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UNITED NATIONS CHILDREN'S FUND

Programme Committee

Recommendation of the Executive Director for an Allocation

TUNISIA

Pre-School and School Feeding^{1/}

1. The Executive Director recommends an allocation of \$162,000 to Tunisia to cover the cost of ocean freight on three million pounds of skim milk powder and to provide 253,500 pounds of powdered whole milk, 1.8 million fish-liver-oil capsules, nutrition education material and transport for the use of supervisory personnel in a pre-school and school feeding programme associated with nutrition education, to be carried out through MCW centres, schools and other institutions during a two-year period beginning in the fall of 1957. A total of 81,500 school children will be provided with powdered skim milk during the 175-day school year, while 5,500 pregnant women or non-lactating mothers and especially needy children in the one-to-three-year age group will receive skim milk through MCW centres; 6,000 children will receive one fish-liver-oil capsule daily for 150 days a year and 3,000 infants will receive whole milk daily throughout the year through the centres. (One-third of the whole milk will be provided by the Government and two-thirds by UNICEF). The existing "Goutte de Lait" programme which provides whole milk through MCW centres to 1,000 pregnant and nursing mothers and infants will be integrated into the expanded programme. Approximately 30,000 school children in 300 schools in especially needy areas will receive a complete lunch to be provided at Government expense.

^{1/} First request for assistance to this programme.

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2. Implementation of this allocation will be dependent upon the availability of United States surplus dried skim milk free of charge at shipside at the time shipment by UNICEF is required. The Government's matching costs for the two-year period covered by this recommendation would be equivalent to US\$770,000, a substantial part of which will be used to buy local foodstuffs for the school lunch programme. The overall expanded programme is expected to result in the establishment of a permanent nutrition service within the Government. An FAO nutritionist will assist in developing the several parts of the feeding programme and in the development of nutrition education. Subject to budgetary approvals FAO and WHO will provide training fellowships for governmental personnel who will be responsible for supervision and for expanding local participation in the programme.

3. The Government's long-range objective in the improvement of nutrition for all groups in the population is to bring about a complete readjustment of the agricultural economy with the aim of diversifying crops sufficiently to provide a balanced and ample diet from locally produced foods.

The present situation

4. The total population in 1956 was 3,782,000 persons and its rate of increase for the past two decades has been three per cent per year. The demographic characteristics are therefore those of a young population. Half of the people are less than twenty years old, while forty-two per cent are below fifteen years of age, and a large bulk of the population will not be economically productive for many years. The average annual income per person is twenty to thirty per cent less than in Morocco and Algeria, and unemployment is high. Post-war studies throughout the country show that among fifty-six per cent of the population, over ninety per cent of income goes for the family food budget.

5. Malnutrition is frequent particularly among pregnant and nursing mothers, and breast feeding often ceases within three months despite the traditional period

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of up to two years. Malnutrition among infants is correspondingly high and rickets either in acute or simple form is prevalent, as are conjunctivitis and other related diseases. For the period 1947-1950 child mortality represented thirty-three per cent of the general mortality. Intestinal parasitism and infectious diarrhoea are very common. In the surveys made by FAO/WHO in December of 1956, evidences of vitamin deficiencies among children were found to be extremely high in all sections of the country, ranging up to above fifty per cent in one area. It is generally conceded that the wide-spread malnutrition results not only from the food habits and economic conditions but also from the general lack of protein-rich foods such as fish, meat, eggs and milk, and from the fact that agricultural production of green leafy and yellow vegetables is extremely limited.

Plan of operations

6. The aims of the proposed plan of operations are as follows:

Long-term objectives

- a) the general development of local feeding resources and more particularly of resources rich in proteins, green leafy and yellow vegetables and fruits and the wide-spread diversification of their production;
- b) education of mothers and school children and the general population in matters of nutrition; and
- c) creation of a permanent nutrition service capable of defining the problems of nutrition, of determining their causes and advising the interested ministerial departments as to their solution.

Immediate aims 1957/1958

- a) distribution of supplementary foods to mothers, infants and pre-school and school children to correct their dietary deficiencies;
- b) immediate creation of a Nutrition Section in the Ministry of Public Health;

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- c) improvement of school meals by the organization and provisioning of kitchens through the creation of a School Feeding Service;
- d) re-organization of the milk distribution programme in the MCW centres;
- e) introduction of an educational programme for mothers into the MCW centres and into schools for school children;
- f) formation of channels through which the programmes will be administered, also the training of personnel;
- g) study and evaluation of local foods which could be utilized in the programme toward eventual subsistence solely on local resources; and
- h) stimulation of local food industries and production, and the improvement of interior economic and distributive channels in order to establish nation-wide supply and demand for a balanced diet.

PLAN OF ACTION

Ministry of Health

7. A Nutrition Section, destined to become a permanent nutrition service, will be created within the Ministry of Health, the direction of which will be assigned to a person working full-time and who will have received preliminary technical and administrative training. This section, through the intermediary of an inter-ministerial "co-ordinating group" will give technical direction to the different organizations, organize feeding and nutritional research in the families and in schools in the various regions and various social classes of Tunisia, and will collaborate in the instruction of personnel in matters of nutrition.

8. The plan for distribution through the fifty-four MCW centres will incorporate the present "Goutte de Lait" (Drop of Milk) programme and will emphasize nutrition education. Whole milk will be distributed to 3,000 infants (1,000 at the expense of the Government and 2,000 at the expense of UNICEF). Skim milk will be given

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to 5,500 mothers of children from one to three years of age during the pregnancy or nursing period or to the children themselves every day during the period from one to three years of age when need is indicated. A particular effort will be made to reach the children who are at the critical age of protein malnutrition. Assistance to all of these beneficiaries will be under the guidance of the MCW centre personnel, both the regular and home visiting and auxiliary staff. Fish-liver-oil capsules will be distributed to 6,000 children 150 days of the year.

Ministry of Education (schools)

9. A School Feeding Service will be set up under the Office of Social Action of the Ministry which, with the technical advice of the Section of Nutrition will direct the feeding programme in the schools and the nutrition education of inspectors, teachers and school children. Two full-time officials will be appointed to this service and will have as their main task the guidance and supervision of the school feeding.

10. A central supply agency will be established to distribute the powdered milk and to arrange centrally for the purchase and distribution of other foodstuffs.

11. Within the limits of the funds available for school kitchens (now providing for thirty thousand children in about 300 schools throughout Tunisia), an attempt will be made to replace present meals comprising foods of low nutritional value by others obtainable from the local markets which will provide the nutritional elements lacking in the average diet. To offset the fact that relatively fewer girls attend school than boys, the selection of girls to partake of the school meals or milk rations will be stepped up progressively in order to encourage larger female attendance at schools.

12. Certain city and rural institutions existing principally through subsidies from the State or private organizations (Koranic schools for example) and those schools in which financial contributions from the family are minimum, will be included in this programme in the same way as are other schools.

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13. In order to instruct the inspectors and the directors of the schools how to carry out the supplementary feeding programme, one-week training courses will be set up in each province as the programme develops.

Nutrition education

14. The education of mothers will be undertaken in all MCW centres by demonstrations on the utilization of milk and the preparation of foods for the smaller child, as well as on the food necessary for pregnant women and nursing mothers. The mothers will be advised on the choice and purchase or production of foods locally obtainable. Visual material such as films or simple slides will be utilized.

15. The education of school children will be undertaken during at least the last two years of primary school. The scholastic programme will eventually be revised to allow for lessons and practical work on food and nutrition. School gardens will be established and developed wherever possible.

16. The Director of the Nutrition Section and the two inspectors of the School Feeding Service will receive appropriate training abroad with the help of fellowships and at home with the aid of the FAO nutrition expert. In their turn, this personnel, with the aid of the nutrition expert, will organize local training courses for the inspectors and feeding personnel as well as for the personnel of MCW centres. The programme of education will be progressive and will be planned by the FAO expert and the interested ministries. Vehicles and educational equipment will be provided to enable the director and the inspectors to carry out their functions of supervision and education.

UNICEF commitments

17. UNICEF will supply the following for the period July 1957 to the end of June 1959:

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| | <u>US\$</u> |
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| a) <u>Skim milk powder</u> (paragraph 8) 3,000,000 pounds | NO COST |
| b) <u>Whole milk powder</u> (paragraph 8) 253,500 pounds | 72,000 |
| c) <u>Fish-liver-oil capsules</u> (paragraph 8) 1,800,000 | 4,000 |
| d) <u>Three vehicles</u> (paragraph 16) | 3,500 |
| e) <u>Nutrition education materials</u> (paragraph 16) | 3,000 |
| f) <u>Contingencies</u> | <u>2,500</u> |
| Total supplies and equipment | 85,000 |
| g) <u>Freight</u> | 77,000 |
| i) on skim milk | US\$ 69,000 |
| ii) on other supplies | <u>US\$ 8,000</u> |
| Total recommended allocation | <u>162,000</u> |

FAO participation

18. FAO will assign a nutrition specialist as soon as possible in 1957 to organize the supplementary feeding programme in the schools and for collaborating with the milk distribution programme in the MCW centres. FAO will also help to develop the nutrition education programme in all its stages, as well as to establish and assist in the training programme and to organize food and nutrition research.

19. FAO will grant a study fellowship of about nine months' duration for the Director of the Nutrition Section and a study fellowship of three months' duration for one of the inspectors of the school feeding service. As soon as the supplementary feeding programmes are put into operation, these personnel, who will have completed their studies, will take over the direction of the programmes and the FAO expert will concentrate more particularly on counselling the Government on a food and nutrition policy.

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WHO approval and participation

20. The plan outlined above has received the technical approval of WHO. Consideration is being given to provision of a fellowship on the regular WHO 1957 budget.

Government commitments and matching

21. Commitments: The Government will assure the execution of the plan of action by carrying out the following commitments:

- a) nomination of full-time personnel as follows:
 - 1 chief of the nutrition section;
 - 2 inspectors of the school feeding service;
 - 1 economist with the school feeding service;
 - chauffeurs, assistants and secretaries as needed;
- b) provision of expenses for transporting personnel;
- c) improvement of school meals according to standards to be determined;
- d) warehousing and internal transport of the UNICEF supplies;
- e) up-keep of the vehicles, supply of gasoline and lubricants and of spare parts.

The Government will also give high priority to the request for services of an FAO expert and fellowships in the Technical Assistance programme for 1958, and will assure the creation of a nutrition committee charged with helping the Nutrition Section.

22. Matching: The Government will assure budgetary provision to meet the following estimated annual costs for this programme:

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| Ministry of Education | Francs 125,000,000 |
| Ministry of Health | 10,000,000 |
| | <hr/> |
| | Francs 135,000,000 |

Thus for the two-year period of the plan a total of Francs 270,000,000 will be budgeted for the pre-school and school feeding programme, equivalent to US\$770,000 which is considered as the Government's matching commitment for the UNICEF allocation.