



TEST CF Item = Barcode Top - Note at Bottom =  
CF\_Item\_One\_Barcode\_BC5-Top-Sign-narrow

Page 1  
Date 7/25/2005  
Time 12:04:01 PM  
Login Name Upasana Youn



CF-RAI-USAA-DB01-HS-2005-00147

Expanded Number **CF-RAI-USAA-DB01-HS-2005-00147**

External ID **HST-1975-VIETNAM-SEP**

Title

**A History of UNICEF in Viet Nam. Colour version, Part 2 of 3. By Christian Salazar Volkman, Officer in Charge, UNICEF Viet Nam. July 2005. Incorporates reseach from UNICEF NY Records and Archives. See also black and white versions**

Date Created  
7/21/2005 at 11:20 AM

Date Registered  
7/21/2005 at 11:20 AM

Date Closed

Primary Contact

Owner Location

Home Location

Current Location/Assignee

Record & Archive Manage Related Functions=80669443  
CF-RAF-USAA-DB01-2004-02502 (In Container)  
At Home Location: CF-RAF-USAA-DB01-2004-02502: Upasana Youn

FI2: Status Certain?

No

FI3: Record Copy?

No

101: In, Out, Internal Rec or Rec Copy

Contained Records

Container

CF/RA/BX/ED/X/1975/T053: Administrative and Working files - Indoc

Number 3

Field 1

Field 2

Full Classification Number

Date Published

~d3: Doc Type - Forma

1:Date First Publish

Priority

Record Type **A02 HIST CORR ITEM**

Source Document

Document Details **Record has no document attached.**

Alt Bar code = RAMP-TRIM Record Number: **CF-RAI-USAA-DB01-HS-2005-00147**

Notes

Empty box for notes

Print Name of Person Submit Image

Signature of Person Submit

Number of images without cover

Upasana

51



*hygiene, and the Ministry began a five point programme to erase these diseases, promoting double vault compost latrines; dug wells; infectious disease control; essential drugs and traditional herbs; and the strengthening of the Primary Health Care [project].'*

**Rudolph Hoffmann:** *'In terms of urgency, the most important factor for UNICEF was the support for the Institute of Hygiene and Epidemiology. There was a great risk and we had to move fast with quite a variety of vaccines and cold chain equipment.'*

Vietnamese officials presented UNICEF with a plan for development of basic health facilities in the South and Central parts of the country that, like everything else, mirrored what had been established in the North. At the time, the government was busy with its resettlement programme, and needed health facilities in areas where they had been destroyed or never previously existed. During the first three years of the emergency programme, UNICEF provided bulk drugs, equipment, construction materials and other health infrastructure assistance.

### **1979: Dashed Expectations**

**Ian Hopwood:** *'There was much expectation that the reconciliation between the West, US and Viet Nam would happen rapidly. Bilateral agencies entered in 1975 and expected the changes would happen faster. It didn't work out that way.'*

Just when the emergency programmes began to generate their own momentum, South East Asian relations crumbled. In December of 1978, Viet Nam entered Kampuchea to oust the brutal Khmer Rouge regime. This act would have major political and economic ramifications, as well as for aid procurement and distribution for the country. The aid that had started to flow from the West since 1975 abruptly stopped. Much of Collins' work as Representative was determined by these repercussions and the aftermath of the Kampuchean humanitarian disaster. The global calls for aid intervention to Kampuchea – on a much lower register than what had been heard for Viet Nam in 1975- were answered by UNICEF Headquarters, which relied heavily on its Hanoi office for logistical organization.

There was considerable international disagreement over whether aid should be provided to the Kampuchians if it had to go via the Vietnamese. But UNICEF's position was consistent with its apolitical

mandate: the children and women in Kampuchea had to be protected, irrespective of any political opinion. In this case, UNICEF HQ could use its Hanoi contacts to facilitate aid to Kampuchea, though this would not help the aid dollar needed for Viet Nam - indeed, this aid intervention later became a competitive drain on funding for South East Asia.

The value of UNICEF's mandate and erstwhile displays of goodwill, it should be noted, were particularly crucial for intervention in Kampuchea. UNICEF had built up a sufficient level of integrity in the eyes of the Vietnamese Government for them to recommend UNICEF's emergency services to Phnom Penh. Again the Hanoi office was partnered with the ICRC to requisition aid for over two million Kampuchean who had survived the apocalyptic regime of the Khmer Rouge and were then facing starvation and other threats to survival.

**Helen Argyriades:** *'Our office was the only conduit to Kampuchea and, being located in Viet Nam, we were careful not to condone attempts by external elements which presented Viet Nam as the "big brother" in issues related to Kampuchea...Rather, the office had to keep a low profile in the eyes of the parties concerned, while also putting forward the goals of the organization – for humanitarian aid for children and mothers and for development assistance.*

*So there was this complexity from the point of view of international politics. There were also technical complexities, difficulties of communication, both within and especially outside the country. Telephone calls outside Hanoi...were hardly available except for Geneva and with great delays. I remember in July of 1979 we had to wait seven hours to get a line from the Central Post Office to a colleague in Geneva to dictate to him a cable to be sent to Collins, who was then at Headquarters on mission. The cable was the result of the final discussions between the ICRC and UNICEF on the one hand, and our Government counterparts on the other; it relayed the Government's consent to the reconnaissance mission to Kampuchea, which was prior to any aid efforts, and outlined the conditions for it – one being that UNICEF should go in as well as the internationally accepted ICRC as partner.*

On a side note, it was UNICEF's actions in Kampuchea that instigated a gradual return of its presence to Ho Chi Minh City. By the end of 1979, Jacques Beaumont, again the UNICEF man on the ground in Indochina, was directing aid provision efforts from Pnomh Penh to Hanoi and then on to Headquarters. Negligible Kampuchean telecommunications

required that UNICEF have a liaison in HCMC to receive Beaumont's daily call and then pass his orders along. Consequently, UNICEF was able to establish 'the UNICEF Antenna': a single person by the phone in a single room at the Caravelle hotel in Ho Chi Minh City. But great things often have small beginnings; UNICEF only left the Caravelle in 1982 for a larger, more practical office area, once the Water and Sanitation (WATSAN) and Education programmes were established in the South.

Thus UNICEF's progress in Hanoi translated into a broader ability for the agency to impact on crises in a neighbouring country. While this extraordinary circumstance undoubtedly pulled attention away from daily country operations, a far greater challenge was put to UNICEF's country programme by the international community. They condemned Vietnam's battle with the Khmer Rouge, set up embargoes against Viet Nam, and eliminated the majority of donor financing.

### **Loss of Face**

**Fouad Kronfol:** *'It is amazing how Viet Nam came out of its war with the USA in 1976 as a 'darling' of the international community and garnered tremendous support, aid and recognition, only to lose all that and turn into the world's pariah in less than three years after the incidents with Kampuchea. The paradoxical reactions from around the world which condemned and ostracized Viet Nam but also sent kudos on their eliminating the murderous Khmer Rouge regime were most revealing. From the UNICEF Viet Nam perspective, our concern was that Headquarters and other UNICEF entities became so absorbed with the Kampuchea emergency and that its billion dollar programme for some 4-5 million people completely dwarfed the Viet Nam programme serving the 60-plus million population.'*

**Paul Louis Audat (Representative, 1983-1987):** *'One could see what effect the Western reprobation against the Vietnamese intervention in Kampuchea, in particular the halt to the majority of international assistance, had on daily life. But I never really understood this reprobation because I met many more Kampuchians who were grateful towards the Vietnamese for having delivered them from the genocide of Pol Pot than Kampuchians who condemned the intervention of those on their territory. This reaction was a particularly Western one, and it did nothing but reinforce the relationship of Viet Nam to the Soviet Union and COMECON and quarantine the country I had come to serve for UNICEF.'*

Things went from bad to worse. Viet Nam's relations with China, its principal source of material, technical assistance and food, rapidly deteriorated over northern territorial disputes. About 160,000 ethnic Chinese left north Viet Nam for China, resulting in an escalation of inefficiencies at the Hai Phong port and subsequent UNICEF programmes and deliveries, as much of the ports operations had been run by ethnic Chinese. In February, China struck, hitting the northern border provinces and crippling their agriculture-based economies. Negative impacts from the wars with China and Kampuchea were further magnified by massive flooding the previous year that had wiped out over 3 million tons of food crops, livestock and storage and directly affected 5.8 million people, and typhoon Nancy, which then struck in September, 1979.

The irony was that the rest of the world was celebrating the International Year of the Child, and using the chance to bring all potential partners together for participation in improving conditions for their children. UNICEF Hanoi, however, seemed to be back at square one. It had to extend its programmes of reconstruction and rehabilitation of war-torn services that had been scheduled to expire in 1979. It also had to move the goods that had been targeted to the 1978 flood emergency to the more seriously affected areas in the North. It had to resume working in conjunction with the WFP to deliver food assistance. And all this had to be done against a backdrop of significantly lower contributions from donors.

### ***Your Attention Please***

In 1979, the Hanoi office was in a financial bind. Only \$9.46 million had been received from various governments by the third quarter of that year, far below previous levels. Attempts were made to strengthen international public awareness to the cause in Viet Nam. Jacques Danois, Regional Information Officer, co-produced two films; one with Vietnamese television and another in conjunction with the Central Committee for Protection of Mother and Children. There were also three official visits from UN Headquarters: Sadako Ogata, Chairwoman of the UNICEF board, UN Secretary General Kurt Waldheim, and Henry Labouisse in November.

**Helen Argyriades:** *'Labouisse came right before Bertram [Collins] left. It was something that the Vietnamese government wanted and that Labouisse wanted, which was courageous on his part, as his own*

*country was not a friend of Viet Nam. But he felt that he was an international civil servant. He was a diplomat but a very gentle, sensitive person who was well aware of his position as an American.*

*He was the guest of the Government and met everyone. Labouisse explained the interests of UNICEF in Viet Nam. The hospitality was exemplary. We all attached great importance to that visit – and we felt it was a successful visit - in order that relations would be smoothed.*

*For Ogata's visit, we went to the South. It was important that Ogata [see what we were doing in order that she could] talk to the Executive Board about our programme and that the Board would support it. She had to bring back samples of Vietnamese goodwill, proof that they would cooperate and cut bureaucratic procedures. She also had to convey the problems we encountered in our work, the welfare of the staff and how we were treated. It was the first look of an international board member, and interesting because Japan was not friendly towards Viet Nam. But she was well received.'*

*On the day that Mrs. Ogata was leaving, the Vietnamese military planes were criss-crossing the skies in anticipation of the Chinese conflict. That came soon afterwards and lasted about four to six weeks, during which there were talks of evacuating the members of the international community. The office, however, continued to work without interruption. But Kampuchea, though on all parties' minds and mentioned in the talks held by Mrs. Ogata, was no longer a priority during those six weeks, as the invasion was to come within 100 kilometers of Hanoi.'*

### **Take a Look Around**

One positive outcome of these high level visits was that it allowed UNICEF to begin field trips. Organizing field trips had been difficult for a variety of reasons. One needed permission well in advance to leave Hanoi; travel to the central and southern provinces was impossible except by air; tickets required authorization by relevant Ministries, which then had to inform relevant local authorities; and, lastly, the office was short-staffed and could not easily make do while staffed traveled. This process was made nearly impossible from the conflicts in the Northern provinces and along the Cambodian border. This reticence resulted in inadequate monitoring, feedback and performance assessment of the projects.

Despite these difficulties, in 1979 UNICEF was able to organize a

lengthy tour of the South, as well as of ports and water projects in Hai Phong and Southwest provinces, and training schools in the Hoa Binh province all took place.

**Jacques Danois:** *'Travel was not a problem when I went with Sadako Ogata and together with the TV team. We were there to show what UNICEF was doing, and what needed to be done. We were all interested in the same thing, and since we were with Vietnamese television, there was a lot of press coverage and no constraints. We went all over, showing these films in different villages.'*

**Helen Argyriades:** *'The field trips were organized by the government. We would propose, and they would agree. Out in the field, the Vietnamese would never ask for anything. A proud people. We never had meals with them on the trips; they would just disappear. We could not understand this. But then we realized they were giving us the best they had. It was only later that we managed to have meals with our colleagues.'*

*In the North, we always went by jeep. There were no petrol pumps, so we carried the petrol in a jeep and every 100km we would fill it up. Trips could last ten days. We saw a lot of projects and observed what they were doing on their own. A lot of it was readying to receive aid. They did not have resources, but they wanted their people to be trained.'*

*We worked with the local people...They all had to work the land. Even the Health person would work for a while but then go work in the field as well, in order to feed the family. Finding food was the priority, and salaries were next to nothing for the public. But still, they never asked for anything. We would then read the [international] newspapers which described the Vietnamese as hard people who did not like foreigners, and we couldn't believe we were in the same country.'*

### ***The End of the Beginning***

At the end of 1979 and Collins' tenure in Viet Nam, the domestic status sheet looked like this:

The school building programme was 84% complete and construction of the two teaching-aid factories and training of staff was in the advanced stages. UNICEF was continuing deliveries of teaching equipment and material for day-care nurse training and family planning and

motherhood classes. Construction had begun on a factory for weaning food, improvement of the water supply systems in Hanoi and Hai Phong continued, and contributions to a rural sanitation programme were concluded. Further equipment for 400 health services and 50 pediatric and maternity stations in various parts of the country was distributed, as was material for the 45 day-care centers to be built in 1980. A toy factory was planned and equipment ordered, though the project was to suffer repeated delays. Lastly, UNICEF delivered parts and tools for maintenance of vehicles and instruments, ambulances for maternity clinics and X-ray equipment to fourteen hospitals.

**Helen Argyriades:** *'Bertram Collins introduced to our counterparts the idea and the reality that UNICEF's main contribution and natural progress in the country was to invest increasingly in human resources development [in the fields of education, health and nutrition], training and technical assistance. It can also be said that Bertram's great contribution was the consolidation of a basis of trust on which his predecessor François Remy had built the cooperation between Viet Nam and UNICEF.'*

UNICEF Viet Nam's first two Representatives had relatively clear-cut objectives: to move the programme from a war footing to an emergency aid intervention and then, when possible, to a normal programme of development. Due to the subsequent changes in the neighbouring political landscape, and the influence of the international fallout, the UNICEF programme made the transition from aid to cooperation shortly after Collins was replaced by Fouad Kronfol in early 1980. Though it is easy to group these Representatives due to their collaborative efforts and the unique circumstances of the Viet Nam mission, each one, with their team, made their own distinct contributions.

**Rudolph Hoffmann:** *'Remy was there in 1975 and established the emergency cooperation and the groundwork for future programmes. Collins started a first regular programme in 1977 with focus on health and hygiene, but which also covered water supply, education and social affairs. Kronfol continued in 1980 with a programme based on training, institution building and experience exchange.'*

### **Legacy of the Early Days**

**Dr. Charles Egger:** *'To have face in [this] country... one had to recognize what they had gone through and be prepared to take this into*

consideration when negotiating with them without giving up any essential premises. That UNICEF was able, gradually, to come to an acceptable level of cooperation is a great credit to both the organization and particularly those who were negotiating at the front line and representing UNICEF's interest there.

Perhaps some of the aid and investment we made were not necessarily at the beginning the most appropriate and in certain fields too sophisticated. It was all part of the effort to come to terms and show our interest in helping to rebuild the institutions of a war-torn country for so many years cut off from the outside world. But basically, in terms of helping in the strengthening of their concept of primary health care, in facilitating a new beginning in education and encouraging also local production, and taking an interest in early childhood education, all very much to the credit of UNICEF and showed positive results in the collaboration with Viet Nam which was also increasingly appreciated by the government.'

RECONSTRUCTION (1975 - 1980)



*Dr. Francois Remy, 1<sup>st</sup> UNICEF Viet Nam Representative (1975 - 1977) attending the opening of the Ho Chi Minh mausoleum*



*UNICEF Staff at the entrance of Hotel Hoa Binh. Bertram Collins, UNICEF Viet Nam Representative (1977-1980) is standing on the left*



*Ian Hopwood and Simon Spivac in the UNICEF office at the Hotel Hoa Binh*



*Bottom row from the right: Fouad Kronfol, UNICEF Viet Nam Representative (1980 - 1983) and James Grant, UNICEF Executive Director (center)*

---

## Chapter III

### Expansion and Integration (1980-1989)

#### *Change of Command*

James P. Grant replaced Harry Labouisse as Executive Director of UNICEF in January, 1980. In the same month, Fouad Kronfol, a Canadian, came to replace Collins. Grant, through his dynamism, was to make indelible directional changes to the agency, launching a 'child survival and development revolution', which aimed to eliminate the death of millions of children from easily preventable diseases.

In Hanoi, as in New York, the programme was also to undergo significant realignment. Collins and staff had prepared a three year proposal (1980-82) that largely focused on carry-overs from relief and emergency operations. But the next three years were going to be characterized by greater development planning. Because resources were thin, emphasis was placed on structure and implementation and more criteria for review and evaluation. Better information, better research would lead to a tighter focus and long-term planning.

**Helen Agryiades:** *'The arrival of Fouad, with his thorough knowledge and experience of UNICEF country programming, signaled the beginning of a new era for UNICEF in the country. UNICEF cooperation needed gradually to grow...[and] for this, we needed to increase the number of experienced staff, to secure funds, and also to involve our counterparts in the programming process.'*

#### **Fouad's Agenda**

**Fouad Kronfol:** *'With Viet Nam and China on the war footing, the country was still locked in the state of emergency. The office at the time operated under two factors: under the atmosphere of uncertainty and second, we had no money. By going into Cambodia, the Vietnamese had displeased everybody...all supplementary funding was cancelled. The country budget was somewhere between \$12-15 million, and then we had zero.'*

Even humanitarian assistance was slowed, with most donors only continuing ongoing projects. The decision by the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD) to stop programmes in the country was one of the more critical of such developments, as was the deferment of a \$26 million irrigation project by the WFP. Many of the bilateral donors either cut or froze their development aid.

**Fouad Kronfol:** *'I remember the acrimonious meeting of the Executive Board when some of the members insisted the aid to Viet Nam be cancelled. This was the first time in the history of UNICEF that the Executive Board wanted to cancel aid to a country. It was undoubtedly one of my most unpleasant experiences.'*

The UNICEF Hanoi team was faced with two clear challenges: a) to try and find other sources of money and to convince Grant to increase the general resources, and, according to Kronfol, b) to continue to 'push the Vietnamese into programming that made more sense'. The established pattern of government-insisted equal distribution of aid to all provinces was to be cut. In its place came a needs-based approach that fitted a limited budget and eliminated inefficiencies. It was necessary to show the Vietnamese that doing things differently also meant more ably and effectively. It was also necessary to show Headquarters that the urgency in Viet Nam had not disappeared when the UN spotlight moved over Viet Nam's western border.

The reality was that the country had one of the weakest economies coming out of the war. And after unification, both halves of the country lost their most important bilateral aid providers (USA in the South and China in the North). So in 1978, in order to redress these losses, Viet Nam joined COMECON and became a beneficiary of aid from the Eastern Bloc, most of which centered around barter arrangements.

### **Grant Pays a Visit**

**Fouad Kronfol:** *'It is interesting how the confluence of events eventually helped us to obtain more resources for Viet Nam: a) Jim Grant had his own agenda centered around child survival which he was pushing; b) The Kampuchea emergency was taking too much of UNICEF's resources and management time and he was determined to get out of it as soon as possible, and; c) His visit to Viet Nam to ostensibly discuss Kampuchea served us in Hanoi with an opportunity to trumpet our cause.'*

**Rudolph Hoffmann:** *'Grant came in the summer of 1980 [accompanied by Dr. Egger]. He was questioning the accommodations and could not believe where and how we lived. When he came, we had dinner at Hoa Binh prepared in the kitchen that was actually the bathroom. We were sitting in Kronfol's bedroom, and Grant asked me, 'Can you explain to me where are these people sleeping?' And I said, 'You are sitting right on it!'*

Grant doubled the general resources from the initial \$1.8 million. This helped, but it was not going to be nearly enough. General resource allocation, after hitting a low in 1979, leveled off at \$4 million from 1983 onwards. UNICEF Hanoi was forced to make a case to re-classify Viet Nam in UNICEF's categories to Headquarters.

**Helen Argyriades:** *'It proved extremely difficult to increase the funding outside of regular resources. Fouad tried many ways and succeeded in some. Among those desperate attempts, at the time, was also an effort to include Viet Nam among the Least Developed Countries (LDC). Viet Nam fulfilled all the economic criteria (low income per capita, etc.) but not the criterion of a 'very low literacy rate'. For this reason, the Government of Viet Nam understandably preferred not to be listed as an LDC and thus we could not benefit from some funds from that category.'*

A similar attempt, but with different results, came when Kronfol targeted the National Committees for UNICEF for extra funding, using connections in New York and Geneva. The manner by which UNICEF intended to drum up funding was again disagreeable for the pride of the Vietnamese Government. To overcome this, Kronfol needed to show his counterparts that they would stand a better chance if they momentarily checked their pride at the door. He also needed to convince them to allow international visitors to travel outside Hanoi to see firsthand what had been done and how much more was needed.

**Fouad Kronfol:** *'When I proposed to the Vietnamese government that the National Committees come and visit, it took them three months to accept. I insisted we go to the provinces to visit the health centers and villages, and this was not agreeable to them. They wanted a visit of 2-3 days in the capital during which they would show their 'success stories'. I wanted the opposite: to visit child-care centers and get a real sense of the crying needs of the country. It took a lot of effort to get them to 'play*

*the game'... But in the end, the upshot was remarkable: 17 presidents of European, Canadian and Australian Committees visited the country for the entire week. The visit was a great success. Everyone was happy and the National Committees were impressed with UNICEF's work and happy to raise money. Soon thereafter we received \$100,000 from the French, \$30,000 from the Spanish, with Norway, Germany, the UK, Australia and Canada coming through with additional funding'*

This was critical for the success of the country programme because many of those who had visited voted in support of augmenting the funds for Viet Nam, testifying that the needs were indeed great. Their recommendations overcame the objections of some of the Board members, including China, ASEAN countries, the UK, and the USA, who had urged that no money be sent to Viet Nam. From there, further positive results from other efforts brought an increase of the general resource commitment from the allotted \$16 million to \$27 million over the period 1983-86. This gave UNICEF Hanoi desperately needed breathing room. Financially, it could be considered another major breakthrough for operations.

## 72 Ly Thuong Kiet

Hotel Hoa Binh was both home and office until 1982, when it moved to a renovated villa at 72 Ly Thuong Kiet St. in Hanoi. The point that had been driven home during Grant's visit was that if UNICEF was no longer conducting business in a relief/emergency mode, its premises should also look the part of a more 'normal' office. Furthermore, two new positions were created for international staff (a WATSAN Project Officer and a Programme Assistant) and operational and technical staff were added. Working and living conditions were cramped. Space and permanence were sought out.

**Fouad Kronfol:** *[Hanoi's austerity] was exemplified by the UNICEF villa which I took over in order to get us out of the Hoa Binh Hotel. There must have been at least 50 people living in it (who were eventually evicted, much to my chagrin), its condition was so deplorable that no less than eight diplomatic missions refused it when it was opened by the Government. I saw possibilities in its setup, worked at it for 18 months, and the rest is history. When we left in June 1983, it was the most elegant apartment/office in Hanoi, the envy of many diplomatic missions.'*

It may have been the toast of the town, but it was still very much a work in progress. Stephen Woodhouse, the UNICEF Representative ten years later, recalled that even then it was still in its very rudimentary stages. Expansion on the villa was being done during his time, and it was still being used as both home and office.

**Stephen Woodhouse, Representative (1992-1995):** *'It was Viet Nam's 'leaning tower of Pisa'. It had a definite lean to one side, so I brought in a team of...engineers to assess the potential repercussions of it leaning so...They told me that the leaning had stopped, that it would not be a problem, but that the problem was that the building was sinking! I asked them how quickly and they said it would take centuries, so not to worry.'*

### Turning Points

Fouad Kronfol served as Representative of the Viet Nam programme for just under four years. That alone was a change in precedent; previously, since Hanoi was considered a hardship posting, tenures were kept short. Helen Argyriades also requested and received an extension – and returned ten years later for another two years. This wasn't just

because Ly Thuong Kiet was more comfortable than the Hoa Binh. It was because Viet Nam was, even in the UNICEF realm, an atypical posting at a critical historical moment. The Hanoi team was somewhat of a pioneering presence in a new but increasingly remote country; challenges came both from within and without – the latter meaning without valuable donor support. Professionally, the experience would be difficult to replicate.

In these circumstances, the Kronfol team was able to significantly modify the emergency programme inherited from the first five years. Through realignment of priorities and success in finding alternative sources of funding, the UNICEF Hanoi team introduced a shift in programming and staffing to development cooperation and an emphasis on an area-based quality approach. As Hanoi and the mission moved from an emergency hardship posting to a normal posting, international staff were brought on board with years of relevant expertise, but despite UNICEF's efforts, there was still no local Programme staff.

**Fouad Kronfol:** *'Incidentally, I went to the Foreign Ministry and asked about bringing in American citizens and if it would be all right. The answer was, 'We won the war; why should we mind?''*

### **Pick Six**

Relations and coordination between UNICEF and government departments were deepened, partly due to the longer terms of service and the opportunities such provided, as well as from concerted efforts to literally begin to reach lower-level administration and communes. A key result of these factors was the work done in the specific provinces and the widening of UNICEF's overall understanding of the country and what UNICEF could do to help. UNICEF was able to make new progress starting with developing a statistical profile of children's problems.

**Kronfol:** *'[For programming], this is how it worked: we focused on six provinces; we selected a variety and didn't want the richest or the poorest. We then set objectives together with the Vietnamese. The selection was one national average [province], one poor, one better off, and so on. From this, we were then able to start going to these provinces on a regular basis and we were able to find out about the realities, especially in the South.'*

The six were split equally between North and South (Northern: Ha Nam

Ninh, Thanh Hoa, Nghe Tinh; Southern: Kien Giang, Long An and Minh Hai). From there, UNICEF was able to make new progress, starting with a statistical profile of children's problems (situation analysis). This then led to direct collaboration with technical ministries, and the promotion of regular technical cooperation. All of this culminated in the first long-term Country Programme.

**Fouad Kronfol:** *'The fact that my team was trying to introduce so many new areas of collaboration, to push for different working methods, to request information that was not easily admitted, to make demands on their bureaucracy that were not earlier made – all this did make our interlocutors nervous and often anxious. In the end, however, the results spoke for themselves and they came around to accepting most of what we proposed.'*

### **1980: Changes Made**

The start of a new decade also served to herald fundamental changes by the Vietnamese Government in the structures of many of the government organizations UNICEF dealt with. One of the most significant changes was in the field of nutrition. The Vietnamese Government made nutrition a separate high-priority, rather than just being one factor in the equation of population growth and agricultural production. This change was prompted by flooding in the North that led to poor harvests in 1980-81, and a subsequent realization that poor choices were leading to an inadequate supply and selection of food for the population. The Government promptly established the National Institute of Nutrition, and UNICEF's support began shortly thereafter in 1981. The initial focus was on research gathered by the Central Committee for Protection of Mothers and Children which showed the low calorie, vitamin, protein and mineral intake and resulting growth anomalies in infants. A joint survey one year later, with WFP/FAO/WHO and UNICEF showed the initial survey had only scratched the surface of the severity of these deficiencies, and drew greater attention to the lack of vitamin A, the prevalence of parasites and digestive infections in hospitalized children, low birth weights and second and third degree malnutrition in children at day-care centers.

Other fields in UNICEF's universe began to see similar government attention. The relevant authorities began reforming Education; established the National Water and Sanitation Committee and corresponding National Plan of Action; began research in women's issues with the Women's Union; introduced the concept of Personal Health Care, the Control of

Diarrhoeal Diseases (CDD) and local production of vaccines for the new Expanded Programme on Immunization (EPI). The Government's proactive approach was going to change the nature and future of UNICEF's country programming.

Hand-in-hand with this more open dialogue went the enlargement of programming targets. With the Government on board with UNICEF's area-based approach, there was less of a worry that an egalitarian disbursement of assistance would mean materials went inefficiently to some areas where they were not required and were spread too thin in others. Equally positive were the Government's requests for UNICEF's expertise in projects in the Central and Southern provinces - areas whose access had largely been restricted since the end of the war. Two of the more critical developments, for both UNICEF and particularly southern Viet Nam, were in the fields of Water Supply and Health Care.

### ***Water, Water Everywhere***

The UNICEF Water and Sanitation Programme (WATSAN, now known as Water, Environment and Sanitation, or WES) is preventative public health engineering. If an ounce of prevention is really worth a pound of cure, then the ability to transport clean water and safe hygiene practices into the home should be a top priority in Primary Health Care and other programmes like the Control of Diarrhoeal Diseases. In Viet Nam, where, according to Bernard Gilbert, UNICEF WATSAN Programme Officer 1986-91, 97% of school children had parasite infestations due to poor sanitation, and water-borne and poor hygiene diseases were the leading killers, the need for clean water and sanitation in the immediate post-war phase was dire.

There was a programme of UNICEF assistance to water supply in southern Viet Nam in the years leading up to 1975. Though the Water/Sanitation programme did not start in full force until 1981, UNICEF did find itself involved in a number of substantial projects during Remy's and Collins' terms. In the period 1976-77, UNICEF provided 70,000 units of water supply and waste disposal at the commune level, as well as different costly water rehabilitation schemes in suburban Hanoi and Hai Phong. And though water issues were clearly at a much more critical state in the South than in the North, it took some time before UNICEF was able to establish a more or less constant southern WATSAN programme presence. Despite being nominally based in Hanoi in order to have better access to the relevant ministries, UNICEF's early WATSAN

consultants and staff ended up spending a clear majority of their time, budget and effort around the Mekong Delta. This logistical fact was the leading argument for the eventual expansion of UNICEF's presence in Ho Chi Minh City from a single room in the Caravelle hotel to a larger sub-office.

### ***Watering the New Economic Zones***

During the period from 1976 to 1980, 1.5 million people were moved to what were known as the 'New Economic Zones' (NEZs)– with 600,000 of these coming from Ho Chi Minh City in the first year alone. Most of these zones were in less settled areas in the Mekong Delta. Access to adequate drinking water and sanitation was a great challenge.

**Per Engebak, UNICEF Consultant (1979-1980):** *'UNICEF had been invited to participate in infrastructure development for the 'New Economic Zones'. Up to this point, no foreigners had ever been allowed to visit these camps and therefore it came as a bit of a surprise to many in Hanoi that the Government had invited the UN to visit these camps.'*

Leo Goulet was brought to Viet Nam in September 1980 as the first UNICEF officer specifically assigned to a full-time, long-term water supply post. Much of his work in the following five years was based around the NEZs and the Mekong provinces.

**Leo Goulet, Project Officer (1980-1985):** *'At the outset, the Government was mainly interested in obtaining UNICEF assistance to drinking water for the NEZs in three provinces of the Mekong Delta: Long An, Minh Hai, and Kien Giang. That is why assistance went through the Ministry of Agriculture. There was little talk of sanitation, if any, in those days. Sanitation and hygiene promotion activities were being carried out separately by the Ministry of Health, without direct UNICEF assistance.'*

There were a variety of serious impediments to fulfilling the Government's design, including natural factors like limited groundwater resources – which, contained high iron and salt content. The alternative short river courses in close proximity dried up in the summer months. At that point, drilling had been the main source of water provision, but it was expensive and used largely unsuitable equipment. Furthermore, there was a general lack of technical expertise and also the problem of infrastructure – particularly regarding transportation of materials.

**Leo Goulet:** *'My travels to the NEZs were often by boat, as the canal network was more extensive than the road network, particularly in the NEZs located near the Cambodian border, in areas such as the 'Plain of Reeds' in western Long An Province. In that particular area the soil and, not surprisingly, the surface water, is highly acidic. Living conditions were extremely poor and soil conditions were not well suited to farming – excellent reasons for explaining why they had never been inhabited in the first place.'*

The commonly accepted solution, not just in the South but in most developing countries, was that providing clean water could only come from heavily engineered public works and not simple, low-cost installations. Interest lay in the drilling of high capacity wells connected to a piped system and equipped with electric or diesel driven motor pumps. UNICEF needed to convert the skeptics to a more practical alternative

**Leo Goulet:** *'The conditions of the Mekong Delta – great depth to bedrock, aquifers at depths of 100 metres or more, overlain by deposits of clay – dictated that the technology of choice would be hand-drilled wells equipped with suction hand-pumps.'*

Government counterparts had never seen or heard of this technology and naturally wanted to stick with high capacity wells. UNICEF brought in a technician, Abul Kalam, who had been employed in WATSAN UNICEF in Bangladesh, a country with similar conditions to the Mekong Delta. In Bangladesh, it was the low-cost, easy-to-use, easy-to-repair hand-pump that had revolutionized the water situation in that country. In 1981, he brought with him a 'Number 6' hand-pump and some drilling bits for manually operated drilling rigs.

### ***The Future in One Day***

The site chosen for the first UNICEF assisted well of the 'new era' was just west of Bac Lieu town, south of the Mekong Delta. In a manner that equaled the resilience and ingenuity of the Vietnamese, the UNICEF team improvised a support tripod for the drill stem and drilling rods from government-issue pipe, and drilling fluid from a concoction of water and cow manure. For a well screen, they cut PVC pipe, wrapped it with plastic window netting, and secured it with copper wire bought at the local market. The drill stem was rotated manually by a couple of men who held chain tongs and walked around it in circles. It wasn't pretty. It must have smelled. But it worked.

The aquifer was reached at a depth of approximately 100 meters. As the well was under artesian pressure, water rose within the casing type to within a few meters of the surface. From there, the 'Number 6' suction hand-pump was installed and the authorities contacted.

**Leo Goulet:** *'All of this was accomplished in one day, and by the next morning water was flowing from the well. This event was key to the launching of the entire programme. The next day senior provincial officials were invited to see the installation, and everyone was quite impressed. I believe that it was at this point that the Government realized this sort of technology was far more appropriate for the Mekong Delta than high capacity wells, and that it would be at least as useful installed in already settled areas – not just NEZs...One handpump in the lower delta areas can provide relatively large quantities of water and, if necessary, additional pumps can be installed without difficulty because of ease and low cost.'*

The programme, for the next few years, was exclusively the hand-pump and hand-drilled wells. The Government was very supportive, and made it clear from the start that it was to be a Government programme supported by UNICEF, and not the other way around.

**Leo Goulet:** *'In the beginning, UNICEF did not have its own project vehicles or staff and the Government supplied, at their cost, the vehicles, fuel, interpreters, and so on.'*

At the time, there was no question of providing water to individual households, as installations were meant to be for 'community water supply'. Rural water supply activities centered on the three provinces of the Mekong Delta. The first of 100 wells in Long An, Minh Hai and Kien Giang were drilled and pumps installed. Use of four groups of skilled workers given on-site training in techniques introduced from Bangladesh and study tours were successfully organized to Bangladesh and Burma exposing a team of Vietnamese officials from national and provincial levels to water supply programmes in these countries, application of technologies and programme management.

**Bernard Gilbert, Senior Project Officer (1986-1991):** *'Thanks to a system of provinces working together, the clean water project was expanded slowly from six to 13 to 27 provinces and then [in 1993] all over the country. The water programme in Viet Nam became one of UNICEF's most successful in terms of cost-effectiveness and the number of people who benefited.'*

## **Lost Zones**

But despite attempts to the contrary, the creation of New Economic Zones did not help lives get off to a new start, nor erase the historical economic distinctions. Many who had been relocated to the zones ultimately went back to the city or their homelands.

**Leo Goulet:** *'The NEZs never really took off in the way that had been anticipated by the Government...Work continued there for the benefit of the relatively small number of people who were actually living there, but those numbers were always small when compared with the established population of other parts of those provinces, who were also suffering from lack of clean water. But as the WATSAN programme has always been 'national' in nature and needs-based, the NEZs were never excluded from the programme.'*

## **Sanitation: Same Same But Different**

The bright success of the Water programme was not extended to Sanitation. As with Water, one of the problems in Sanitation was the numerous agencies and ministries that divided up responsibility. Sanitation was ultimately the responsibility of the National Institute of Hygiene and Epidemiology, but UNICEF also collaborated with the Ministry of Health for latrines and wells. Collaboration between the Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Health, and the NIHE only developed slowly, and any type of technical support was lacking.

There were also similarities with Water in terms of the different North-South conditions and practices. Unlike Water, certain problems in Sanitation are culture- or nature-based. Solutions rely on education and conditioning, which can bring a whole host of problems in approaching a difficult subject and different, more hygienic practices.

**Leo Goulet:** *'Prior to reunification, the North had a long-standing policy whereby every household was expected to have, or have access to, a protected dug well, a sanitary washing area, and a composting latrine. This appeared to work fairly well, as conditions are largely favorable to the installation of dug wells, however, the latrine composting process was not closely followed and ended up often as a pit latrine that did not safely decompose its contents.'*

**Bernard Gilbert:** *'The Ministry of Health used what were called 'double vault compost latrines'. Several studies demonstrated that they functioned badly and we found out that they were used to collect excreta, which was then used as fertilizer in the paddy fields. This practice was largely responsible for the very high levels of parasite worms amongst children [in the North; levels in the South were much lower due to different practices].'*

**Leo Goulet:** *'In the South, it was not as easy to install dug wells, and toilet practices were often dictated by where people lived. As many live near waterways, makeshift latrines are installed on pylons directly over the body of water concerned, or even fishponds. So although the Government clearly recognized the importance of clean water and sanitation, there was much to be done to change long-established habits and introduce technologies for both water and sanitation.'*

In preparation for the 1983-86 Country Programme, after insufficient progress, it was decided to separate Sanitation in order to give it a stronger definition rather than be subsumed as a secondary activity to water supply.

The joint effort made by the Government and UNICEF in establishing the National Water and Sanitation Committee in 1982, which produced the National Plan of Action for rural water supply and sanitation, adoption of low-cost technologies and production of supplies, brought more effectiveness into the programme implementation in the 1990s.

### **Primary Health Care**

**Dr. Charles Egger:** *'[By the beginning of the 1980s] UNICEF and WHO worked out the key elements of a new Primary Health Care policy in the form of a wide network of simple health care and protection over which local communities were to have decisive responsibility. Thousands of auxiliaries, drawn from the communities, were to be trained.'*

Viet Nam – the North, in particular - was a natural for the introduction of Primary Health Care (PHC). The practice turned basic health care responsibilities over to local communities under the premise that 'health for all is also health by all'. While this might have appeared a fundamental practical shift, the reality was that health by all had been the norm throughout the war years and beyond. The socio-political system alone stressed shared responsibilities and broad participation in

all areas of life, both for the community and the individual. So in 1980, as part of the Country Programme, Primary Health Care was essentially an ex post facto declaration on the status quo. The greatest requirement for turning the norm into a fully-fledged programme in the North was training auxiliary health staff and nursing assistants and replenishing severely depleted supplies.

The South was a decidedly different picture. According to the 1983 Annual Report, only Ho Chi Minh City and the provincial centers had had a well-organized curative health care system. But coverage was far from adequate; most of the rural population was left uncared for. Furthermore, preventive health had hardly been developed. And for once, the Government's attempts to transpose the Northern model on southern shortcomings did not turn out as well as anticipated.

**Dr. Pham Ngoc Len:** *'The South had been based on the American model, which was not providing the necessary care at every level. On the commune level there was almost nothing, only staff working in private services. In order to bring the South to the standard of the North, it was necessary to modify the training curriculum. The Government launched a massive training programme, set up provincial medical schools, and recruited heavily among the gifted students. Ordinarily, it took six years to become a medical doctor; three years for an assistant; one year to become a nurse. But this modified curriculum returned the recruits to their homelands to practice after five years.'*

*There was also the argument that the Northern programme was too dense for the South – that perhaps it was not necessary for every district to have a hospital, or every single commune center. The Minister of Health, Dr. Pham Song, came up with an intermediate proposal, in recognition of demand patterns and the urgency of the situation. And so the southern system was not totally turned into the Northern model; there are southern districts that do not have district hospitals, and so on. This is sometimes referred to as the Pham Song System.'*

UNICEF, for its part, focused on training and planning of services in the South, and strengthening logistics in the North. Country-wide, UNICEF support extended beyond the communal centers to the district hospitals. It supplied equipment for the maternity and paediatric wards, with coverage for about 30% of the total district hospitals in the country by the end of the Country Programme. The PHC programme also, for the first time, focused on strengthening services specifically in minority areas.

The PHC operated on a four-tier system comprised of the communes, districts, provinces, and the National Center. The pillar was the commune health center. It covered the widest range of population, reached the least reached and the least advantaged. But owing to the vulnerability of provincial budgets, the communal health center was the most vulnerable to cuts. Manpower and equipment often were bypassed in order to pay for new health care buildings. Initial UNICEF surveys found great discrepancies in staff expertise and overall capabilities; it was one thing to have a communal health centre that was to cover the needs of up to 5,000 people, but another thing entirely to adequately maintain it. The great strength of community volunteers (in the North, there was virtually one volunteer per household) was a manifestation of good intentions, but not a guarantee of proper care.

Ideally, with UNICEF supplies and expertise, they would be better positioned to cover treatment of children's diseases, antenatal and post-natal care, deliveries, and preventive health activities. The key to future health lay in whether Viet Nam could make good on its great potential.

### ***(UN)Certain Futures***

As the programmes began to cover greater parts of the country, and as more and more like-minded organizations would begin to establish themselves in Viet Nam, UNICEF was able to expand its targets into more sophisticated areas of concern, including gender development, ethnic minorities and, eventually, social work. This blend of learned expertise and programme evolution was necessary for UNICEF, as it needed and wanted to maintain a relationship with Viet Nam that kept its unique value while the players and the field began to change. Eventually, UNICEF and the Government would work in collaboration with the World Food Programme (WFP), the World Health Organization (WHO), UNESCO, UNDP, UNFPA, FAO and UNHCR, as well as an incoming tide of NGOs and generous governments like Japan, Australia, Sweden and Denmark. The road into Viet Nam, for the correctly credentialed, was slowly growing wider.

Ultimately, all these factors would contribute to UNICEF creating a more coordinated Country Programme. Sections would combine for a cross-cutting approach that would build on the early success of the WATSAN projects in the South which had spearheaded other programme interventions. The message was that no one concern existed in a vacuum, and that the most efficient means to reducing problems like

infant mortality and increasing general levels of health was to envelope the focus areas – in other words, the best way to lower the under five mortality rate and ensure a healthy infant was to focus on ensuring a healthy pregnancy and a healthy, educated mother.

### ***Proof Positive: National Immunization Programme***

The 1980's began to shed light on two of UNICEF's greatest growing concerns: the plight of the poorest of the poor, and intervention for those living in difficult to access areas. By mid-decade, Viet Nam's infant mortality rate was in the group of middle rank countries at 68/1000, while the under 5 rate, at 95/1000 was categorically high. But these numbers masked a substantial inter-provincial variation, with estimates for under 5 showing discrepancies between 150 and 20/1000. The leading causes for both morbidity and mortality were infectious and parasitic diseases, with respiratory infections and diarrhea accounting for nearly 60% of all deaths under five. The other leading threats for survival were preventable diseases.

A large part of James Grant's legacy was his call for UNICEF to eliminate the 'global silent emergency': the deaths of children from easily preventable illnesses. He launched a global 'child survival and development revolution' in 1983 to bring this phenomena to an end through immunization, oral rehydration and breastfeeding. In Viet Nam, his message found a willing audience. Two of the more noteworthy country-wide health projects that were impressive in their rapid achievements were the National Expanded Programme on Immunization (EPI, also referred to by Grant's title of Universal Child Immunization, or UCI) and secondly, the Control of Diarrhea Diseases (CDD). The former was largely a Government-led prevention project, the latter a joint WHO/UNICEF curative project. Both projects were progressively expanded to the entire country on an ambitious time schedule.

In 1981, UNICEF had adopted a long-term strategy to support local production and quality control of EPI vaccines, especially BCG (tuberculosis), DPT (diphtheria, pertussis, and tetanus), TT (neonatal tetanus), measles and polio. According to Nguyen Thi The Yen, UNICEF HCMC Assistant Project Officer, Monitoring, Viet Nam's domestic production of immunizations dates back to when the network of Pasteur Institutes was formed in the country. But it was only a trivial production with a small number of products available, including rabies and

smallpox. UNICEF's initiative and support focused on the Nha Trang Institute with the goal of mass production of vaccines. With the Government leading the way, by its third year, coverage for EPI reached 183 communes in 38 districts, with the 80% target coverage for DPT, measles and polio vaccines.

**Dr. Cao Viet Hoa:** *'At the earliest stages of EPI implementation, the Government was already allocating funding for vaccine delivery – around VND 50 billion annually, matching donor resources – and matching donor resources of around VND 1,000 to 2,000 per child in their spending. It was a strategic intervention.'*

As a priority programme for the Ministry of Health, immunization moved quickly – so much so that it exceeded the 1990 target date for Universal Child Immunization by a full year. Targets for immunization coverage were revised upwards and a new goal of eradicating polio by 1998 was added. By 1995, the EPI programme covered 85% of all children in Viet Nam, and a neonatal tetanus elimination plan had been included. UNICEF had provided vaccines, cold chain equipment, needles and syringes, transportation equipment and non-supply assistance. Funds came from the Government of Australia, the Japan National Committee, and Rotary International. But further proof of 'nothing succeeding like success' was Viet Nam's Government budget allocations for EPI, all of which were either maintained or increased. Subsequently, the number of children who died of infectious diseases dropped by 30% over a five-year period ending 1995, as mortality rates for children under one year old dropped to 38/1000 live births, while rates for children under five years dropped to 68/1000 live births.

**Tarique Farooqui, Representative (1987-1992):** *'In July of 1990, the Universal Child Immunization was achieved. It was a monumental success whose impact on the reduction of child mortality and morbidity would only be recorded in subsequent years. It was an event worthy of celebration and a formal declaration by the Government of Viet Nam. The celebratory function was held in the People's Hall – the first time that the venue would be opened for a 'diplomatic' function where, apart from the Government and representatives from grass roots organizations, NGOs and UN personnel were invited. Present were key ministers and the then Prime Minister, Mr. Do Muoi.'*

Diarrhea remains one of the most common diseases that lead to children under five dying in many developing countries and Viet Nam was no

different. Diarrhea can result in severe dehydration and death if it is not identified early enough and no adequate re-hydration treatment is taken.

The project known as Control of Diarrhea Disease (CDD) was begun to reduce child morbidity and mortality from diarrhea by encouraging exclusive breast feeding; supplementary child feeding using safe, clean water and proper hygiene, such as washing hands with soap.

**Dr. Cao Viet Hoa:** *'CDD followed a little later with a network more or less like EPI. But unlike EPI, it was much more a UNICEF-led programme, under the guidance of the Pasteur Institute in Nha Trang and the National Institute of Hygiene. It was started with the aim of reducing the under 5 mortality rate, and on such terms it can be considered successful. However, there are still questions about its effectiveness in reducing morbidity. The reality is that the cases of diarrhea were and are still not drastically lowered, due to other contributing factors.'*

By 1990, the CDD project was implemented in 40 provinces, protecting 62% of children under five years in the country. Like EPI, CDD saw rapid expansion to the whole country – though in a slightly altered format. The target was to achieve 90% coverage of children under five by 1995. UNICEF had, by this time, been concentrating on 18 provinces in the country. The approach was to attain 100% coverage in these provinces, while aiming for 50% coverage in a further 29 provinces outside of the UNICEF universe, with the remaining 6 provinces targeted for coverage of less than 50%.

**Dr. Cao Viet Hoa:** *'UNICEF and WHO wanted to improve the knowledge and skills of the caretaker [parents, family members], so that the child could be cared for properly at home. This was particularly important in the field, where the usual practice was for health care workers to go and find the children, or perhaps be met by the parents half-way. The caretakers were educated on oral rehydration solutions (ORS), which showed the caretakers that they could continue to feed the child while administering care. Up until then, it was a common but misinformed practice to stop feeding in order to stop the diarrhea.'*

*Both CDD and EPI were a credit to a focused, urgent cooperation. Other programmes like the Control of Acute Respiratory Infections, Trachoma Control, and Prevention of Malaria and Dengue shared similar objectives, if not quite the rapid success or collective priority. But they all show what could be achieved in Viet Nam when there was a committed like-mindedness.'*

### ***Doi Moi: Viet Nam's Renovation***

**Paul Louis Audat, Representative (1983-1987):** *'The economic situation of Viet Nam when I arrived was rather disastrous. The country had suspended the reimbursement of external debt, they were import-dependent on food – rationing was the rule, with nothing on the shelves - and 40% of public expenditure was going to defense.*

*In June of 1985, the Communist Party took steps to allow for a free market. There needed to be a revaluation of the currency, as inflation was high and led to the growth of the black market. The year ended with the public disorganized and disoriented, with criticism coming out in the press. The 6th Party Congress that followed seemed to be the last hope for an economic resuscitation or perhaps the dawn of a political liberalization.'*

In 1986, the Government began introducing a series of measures for the social and political reform of the country known in Vietnamese as *Doi Moi*, or 'renovation'. These measures would generate economic growth rates between 7% and 9% through most of the 1990s, and the new opportunities that markedly improved the standard of living for most, particularly those in city and industry centers. *Doi Moi* measures were not confined to economic policy; Viet Nam's external relations were opened wider in order to engage opportunities that would come from beyond their socialist community partners. The Government's adoption of two major resolutions curtailing their military activity in Cambodia made it easier for the international community to accept Viet Nam's new open door policy and come in with a mind to make investments.

Further reform measures would follow against a greater global break-up and the reported end of the Cold War – the implications of which would reach all the way to the markets of Viet Nam. 1989 was the year of the fall of the Berlin Wall and subsequent tumbling of socialist states in Eastern Europe. Financial, material and technical support to Viet Nam from Eastern Europe essentially ceased. But in this case, where a window was closed, a door was opened: The West showed a renewal of interest, and by re-positioning its markets, Viet Nam's trading partners went from around forty in the COMECON to over 134 countries and territories by 1987. Just as critical, according to Viet Nam's General Department of Statistics, the level of Official Direct Assistance (ODA) rose both in volume and number of donors so that by 1992, ODA would

reach \$560 million - up from \$218 million the year before, and with UN organizations contributing around \$71 million. Unlike the COMECON period, ODA was not just going to meet the needs in consumer goods, but for physical restructuring of industry and the country. Viet Nam was beginning to beat a vigorous path towards liberalization and modernization.

**Helen Agryriades:** *'[When I returned to Viet Nam] the Doi Moi process had already begun and changes were visible. Though the center of Hanoi had not changed very much - some public buildings had been repaired and repainted and bicycles, as always, crowded the streets - with motorcycles a recent addition) - there was a new, intensive commercial activity evident everywhere, from food to clothes to art. The average person was becoming able to repair their home, to purchase essential items and commodities and to make improvements in their daily life. Construction of new homes or repair of old ones was evident everywhere. The girls began preferring modern hats and jeans over traditional items, much to the sorrow of foreigners. Beautiful small pagodas, hidden in narrow alleys were now open and functioned. And, most important of all, we could talk to people more easily and were even, occasionally, invited to some homes. This was greatly appreciated.'*

### ***The Wall Comes Tumbling Down***

On the broader perspective, Viet Nam was becoming increasingly aware of its potential and future role in the region. It talked openly of the need to enter such bodies as ASEAN and other regional forums. As such goals were attained, access to regional and international trade partners brought benefits and know-how, as well as greatly needed foreign exchange. The Representatives during this period, Tarique Farooqui, Stephen Woodhouse, and Rima Salah, were able to reap the benefits, as aid coffers filled up again.

Some performance measures had been gradually introduced earlier, and had served to prompt leaders to push forward on a national scale. One of the most important changes was in agriculture, where a policy of semi-private farming that gave the worker control of a parcel of land and a production quota, and the freedom to sell surplus production at market prices was initially administered in the North before it went national. The resulting de-collectivization was a true turning point not only in embracing more free market ideas, but also a dramatic rise in food

production that would lead Viet Nam to achieving nutritional self-sufficiency. Production yields rose from 12.5 million tons in 1981 to around 16 million for 1983, and by 1989, Viet Nam was able to switch from being a net food importer to the world's third largest rice exporter, exporting 2 to 4.5m tones of rice annually.

This was a significant turnaround, but it is also necessary to point out that the hard currency earned from rice exports went to purchasing fertilizers that had up until recently been procured from the Soviet Union at highly subsidized prices. And when one considers that average energy food intake per capita around this time was only 85% of the recommended 2,200kcal/day, with one-quarter of the population suffering from inadequate energy intake and nearly 9% chronically starving, then the buzz from record rice harvests of 24 million tonnes in 1992 gets toned down considerably.

**Prof. Pham Minh Hac, former Minister of Education:** *'As a Vietnamese and as a father, I was happy and pleased to see Viet Nam change from a rice importer to an exporter of three million tonnes per annum. But at the same time, approximately 40% of children were malnourished. Such a high percentage then - and it is still high today, with goals of reducing to 25% by 2010 – bothered me greatly.'*

**Paul Louis Audat (1983-1987):** *'The decision to make drastic budgetary measures to control public expenditure resulted in cuts in social areas – most notably for UNICEF were those that concerned the infant. But in terms of the overall economy, the consequences were near immediate. At the time of my departure in 1987, the sectors of trade, agriculture, and industry were all entering into full growth.'*

**Christian Salazar, Senior Programme Officer (2001-present):** *'You cannot divide UNICEF from the political and economic reforms of this country. With the Doi Moi, what Viet Nam was saying was that if it wanted to integrate with the world, it had to open up to the world around it in all fields, including social fields, human rights and the rule of law.'*

Good news and positive figures were filling local headlines, and the international and business worlds were reading enthusiastically. Events for the Government and UNICEF were no less positive.

**Helen Argyriades:** *'Surely the Doi Moi process brought a greater ease in coordinating our work with that of our counterparts. There were*

*several sector meetings with each of our counterpart Ministries, Committees, the NIHE, as well as inter-sectoral sessions in an attempt to achieve a measure of coordination. Although initially meetings were formal, it had become easier to approach individual counterparts to discuss details, or to go over a text, than it had been [when I was here] eight years before. [By this time], expatriate staff were allowed to have private cars. Thus going to an appointment with Vietnamese colleagues, we could use my car...and if our counterpart knew English or French, no interpretation was needed, as it would have been in the past.'*

### **A Woman's Place**

In October 1987, Tarique Farooqui arrived in Hanoi as successor to Paul Louis Audat.

**Tarique Farooqui (1987-1992):** *'On my appointment as UNICEF representative I studied the evolution of women in society and took note of the quantum leap by which the cause of women's emancipation as well of participation had progressed during the preceding four decades. Having a first-hand experience of the severe limitations on women's roles in many developing nations, I was thrilled at the possibilities presented by Vietnamese women of a meaningful and sustained partnership in the UNICEF programme of cooperation. [UNICEF] consciously embarked upon laying a solid foundation of cooperation with women's organizations country-wide, and principally with the Vietnamese Women's Union.'*

There were two significant developments during Farooqui's first year: The UNICEF Country Programme 1988-1991 introduced support for women in development, and the creation of the stand alone 1989 UNICEF and Government multi-sector proposal for supplementary funds for health care and education. The latter aimed to reduce child mortality and morbidity, but was just as much an attempt to bring the young mother and women to participate in the economy. Women were to be viewed as agents of development and thus were to be given access to financial resources and credit. This marked the beginning of specific attempts to promote empowerment.

Across the board and across the country, no one group was more vulnerable to poverty than women. Among the poor, it was the women who were poorest. And it continues to be. So while Doi Moi would lead to new job and entrepreneurial opportunities for women as well as men,

and would facilitate many women's escape from poverty, there were still traditional limitations for Vietnamese women that hindered a more balanced gender improvement.

The problem was that there was no sense of gender balance to work from. Women had to work longer, combining their job and work at home, earned around 25% less than men on the same job, had less rest and social opportunity, less chance at finishing primary school, were less able to qualify for credit, and were less recognized in terms of decision-making than their male counterparts. Despite all these burdens, women still managed to outlive their male counterparts – 63 to 58 in 1987, though this could also be seen as the final burden, as retirement was dependent on health and family, and medical treatment became prohibitively expensive for the poorest.

Viet Nam's 1945 Constitution had given women equal rights and its system had endorsed the view of woman's equal contribution to building up the country. But most point to the war as the defining moment when women came to play a dual and pivotal role.

**Madame Nguyen Thi Binh:** *'Vietnamese women played an important role in the war, and now in development Vietnamese women still play an important role. So it is very natural to have a demand for training and improving women; that is the only way we can help them to make a strong and positive contribution to the economy and a good position in society. Especially in Viet Nam, the role of the woman in the family, as wife and mother, is something super and something we need to maintain.'*

UNICEF support to programmes for women had begun in collaboration with the Women's Union (VWU) in 1981 but had moved slowly, as there was uncertainty as to what form cooperation should take. But the cuts in social services quickly created clear areas of need. Rising costs for maternal and child care effectively eliminated these options for the poor, which had unfavorable knock-on results of higher malnutrition rates in women and children and increasing drop-out rates amongst girls. UNICEF began to work in earnest with the VWU, as well as with the Central Committee for the Protection of Mothers and Children - the Government body responsible for programmes for the young child.

**Tarique Farooqui (1987-1992):** *'Our great fortune was that on the Vietnamese side, Mme Nguyen Thi Binh, the Vice-President of the*

*Republic was the President of the Vietnamese Women's Union...We received a pledge from Mme Binh that the members of the VWU would act alongside the Government functionaries and UNICEF throughout the country; VWU had a membership of 11 million and 11,000 union branches at grassroot levels. They kept their promise and for the next four years played a remarkable role of advocacy for our programmes and of cooperation in the fields of primary health care and nutrition for pregnant and lactating mothers, day care centers and community education through the Facts For Life.'*

### **The Facts and More**

In 1989, UNICEF and the Women's Union introduced a book and subsequent micro-credit scheme that was to become the backbone of women's training and development in Viet Nam. A Vietnamese version of the UN publication, *Facts for Life*, which contained pertinent information on ten health and survival topics, including breastfeeding, immunization, household hygiene and HIV/AIDS, was to be given to Vietnamese women. According to Margaret Black, 'teams of communicators - 25,000 altogether - were trained for both public meetings and one on one household visits.' *Facts for Life* was later translated into five ethnic minority languages (H'mong, Thai, Tay-Nung, Bana and Gia Rai) with the support of UNICEF to improve access of ethnic minority populations to these messages.

Alongside the *Facts for Life* project, UNICEF and the VWU produced booklets on female hygiene knowledge, childhood diarrhoea and malnutrition. Special versions targeting rural and illiterate mothers were also distributed. Equally as important was the ability to get the messages from these publications out to communes throughout the country. The Women in Development project pushed training of basic communication skills, project planning and management targeted all levels of key women's cadres. Other activities concentrated on the promotion and education of women as mothers through the VWU's 'To Be a Mother Programme'. This backed up the lessons learned from the *Facts for Life* on infant and child care, education, safe-motherhood, breastfeeding and family planning.

By the middle of the next decade, more than 100,000 Vietnamese women and girls owned their own *Facts for Life*. World over, the UNICEF publication, including the Vietnamese adaptation, became the most widely distributed book in the world after the Bible.

**Tarique Farooqui (1987-1992):** *Goodwill Ambassador Mme. Tetsuko Kuroyanagi, during her visit to Viet Nam, went to the VWU headquarters. [She spoke with Mme. Binh] and was so moved that she pledged \$1 million towards the UNICEF programme in Viet Nam. Upon return to Japan, she promptly remitted the amount out of her reserve fund.'*

These lessons were then taken to a higher level with the Early Childhood Development (ECD) programme. Like the EPI, ECD was a high priority of the Government, and like the aforementioned stand alone agreement with UNICEF, the goal was to help women participate more fully in social and economic life. ECD was to attempt to achieve this through communal development of the child through childcare services and facilities. The focus was on a broad combination of health, nutrition, water, environment, education and psycho-social activities for the child. It was a lot to expect, but then there were many collaborators, including MOET, MOH, the Ministry of Labor, Invalids and Social Affairs, the Institute of Early Childhood Studies, UNFPA, and even the Vietnamese organization for the Technology for Gardening, Fishery and Animal Husbandry (VACVINA).

Only problem was the budget. All those Government ministries and all Viet Nam's women couldn't put a deteriorating day care system back together again. The costs for the buildings, furniture and play areas were to be borne by the community, as was the salary of temporary staff. The Central Government was to provide the salary for the permanent staff. But in a telling rebuke to these ambitious plans, the Government had a hard time keeping teachers owing to the low pay and incentives: most of the ECD teachers received 30 to 40kg of paddy rice in lieu of cash, or opted out for higher-paying employment.

**Madame Nguyen Thi Binh:** *'In the past, there were times when the day-care system was very well developed, and it greatly helped the mothers. But with the introduction of the market economy, this has deteriorated, as have others, and it is a concern to restore the strength of this system.'*

## **National Programme Staff**

By the end of the 1980s, the Ly Thuong Kiet office had grown considerably. Physically, UNICEF was expanding its staff and areas of expertise at a pace that would require the construction of an additional wing by the end of Farooqui's term. Internally, there were now separate sections for Health, Nutrition, Water and Sanitation, Education and also for the newly created Information and Communication – alongside the Administration and Finance stalwarts. Up to this time, however, there had been no national programme officers. It would not be until 1994 that UNICEF would formally appoint forty-five local staff members under United Nations terms of employment.

**Tarique Farooqui:** *'...UNICEF did not have sufficient number of national professional staff to interpret and act as facilitators...with Government counterparts. So...a thoughtful restructuring of the office was put in place. National staff were [intensively trained then] gradually given responsible roles in programme planning and monitoring. Communication and information section was also added to the organization, which would play a key role in advocacy, dissemination and social mobilization activities.'*

**Helen Argyriades:** *'Each [Section], with the exception of Communication, had an International Programme Officer and a National Officer. The presence of local Programme and Administrative staff was something UNICEF had wanted over the years. It now promoted the transfer of skills on the one hand and on the other, eased immediate contact with counterparts and country realities, which in turn could be reflected in the programming progress at every phase.'*

*Our Vietnamese colleagues were eager to assist in official and unofficial circumstances. They would smooth our way in official negotiations and procedures and would help us...in contacts with bureaucracy...They had learned a lot about UNICEF and espoused its cause, often even when interpreting at official meetings. It was evident at the times that they were given to supporting UNICEF's positions even more forcefully than we would.'*

**Tarique Farooqui:** *'I believe Mr. Truong Gia Nhan, our former interpreter, deserves a mention in our history. His contribution to enabling us to communicate with the Vietnamese counterpart was colossal. Mr. Nhan helped me establish a relationship of trust and of mutual respect with the Vietnamese high officials and the society at large which included the beneficiary target population...[His interpretation] helped me achieve the acquiescence of the Vietnamese in facilitating my travel to hitherto closed parts of the country, thus facilitating UNICEF situation analysis and outreach.'*

### **Audrey**

For Communication and Information, it was important to maintain the goodwill that had been generated recently and the funding that resulted from it. It was a time when the international media was interested in the stories and opportunities of a new Viet Nam, but it was also a time where UNICEF could show the world how much more could be done for the children of Viet Nam. UNICEF chose to convey this message through one of the world's most highly-regarded actresses of the twentieth century, Audrey Hepburn. Her role as the first Goodwill Ambassador to Viet Nam in 1990 turned out to be one of the most successful publicity events on an international, domestic, and UN scale – and paved the way for others, including Sir Roger Moore, Judy Collins, Nana Mouskouri, and more recently, Jackie Chan.

**Helen Argyriades:** *'As the Government was to be her host and, indeed as her fame was little or not at all known in the country, it was necessary to introduce her, both as a personality and in her role of Goodwill Ambassador...She met Government and Party officials at the highest levels...To say that everyone, locals and foreigners alike, fell under her spell is no exaggeration. Her intelligence and sensitivity came through in her emotion and interest in what she saw and learned in her field visits and meetings.'*

*The Government put at her disposal a large helicopter for her visit to minority villages in the mountains. In one of the houses we visited, the local women dressed her up in a traditional costume. Her walk down the hill, looking happy, followed by all the village, singing and playing their instruments, was something from a scene of Pied Piper.*

On her last day, she gave a press conference for local and foreign correspondents and the embassies' press officers. She began by saying that she could not speak in technical terms but, after what she had witnessed, she wanted to speak as a mother. She told of her impressions and what she hoped to be able to achieve through her visit, without minimizing the difficulties of her ultimate mission after she left the country.

There can be little doubt that this Goodwill Ambassador's visit was effective.'

EXPANSION AND INTEGRATION (1980 - 1989)



*Mme Nguyen Thi Binh, Minister of Education & Nguyen Le Van, who made films of UNICEF projects, with Jacques Danois*



*Paul-Louis Audat & wife (in centre of photo), UNICEF Representative (1983 - 1987) and UNICEF Staff at 72 Ly Thuong Kiet, Hanoi.*



*"No 6" water hand pump, adapted from those used in Bangladesh*



*UNICEF Goodwill Ambassador, Audrey Hepburn visits Viet Nam*



*Viet Nam achieves 80% immunization coverage. UNICEF Representative, Tarique Farooqui (1987 - 1992) with the Viet Nam Prime Minister, Do Muoi*