of economists and social experts, of doctors and engineers, of experts in agriculture and industry and others, if such balanced development is to be achieved.
- (ii) The rapid emergence of new States, particularly in Africa, which need assistance of many types, including assistance in development planning and in the formulation of requests for assistance; this makes it imperative that there should be close co-operation and co-ordination rather than competition among the intergovernmental organizations as they make their resources available to these countries."

19. A good deal of attention has been given to this matter already by UNICEF and the specialized agencies and it will receive further consideration at the Geneva meeting. However, it is of extreme importance that the kinds of policy decisions such as the Geneva meeting may reach, be fully implemented at the operating level. Unless this can be done, there is grave danger that the common objective of getting necessary services to the children who need them may founder on the shoals of inter-agency red tape.

20. The Bureau recommends that specific encouragement be given by UNICEF to countries wishing to make comprehensive surveys of all aspects of the needs of children as a basis for developing a national plan for meeting these needs and for determining priorities among them. The Bureau suggests, however, that where countries do not feel ready to undertake such comprehensive national surveys, assistance should be extended to assist with surveys of particular aspects of children's needs. This is urged especially for countries in which assessments may already have been carried out in some fields but not in others, or in other countries where circumstances may preclude a comprehensive survey covering all fields at the same time.

21. The urgent need for upgrading the skills of people working with children and for the training of many more is most obvious. The Bureau, therefore, would hope that UNICEF will continue its interest in and support of training programmes, and that it may also be possible for UNICEF aid to be given, where appropriate, for full professional training of welfare personnel as is already approved policy for certain categories of health workers. It is our view that the training of people for leadership roles in all aspects of child welfare is an essential investment toward the strengthening and maintenance of adequate services to children within countries. The Training Survey prepared by the Bureau deals extensively with this and other training needs.

22. Concerted action is desirable in respect to programmes for handicapped children who can profit from rehabilitation services. In this field working relationships and a division of responsibilities have been worked out among the various specialized agencies. This would be a fruitful area for the development of UNICEF-aided projects, especially because the needs of this group may tend to

be neglected by some countries, because of the urgency of other needs in the social welfare field, unless international aid is available. Further, demonstration of co-operation in international activity in this field may well give the lead to countries where such a team approach has not yet developed. Also the dividends from such programmes in developing self-help, a sense of personal worth for the individuals who benefit, and their families would be of great psychological importance. In isolating the handicapped, we would not wish to suggest that special or separate programmes are always required. It is important, however, that their needs be met either within a comprehensive child welfare/<sup>programme</sup> or in especially designed programmes.

#### VI. SPECIFIC IMPLICATIONS RE SOCIAL WELFARE SERVICES FOR CHILDREN

23. In the light of experience to date in planning and implementing UNICEF aid for programmes in the field of social services for children, and the available information on social welfare needs of families and children, it is strongly recommended that the Board formulate a comprehensive policy of aid for the improvement and further development of social services for families and children. Action of this kind by the Board would support the position of the ECOSOC which gave high priority to a positive programme of assistance to governments interested in the formulation of a national policy and the development of family and child welfare services as the core of a comprehensive national social service programme. Such a programme should stress a preventive and positive approach to the wider social needs of children, including types of programmes for families, children and youth in both rural and urban communities, taking into consideration such urgent needs as those arising from the impact of rapid changes in all sectors of society.

24. The Bureau has every reason to believe that countries have a great interest in making use of UNICEF aid for the further development of their social service programmes for children. It is to be hoped, therefore, that the present flexible policy of the Board to assist with the development of these programmes in the light of needs as they are seen by the countries concerned will be continued.

There is reason to feel that the Bureau will be able in the future to give more adequate technical help with such projects than has been possible in the period since the policy was adopted. Strengthening of the staff resources of the Bureau recommended by the Social Commission for the consideration of ECOSOC later this year, if approved, is intended to supplement the Bureau's present services particularly in the regional offices and commissions.

25. We believe that greater emphasis and more resources should be directed by UNICEF in the coming period to the needs of youth, particularly to ensure that young people in newly developing countries and in rapidly changing societies are prepared to play a constructive role in their homes and in their communities. This is an area which in particular lends itself to concerted action among the various specialized agencies. In the Bureau itself, community development, social services and social defence sections are most concerned with this group, and the interests of WHO, ILO, UNESCO and FAO have also been indicated.

26. The importance of community development in stimulating self-help and improving the levels of family and community living would justify support of such programmes beyond what the Board is now doing. It should be anticipated that a greater number of requests will be received for help with urban programmes and these may involve different types of needs in terms of equipment, training needed for workers and community leaders than rural programmes require.

27. Because of the interrelationship between social policies and programmes affecting families and children and the services directed to the treatment of juvenile offenders, it may well be fruitful if some of the UNICEF-aided programmes, especially for institutional personnel included personnel in some of the institutions for delinquents. Further, as UNICEF extends its aid further to strengthen the family as a unit, it will undoubtedly have a beneficial effect on rates of delinquency in many of the newly developing countries.

28. The thirteenth session of the Social Commission gave serious consideration to the related problems of urbanization, housing and community development and has prepared recommendations for presentation to the next meeting of the ECOSOC toward a concerted programme in these fields. The Board may wish therefore to consider the contribution it might make to the implementation of country

programmes designed to help solve these major problems, especially in the newly developing countries, particularly to ensure the development of adequate social services for families, children and youth within such developments. Also to improve the social environment in which children and youth live, the Bureau proposes further that consideration be given to extending aid to encourage and assist appropriate aspects of physical planning, particularly in urban areas or new industrial towns.

29. We recommend that the Board give consideration to making funds available to interested countries to promote research and study in order to provide more accurate information and deeper insight into the nature of the social needs of children, the effects of social change upon children, youth and families, also to assist with studies relevant to more effective types and methods of social services, and for experimentation and demonstration of methods and approaches adapted to local conditions and needs including particularly community, group and educational activities. Such activities are most needed in African countries where changes relate most particularly to transition from traditional customs and from rural to urban living.

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