

UNITED NATIONS
ECONOMIC
AND
SOCIAL COUNCIL



LIMITED

E/ICEF/L.812
12 August 1955

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

UNITED NATIONS CHILDREN'S FUND

Programme Committee

Recommendation of the Executive Director for an Apportionment
IRAQ
School Feeding

1. The Administration recommends an apportionment of \$148,000 to Iraq for a two-year expansion of a school feeding programme (through the school year ending May 1957) reaching at its peak 340,000 primary school children. Of this number 100,000 will be receiving school lunches, and 240,000 will be receiving only a glass of milk and fish-liver-oil capsules. UNICEF will provide 3,240 tons of powdered skim milk and 14.4 million fish-liver-oil capsules for this programme. It is expected that extension of the programme to new schools for the distribution of the milk and capsules only will pave the way for a more rapid expansion to a full school lunch programme. The current school lunch programme, which UNICEF has been assisting in the past two years (E/ICEF/R.431) began with 25,000 beneficiaries, and reached a peak of 62,500 at the end of the scholastic year in May 1955.

2. The Government has as its objective the development of a permanent school feeding programme. Originally, the Government's request was made for a three-year programme which would extend through the school years 1957-58 (with a peak of 120,000 children to receive school lunches and 250,000 children to receive milk and fish-liver-oil capsules only). However, while the Government has already made arrangements on this basis, the uncertainty of the availability to UNICEF for consumption beyond 1957 of U.S. surplus skim milk free at the port of exit has prevented the Administration from preparing a three-year arrangement at this stage. The Board may be requested to extend UNICEF aid to this programme for a third year (1957-58 school year) when the situation regarding availability of powdered skim milk becomes clearer.

/3. The Government will

3. The Government will continue to provide local foods (vegetables, bread, fruit, eggs, etc.) for the school lunch programme, and two-thirds fish-liver-oil capsules required. (During the school year ending in May 1955, the Government provided half of the fish-liver-oil capsules). The matching of the Government for the two-year programme recommended in this paper is estimated at \$1,700,000.

4. In addition to the aid for this programme, 6,000 infants, pre-school children, and nursing and pregnant mothers were receiving UNICEF milk in mid-1955 through MCW centres as part of a plan to develop distribution channels before the start-up of the UNICEF-aided milk pasteurizing and sterilizing plant.

Child nutrition

5. Information on the nutrition and health of school children in Iraq and an outline of efforts already undertaken to initiate a permanent scheme for school feeding were described in the previous recommendation to the Board relating to school feeding (E/ICEF/R.431). Out of an estimated number of 750,000 children of primary school age, the number of children attending school has increased to 293,000 (1954/55), and the Government plans in the course of the next five years to provide school facilities for the majority of children of primary school age.

Progress to date

6. The school feeding programme is under the supervision of the School Health Service Directorate of the Ministry of Health. Technical advice has been provided by an FAO consultant. Responsibility for implementation rests with school health officers who received an orientation course on the project in the capital. Provision of the local funds required is made in an annual budget of each participating Liwa (Province) set up to cover the cost of the feeding programme and to provide clothing to primary school children.

/7. Selection of

7. Selection of schools and the introduction of school lunches progressed slowly during the first year of the UNICEF-aided programme 1953/54, reaching a total of about 25,000 children. A set-back was experienced during the latter part of the school year as a result of the severe floods.

8. The experience gained during the first year of operation enabled the Government to plan more effectively and in greater detail for the second year. A Central Advisory Board at the capital, which originally had been set up within the Ministry of Health, was re-formed as an inter-ministerial body to allow more effective coordination between the ministries concerned. A similar reorganization was effected in all fourteen Liwas where the Service became the responsibility of a School Feeding Board composed of school health, education and provincial administration chief officers. By the end of the school year the programme was reaching 62,500 children daily.

9. There is evident everywhere, among Liwa officials as well as in the local communities, a positive and active interest in the programme, occasionally to the extent that planning of expansion exceeds the possibilities of existing facilities. Teachers and school medical officers have reported favourably throughout on the effect of the daily school meal and refer to such factors as a decrease in school absenteeism, reduced attendance at school health dispensaries, and more satisfactory physical growth. When the programme started in 1953, interest on the part of parents was negligible. The situation now is that schools where the school lunch service operates cannot meet new entrants' applications for lack of space. Visits made to the more distant villages in the Liwas have confirmed that the programme is penetrating, and is having a continuing impact in the majority of the truly rural districts of Iraq.

Proposed plan

10. It is the Government's desire to extend the school lunch programmes as rapidly as practical. A number of problems of organization, financing, and administration, including the relationship of the Central Government to the Liwas need still to be overcome, however, and a peak goal of 100,000 for school lunches in the school year ending May, 1957, therefore seems to be realistic. In the meantime, the initiation of a simple cup-a-milk-per-day programme in schools where full-scale lunches cannot be organized will prepare the way for a later expansion.

/11. Related to this

11. Related to this is an overall plan which the Government is currently developing, with the cooperation of WHO, to reorganize its school health services in accordance with modern public health principles. In this connexion the Government has advised UNICEF that assistance for the improvement of health and nutrition work in the primary schools might be requested.

12. The present plan would provide a daily school meal (for 150 days per year) to 80,000 children in the school year 1955/56 and increase this number to 100,000 in 1956/57. Where school meals are not served, the children will receive skim milk on the basis of 40 grams per child per day for 150 days and fish liver oil capsules on the basis of one per day per child for 80 days. The number to be reached through this distribution will be 120,000 in the 1955/56 school year and 240,000 in 1956/57.

13. Administration of the entire service will continue to be carried out under the primary responsibility of the Directorate of School Health in the Ministry of Health, which will coordinate all organizational and inter-ministerial aspects on a national level through the school services Central Advisory Board. Provincial and local community responsibilities will continue to be coordinated under the direction of the Liwa School Feeding Boards working in cooperation with parent/teacher committees.

14. Regular inspection of participating school by school health officers and education inspectors is recognized by the Government as an indispensable key to a successful programme. Lack of adequate regular transport for such supervision has hitherto been a difficulty. In view of this situation, the Government will provide each of the fourteen Liwas with a suitable vehicle which will both provide for supervisory requirements of the programme and also allow small emergency transportation of supplies to be undertaken when necessary.

UNICEF commitments

15. UNICEF would provide the following to cover the requirements for two years:

(i) <u>Skim milk</u>		
a) for school lunch programme	1080 tons	
b) for expanded milk distribution through schools	2160 tons	
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total:	3240 tons	
		(no cost)
 (ii) <u>Fish liver oil capsules</u>		
a) for school lunch programme	4.8 million	
b) for expanded milk distribution through schools	9.6 million	
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total:	14.4 million	\$35,000
 (iii) <u>Contingencies:</u>		
		<hr/>
		3,000
		<hr/>
		38,000
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	Freight:	110,000
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		\$ 148,000
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Government commitments

16. Although the government is planning a three-year programme which would involve expenditure of the magnitude of \$3 million, its matching commitments have been calculated, for the purpose of this recommendation on a two-year basis. Thus, at a cost of \$0.054 per ration per day, its expenditure on local food stuff for the regular school lunch service would amount to about \$1,460,000, besides some \$75,000 the cost of imported capsules, which, in addition to administrative costs and costs of distribution and storage, would place the total in the neighbourhood of \$1,700,000.

/FAO participation

FAO participation

17. FAO maintains an active interest in the development of this programme. The FAO Regional Nutritionist will continue to make periodic visits to assist in the planning of extensions and in the instruction courses for the Liwa School Medical Officers.

Target time schedule

18. Supplies for the 1955/56 school year from UNICEF should arrive in Baghdad as early as possible during the last quarter of 1955. Requirements for the continuing programme will be called forward as necessary. Vehicles will be made available by the Government during the first quarter of 1956.