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UNICEF

UNITED NATIONS CHILDREN'S FUND
FONDS DES NATIONS UNIES POUR L'ENFANCE

INTEROFFICE MEMORANDUM

TO: UNICEF Regional Directors

DATE: 19 May 1971

FROM: Tarlok Singh

FILE NO.: PLAN/W/1

SUBJECT: Follow-up of the Geneva Workshop on Children and Adolescents in the Second Development Decade

1. The paper on UNICEF-Assisted Programmes: Lessons from the Sixties, which was discussed at Geneva on 30 April and 1 May 1971, has since been revised. This revised paper is being forwarded to you along with summaries of the main observations and suggestions made during the discussion. As proposed in PLAN/A/1 dated 18 May 1971, the paper is to be discussed in the regional preview meetings.

2. The Executive Director's memorandum EXD/2666, dated 26 March 1971, on Planning in UNICEF at Regional and Country Level, was briefly discussed in Geneva, both in the Workshop and in subsequent meetings. In the light of the discussion, a revised memorandum will be issued in June 1971.

3. Memorandum EXD/2665, dated 26 March 1971, on Assessment of the Country Approach in UNICEF Assistance, was considered in Geneva in the Workshop and in later meetings. It is now proposed that instead of presenting a formal report on the assessment of the "country approach" in UNICEF assistance to the Executive Board at the 1972 session, UNICEF should undertake an internal study of the lessons that could be drawn from its experience in assisting programmes for the development of children and youth. It is expected that this assessment will serve as a useful basis for the study on the Perspective of Development for Children and Adolescents during the Second Development Decade, which is to be presented to the Executive Board at its 1972 session. Accordingly, as a first step, over the coming months, work on the assessment of UNICEF's role and assistance will be undertaken at Headquarters. UNICEF field offices will be kept in touch with this work and their advice and comments will be requested at appropriate stages.

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4. The paper on the Perspective of Development for Children and Adolescents in the Second Development Decade has been revised in the light of discussions in Geneva. A copy is sent herewith. (PLAN/P/1). As will be seen, the purpose of this paper is to acquaint the various agencies of the United Nations with UNICEF's objectives and approach in undertaking the study and to seek their help and co-operation. Any suggestions which you may have at this stage will be greatly appreciated. In particular, you may wish to indicate questions bearing on the development of children and youth in your region which, in your judgement, should find a place in the perspective study, so that the latter could be of practical help to UNICEF field offices, as well as to individual countries.

5. There was only a brief discussion in Geneva on the paper on Statistics on Children and Youth. The main suggestion made was that, in the first instance, UNICEF should consult with the specialized agencies and the regional economic commissions on work presently under way, with a view to determining how UNICEF could co-operate with different agencies and obtain their help in pursuing specific proposals for improvement of statistics on children and youth in selected countries. The earlier draft has been revised, and copies have been sent to various agencies of the United Nations, including regional economic commissions. A copy of the revised paper is enclosed. (PLAN/S/1). Copies of letters addressed to the Executive Secretaries of the regional economic commissions are also being forwarded to you to facilitate further consultations.

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RECORD OF DISCUSSION

UNICEF WORKSHOP ON CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENTS

IN THE SECOND DEVELOPMENT DECADE

(Geneva - 30 April and 1 May 1971)

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The Workshop met for two days, 30 April and 1 May 1971, under the Chairmanship of the Executive Director. The opening session was devoted to a general discussion. This was followed by discussion at length on the first item of the agenda of the Workshop, namely, UNICEF-assisted programmes: Lessons of the Sixties. Discussion on the third item of the agenda, Planning and Programming at the Country Level, was begun and was to be continued in the meetings to review Planning and Statistics arranged for 3 and 4 May, the results being reported for further consideration to the Executive Director's Meeting with the Regional Directors on 5 May. The second item of the Workshop agenda, the Perspective of Development for the Second Development Decade was touched upon briefly in the course of the discussion on Planning and Programming. Further consideration was deferred to 3 May, the subject being brought up again at the meeting with the Directors on 5 May.

The list of participants in the Workshop is appended.

A - General discussion (Friday, 30 April 1971)

Explaining the object of the Workshop, the Executive Director said that the Workshop was intended to be a kind of review of what we in UNICEF had learnt and what we should be doing, and how UNICEF could do a better job. He asked participants in the Workshop to give their views in a frank and open way on whatever problems they might have in mind, so that UNICEF could improve its operations.

Opening the discussion, Regional Director, Eastern Mediterranean Region, said that the terminology commonly used in development (growth targets etc.) did not give an idea of the impact on children or improvements made in the life of the child and the mother. In appraising the second development decade, it was necessary to go behind the targets proposed in the international development strategy. Even with a 6 per cent growth rate, it would be a long time before the quality of human life for the bulk of the people could change in a significant way. There was need for something more immediate and more tangible, for targets not only for ourselves, but for the villagers, so that the people could have some kind of growth path before them.

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The Executive Director said that a rise in GNP had to take place, but this was not the measure we wished to use. UNICEF's emphasis had been on social development and welfare. What kind of targets or indicators to employ was a question to which we had to give more thought.

Regional Director, Americas, said that in his region economists had responded more concretely than others to the challenge of development of human resources. It was important that, as part of integrated and balanced economic and social development, there should be sound social programming. There was need for a better balance in incomes between rural and urban areas and between different sections of the population. The question of administrative and political structures and of the distribution of power was also of great importance, and some countries in Latin America were already making changes in their patterns of organization. The truth was that, with the growth of population, at the end of the second development decade, for many in the small village, living conditions could be worse than they were at present.

Regional Director, West and Central Africa, suggested that there was need, not only for more refined tools in development, but for a better idea of the content and meaning of development. Instead of supplies and equipment engaging so much of our attention, we in UNICEF should be listening to the concepts in development as visualized by the countries themselves. We expected the age groups in which UNICEF was specially interested to become instruments of change. We had therefore to help countries to realize their own goals. It was necessary to go beyond national structures to the populations living in villages and other settlements. They had their own objectives, and we should be looking for these.

Regional Director, South Central Asia, said for the villager development meant certain tangible things, such as new crops, roads, buses, marketing, and growth of political consciousness. At the same time, there was a tendency on the part of governments to sweep some of the real problems under the mat. UNICEF had to accomplish two sets of tasks: firstly, to keep working at the foundations in terms of simple health care, nutrition, etc.; and secondly, at national levels, to participate in efforts aimed at innovation. It is true that governments were less inclined to get UNICEF into the basic activities. UNICEF had to be concerned both with activities which reached the people and provided them with the kinds of services they needed most; at the same time, it had to participate in "innovative" efforts. The expression "innovation" was somewhat of a cliché, and it would be good if UNICEF Headquarters itself avoided and instructed the field to avoid clichés.

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Regional Director, Nigeria and Ghana, referred to the extreme weakness of the basic national services in his region and to the misleading statistics which were in use, for instance, on infant mortality. It was necessary that, in the second development decade we should be completely honest with ourselves, calling a spade a spade, whether in health, community development, nutrition, or education. When people spoke of innovation, it was necessary to point out that there was already so much obvious work to be done with well-established priorities, and that existing administrative structures were not able to assimilate too many new ideas. Thus, to cite an example, health services needed a systematic review. Health centres were not being adequately used by the people. Why was this so?

Regional Director, East Asia and Pakistan, said that as conditions differed, concepts of development also differed from one country to another. It was up to the governments to define concepts. This also applied to priorities. The priorities which UNICEF dealt with were government priorities. UNICEF assistance tended to go into areas where there were powerful ministers and ministries. Perhaps, by working with planning organizations and planning institutes, we could be of help to governments in defining their own priorities. UNICEF's image in a country depended on its Representative. There was need for realistic planning, but UNICEF should not lose its reputation for efficiency in its supply and delivery functions, which received respect and appreciation in the countries in which it worked. The Regional Director stressed the importance of assuring specified amounts of assistance in advance over a period of years.

Programme Officer for Planning, East Asia and Pakistan Region, thought that the dichotomy between traditional and innovative areas of activity was not a real one. There were innovations which were less sophisticated and less costly than traditional methods, for instance, the notion of site and services in housing. Development was an elusive concept, but we knew what it meant when we saw it. Again, concepts differed. For instance, Burma and Taiwan represented two different concepts of social development. There was need for instrumentalities which could help UNICEF in its part of the programme of development in a country.

UNICEF Representative, Djakarta, explained the present arrangements for UNICEF co-operation in Indonesia (through BAPENNAS) and said that since the directive from the President less than a year ago there had been particular emphasis on balanced economic and social development. This had given greater opportunity to UNICEF to assist in the country's social development. Through experience the importance of what might be called the ABCD syndrome had been driven home - "A" standing for administrative and planning capacity in various sectors; "B" for budgetary problems; "C" for communications; and "D" for distribution of physical supplies.

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Planning Officer, Eastern Mediterranean Region said that theories gained influence for a time and then gave way to others. Thus, the threshold theory of economic development was succeeded by the approach of integrated development and development of human resources. Even though it might be superseded, each such conception represented a step in progress. It took a long time for breakthroughs in conception to come about. The real question was whether, from UNICEF, we could put ourselves in locations or situations in which structural changes were taking place, for, such changes were a necessary condition for national economic growth to filter through.

Programme Officer for Planning, West Africa Region, explained the approach being currently adopted in West Africa to get nationals from each country to prepare studies in preparation for the proposed Planning Conference at Lomé. He stressed that in the second development decade countries would wish to define their goals and priorities with the help of their own cadres, and it would be specially important to listen to them.

Planning Officer, South Central Asia Region, thought that the basic issue thrown up by the decade of the sixties was the importance of political commitment. Only where there is the necessary political commitment, the work of development really starts. It was necessary for UNICEF to be looking at outcomes in terms of the programmes undertaken. Particular attention had to be given to the selection of objectives and of areas of action. UNICEF had to continue in the traditional sectors, but in these it would be necessary to find new innovations. Of course it took time to develop innovations. UNICEF covered a variety of fields and this needed much more by way of staff and resources than were available.

Regional Director, East Asia and Pakistan, suggested that some care was needed in dealing with the concentration vs. dispersal issue. In the seventies, it would be important to help strengthen planning units within governments, so that these could develop realistic national plans.

Programme Officer, Brazzaville, said that, while field officers had the duty of implementing new ideas, they did not have adequate staff support and had not the time to think deeply about the projects they undertook. The number of deadlines should be reduced. The regional offices should be strengthened so that they could give greater help to the country offices.

Regional Director, South Central Asia, said that it was UNICEF's job to look for and find new ways of solving old, that is, contemporary, and future, or continuing, basic problems.

Deputy Director, Programme Division, thought that UNICEF was a creature of governments and up to a point a case had to be made in favour of what the organization was doing. Within the family, it was specially necessary to speak frankly.

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Planning Officer, Americas, felt that development meant big structural changes, that is, changes in political, social, cultural and economic conditions. It was necessary to talk with planners in various countries. If we wanted better programmes, UNICEF would have to define its general policies or approaches better than before. Much attention would have to be given in the future to the quality of future recruitment for programme officers and Representatives. Problems of children and youth were to be thought of as national problems and not as problems of small entities.

Regional Director, Eastern Mediterranean, reiterated that development had to be spelled out in more meaningful and in human terms, and there had to be a better measure of the impact of development in relation to the realities of life. As instances of efforts being made in this direction, he referred to the health project in Syria and the land resettlement project in the United Arab Republic. If one read a work like "Growing up in an Egyptian Village" or an account of village life in India like "Behind Mud Walls", one saw how necessary it was to be sensitive to the values of village people. Even if the goals of the second development decade were accepted, could we not translate them into more human terms?

Regional Officer, East Africa said that as far as could be observed (and of course there was need to observe more) many improvements had taken place in the conditions for children. It was reasonable to say that to some extent UNICEF had contributed to them. Various examples of improvements could be readily cited. However, there was no reason for complacency. In UNICEF operations there was some danger of extending ourselves too thinly, if we had not done so already. UNICEF assistance had tended to get extended to too many projects. Perhaps we should make a more conscious effort to correct this trend. It was also necessary to try and find ways of cutting down on paper work and to allow more time for observation and implementation. More time spent on field observation would give us a better idea of conditions than traditional indicators. More stress was needed on supervision. At present there was not much time to look at the projects and to report on findings rather than on assumptions.

Chief, Programme Development Division, Europe and North-Africa Region, said that the first action needed was to satisfy the basic needs. We knew what to do, but not how to do it.

The Executive Director observed that in the discussion there had been perhaps a little tendency to underplay what UNICEF had done. It was important not to let continuing problems cloud the job that had been actually carried out by UNICEF. The idea of concentration had been stressed so as to make better use of available resources. We should

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consider in which particular areas to concentrate. Secondly, as to types of aid given by UNICEF, we should consider whether material resources (as against local stipends etc.) were still the most important. Thirdly, the Executive Director had himself felt that the administrative expenses of UNICEF were too small, and we should have more people where jobs were being done, where UNICEF personnel were working with governments and at the grass roots level. It was a pity that the same Committee of the Executive Board dealt both with administrative and programme support expenditures. Finally, the Executive Director expressed his great appreciation for the frankness of the discussion and hoped that this would continue.

Continuing the general discussion, Deputy Executive Director (Programmes) expressed agreement with the broad objectives expressed for UNICEF in paragraph 4 of the introductory note on the scope and purpose of the Workshop. In the sixties, UNICEF had not only visualised projects, but also a much wider approach. The question was whether, with our available competence, we had means adequate for the "grand design" in paragraph 4 of the Introduction. There was the question of workload and also of future approaches to planning, programming and implementation. An extraordinarily large effort would be needed over a much wider area of development as also an enormous amount of preparation. As he saw it, it was necessary for UNICEF to work in three dimensions which might be described as being a) transcendental, b) broad areas of priority and, within these areas, the catalysing role which UNICEF could play and the new methods and the innovations which it could help evolve and c) areas of concentration. There was need to find levers of influence to work at the village level and to evolve more effective methods of implementation on the ground. A considerable gestation period would be necessary to be able to work to the design proposed for the future.

Deputy Executive Director (Planning) explained the background of thinking behind the view presented in the introductory note and in paragraphs 1-3 of the paper on UNICEF-assisted programme: lessons from the sixties. He drew attention to the consequences which the present "planning cycle" of UNICEF was having on the capacity of the organization. He offered observations on the picture which often seemed to emerge from UNICEF reports in relation to the really difficult problems which had to be overcome and the enormous gaps which in fact existed in many countries. This required serious consideration. Finally, he emphasized the need for interchange of experience and the study of innovative efforts with which UNICEF was associated and referred to the suggestions offered in paragraph 11 of the paper on lessons from the sixties.

Dr. Herman D. Stein said that, speaking from his knowledge of UNICEF over a period of 9-10 years, he believed that the discussion to which he had listened had helped establish a "perspective for realism"

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which would govern the further deliberations of the Workshop. It was his belief that the more familiar development "idioms" which had been characterized as "clichés" were prone to criticism when they masked reality, and not so much because the terms were not necessary. Identifying certain constraints governing UNICEF activities as these emerged from the discussion, Dr. Stein referred to:

- a) the fact that UNICEF depended on the wishes and priorities, as well as the support of governments, recognizing also that there are different sources and policies within governments;
- b) having to work within the United Nations system, both within existing broad policy and individual agency "lines"; and
- c) limitations of budget and personnel.

Referring to chronic, but not necessarily wasteful or disruptive "tensions" which are endemic to the work of such agencies as UNICEF, Dr. Stein specified the following:

- i) Tensions between "conversation" and "innovation" or the problem of balancing new innovative techniques and approaches with more traditional ones. Innovation in UNICEF terms referred to utilization of alternative means, role of planning in programming new ways for UNICEF to contribute to shaping of broad UNICEF policy, and project choices, formulation and assessment. In this connection, the "conservative" view was to conserve the essential values and skills which had developed over a period, e.g. the high credibility of UNICEF resulting from its ability in delivering supplies, and in its single-minded devotion to the interests of children and youth in practical terms.

- ii) Tensions between headquarters and field operations, the problems that arose from the need for headquarters constantly to synthesize and generalize assumptions for imparting a "global" direction to UNICEF's work, and from the likelihood of field offices feeling somewhat hampered by the aggregates developed at headquarters, with the sense of sufficient attention not being given always to local and regional needs and problems.

Dr. Stein suggested that what was being derived through the workshop discussion was a re-classification of purpose and perspective for the organization, to arrive at a modus vivendi in the light of changing conditions and a broad consensus on central issues. The eventual reflexion of these conclusions, however, might have to be adapted in diverse ways to the field. Dr. Stein noted the potentials identified in the discussion which could bolster UNICEF's contribution to the development process. Among these were:

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a) the greater capacity and will of governments to determine their own pattern of development and the formation of new, energetic cadres of personnel;

b) structural changes within UNICEF which were increasingly facilitating a division of labour in the light of more complex tasks, e.g. between programme and planning offices; and

c) the growing capacity of UNICEF to assume an effective and often unique role as a bridge between sectors, and between agencies.

In the process, a certain amount of frustration was inevitable UNICEF could not, for example, have political leverage, as some apparently wished, to be able to influence governmental decision-making and commitment towards a more equitable and effective process of development. Many would also like to see UNICEF equipped with expanded and even more qualified staff. Such frustrations were part of the process of growth and not negatives.

Dr. Stein concluded by suggesting that the workshop discussions, harnessed to the background material prepared for the workshop, would more readily be pursued with a hard and clear determination to identify weaknesses and problems, agreements and differences, in the light of the candor, clarity and diversity of experience and points of view characterizing the initial session.

Deputy Executive Director, Operations, examined briefly some of the development precepts which were relevant to UNICEF's work.

The recognition that economic development by itself was not enough to take account of social aspects was noted as having been widely accepted in Latin America, and increasingly elsewhere. That development services and benefits must get to all people, however, was not so uniformly recognized by Governments. (The coverage of health services, for instance, was recognizably low, ranging from 5 per cent to 10 per cent of the total population).

One difficulty in overcoming this gap was attributable to the Governments continually aspiring to attain the best standards for services, as well as for goals and means. One of UNICEF's tasks in the coming decade would therefore be that of influencing governments and sectoral authorities toward assuming less ambitious and more realistically obtainable sets of standards.

Local and recurring costs for programmes and projects undertaken by governments was another area deserving of careful

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reappraisal. It was suggested that "revolutionary changes" would be required in the methods of delivery of services, including development and utilization of existing simpler traditional channels for delivery of services.

The existence of "opposing trends" was noted, which inevitably influenced the definition of needs, policies and guidelines in UNICEF's work. Both governments and UNICEF had been overly influenced by the economist rather than the sociologist and the anthropologist in assessing what the popular needs and preferences were. In fact, UNICEF was going to have to face the realization that what people want is not necessarily what governments want.

Among other sources of disparity that had to be contended with were the objectives of individual ministries vis-à-vis those of the Government; and the point of view of the UNICEF Secretariat and of the field offices as against that held by the Executive Board.

Within programming, in addition to the choices between innovational and traditional considerations, there were other equally important ones between investment and pre-investment activities. The latter viewpoint would funnel UNICEF's limited resources into the pre-investment phase of a programme/project, leaving other United Nations agencies to take on the brunt of the programmes. Should the pre-investment concept be introduced, it would have to relate UNICEF's planning-programming exercise much more to the prospective than to the current development plan of a country.

"Selectivity" in UNICEF terms was viewed from two possible angles:

- a) as between pre-investment and investment; and
- b) as between many different competing fields of activity sectors.

A third criterion could be locational, i.e., the choice between situating UNICEF assistance in "growth points" (where, overall stimulus to, as well as additional revenues for development were likely to be), or, in remoter parts where the population was being neglected.

Closing the general discussion, the Executive Director emphasized that it was extremely important that the comments which had been made should not be allowed to "die". The process which had been begun in the Workshop had to remain a kind of living operation.

