

# A HISTORY OF UNICEF IN VIET NAM

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Dear friends of UNICEF,

You hold a fascinating book in your hands – a book that tells the history of UNICEF in Viet Nam through the testimonies of several generations of professionals who worked for and with UNICEF in Vietnam with only one aim: to improve the life of Vietnamese children and women.

Over more than three decades, UNICEF has faithfully pursued its mandate to support the fulfillment of child rights and women's rights in Viet Nam. Reading through the lines of this book you will see how the political neutrality of UNICEF and its aim to put children at the heart of social development built up trust, credibility and a very special relationship with the people of Vietnam. At the same time, the history of our cooperation with Viet Nam reveals the difficulties in navigating UNICEF through the political sensitivities during and after what came to be known in Viet Nam as the American war. It also illustrates how the credibility and integrity of UNICEF staff enabled the organization to constantly develop innovative programming for children and thus fruitfully contribute to the outstanding social progress for Vietnamese children and women since the 'doi moi' period.

This book is not only about the past – it is also about the future. Viet Nam now stands on the threshold of becoming a developed country and faces challenges that are as great as the challenges of the past. The country must continue to reduce the number of children living in poverty, while at the same time addressing new social pressures on children and families resulting from rapid social change and modernization. But even though the new challenges are tremendous, we in UNICEF remain optimistic that Viet Nam will master them. And we will do everything we can to support the people and Government in this endeavour in the years to come.

Past, present or future - any achievement of UNICEF would not be possible without thousands of dedicated people from all over the world who join hands with the people of Viet Nam in order to improve the lives of its children. It is to these committed professionals and volunteers and to the children of Viet Nam that we dedicate this book.

Christian Salazar Volkmann  
Officer in Charge  
UNICEF Viet Nam

## ***Acknowledgements***

Fact alone is a poor storyteller. While this is intended to be a memoir on the past thirty years of UNICEF in Viet Nam, it must be admitted that it is by no means a definitive account. Information has been sourced from the New York Headquarters archives, from the Hanoi and Bangkok offices, from Annual Reports and other country-specific publications, and from UNICEF's in-house publications, ranging from Jack Charnow's and Baquer Namazi's interviews with Executive Director Henri Labouisse, Dr. Charles Egger, and Jacques Beaumont, to personal memoirs like Dr. Francois Remy's, '40,000 Enfants par Jour – Vivre la Cause de L'UNICEF' and Jacques Danois' films, 'A Good Start', 'Rice, the Pen, and the Anvil', 'Pilgrims of Goodwill' and 'To Win the Peace'. Much information has also been sourced from the sections on Viet Nam and Kampuchea/Cambodia\* in Margaret Black's two historical accounts of UNICEF, 'Children and the Nations – The Story of UNICEF' and 'Children First'. A more detailed list of sources can be found at the end of the memoir.

But most importantly, a large part of the information presented here has come directly from those who were involved at the time. These personal accounts have added great substance and flavor to the previously published facts and statistics. It is through these accounts that this becomes a memoir, a narrative, and a more or less cohesive story. Some parts of the history are better remembered than others, both in terms of clarity and the number of people who shared their accounts. It is therefore also necessary to point out that other parts of the story have received less mention, if only because personal accounts were harder to come by. Thirty years of memories in an organization that is transient by design, both in general and in terms of the duration of postings, presents great logistical challenges for its archivists.

These personal accounts have been given overall precedence. They may not be the expressed opinions of UNICEF, nor may they represent unanimous consent on any particular event. But that is exactly the point: There are always at least two sides to every story, and so as much space as possible has been given to those who have been willing to recall parts of a common history. Therefore, whenever possible, this memoir yields its structure in the interests of personal account.

Great thanks must be given to all those who generously contributed their memories, photographs, and editing skills. Their contributions were the high point in putting this project together. Special mention must be made for the efforts Jacques Beaumont, Dr. Charles Egger, Fouad Kronful, Tarique Farooqui, Jacques Danois, Leo Goulet, Elise Spivac, and especially Helen Argyriades made to help clarify and lend perspective to their times in Hanoi and the region. Trong Nguyen Quang in the sub-office in Ho Chi Minh City should be recognized for his work in bringing UNICEF Saigon's former employees, Ho Thi Tuyet, Nguyen Kim Thang, Tran Thi Thuy Lan, and Vu Hoa together for a valuable group interview. Martine Deletraz, Adhiratha Keefe, Upashana Young, and the HQ archive team were all instrumental in answering requests and tracking down materials. Hoang Van Sit generously arranged the Education Section interviews and Trinh Anh Tuan acted as translator and advisor during all interviews made in Hanoi. Isabelle Sévédé-Bardem and Mahfoud Bouhembel provided timely translations of French texts and phone calls. Sue Spencer, UNICEF Viet Nam's Communications Section Chief, guided the project and edited the text into cohesion. Many current UNICEF Viet Nam staff were asked to comment on and help edit the material. Thank you all.

Patrick Carpenter (Ha Noi)  
Marina Komarecki (New York)

***NOTE:*** While most of the quotes included in the memoir are answers to questions raised specifically for this project, there are a number of quotes that have been sourced from earlier UNICEF HQ interviews – most notably the interviews with Henry Labouisse and Dr. Charles Egger. These quotes are marked with an asterisk (\*) in the text.

\*The present State of Cambodia was called Democratic Kampuchea by the Khmer Rouge in 1976. Reflecting political and military events, the name was then changed in 1979 to the People's Republic of Kampuchea, and then changed again in 1982 to the Coalition Government of Democratic Kampuchea. It became the State of Cambodia in 1989.

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## **Preface**

***“It is a long story and it begins with the Poles and the Swedes saying, ‘What about the children and the bombing in North Viet Nam?’***

**- Jacques Beaumont -**

On July 7, 1973, Martin Sandberg and Jacques Beaumont flew out of Hanoi to Laos and then back to New York and UNICEF headquarters. The two men were principals in UNICEF’s Indochina Peninsula Liaison Group (IPLG), a task force created by the Executive Director, Henry Labouisse, specifically to create a plan of intervention in a region racked by poverty and a country suffering from a globally divisive war. It was an extracurricular arrangement for a unique state of affairs, and Sandberg and Beaumont had been appointed as representatives of Labouisse to travel to the Democratic Republic of Viet Nam (DRVN).

Their seven day visit was the product of seven years of diplomatic effort and displays of resolve, patience and goodwill. It was also, indirectly, an opportunity opened by events on the ground, including a fragile Paris Peace Agreement that had been signed less than six months before. Sandberg and Beaumont were in the North for exactly one week, and had seen the capital, the port city of Hai Phong and rural areas that had been affected by the war. The two had established contacts at a senior level with both the Democratic Republic of Viet Nam and its southern counterpart, the Provisional Revolutionary Government (PRG). They wanted to shape negotiations around participation in an immediate relief effort. Also on the table was future direction for further cooperation.

But the North Viet Nam government had its own agenda. It wanted UNICEF to agree to deliver a list of medicines and medical items. Health care services for children and education were priorities, with equipment for ear-nose-throat examinations and dental care requested, as were warehouses for storage. If UNICEF was going to proceed any further into North Viet Nam, it was first going to have to preface its goodwill in earnest by providing tangible, critical materials.

Sandberg and Beaumont flew back to New York with this list. The Democratic Republic of Viet Nam’s aid requests were estimated at \$1 to

2 million; the Provisional Revolutionary Government's estimate was between \$400,000 and \$500,000. Just as important for headquarters was a report of their impressions of what they had seen, and what they felt was needed to address the most urgent areas of need. But most importantly, Sandberg and Beaumont returned to UNICEF headquarters with an agreement from the government of North Vietnam to open a direct line of communication. This alone was huge. It was the breakthrough UNICEF had been seeking all along.

But it was still not everything. UNICEF had to persevere with further proof of its integrity for another twenty months before the DRVN and UNICEF could reach an agreement. Finally, in April 1975, it happened. UNICEF became the first UN agency to have an official, physical presence in the new Viet Nam. Again, it was Jacques Beaumont who had been sent back to Hanoi to act as chief negotiator with the DRVN Minister of Foreign Affairs, Nguyen Duy Trinh. According to the agreement, UNICEF was to be established in the Hoa Binh Hotel, room 105, at a cost of twenty-four Vietnamese Dong per day for the room, with further stipulated costs of a local interpreter and driver for their respective 300 and 200 Dong per month. But though there was now a physical presence and direct communication, it was still not the final piece UNICEF was hoping for. Owing to several disputed clauses, the actual agreement that elevated UNICEF's temporary mission to a status of permanent delegation was not signed until February 12, 1979.

And so it all began.

Or to be more accurate, so it all began again. For the story of UNICEF in Viet Nam does not begin with Beaumont and Sandberg and the IPLG, or the end of the war, or even the beginning of the war. The fact is, UNICEF and Vietnam have a relationship that predates the roughly thirty years of fighting against foreign occupiers that this country endured in its quest for independence, and begins at a time when Viet Nam, Laos and Cambodia/Kampuchea were one territory under French colonial administration.

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# Chapter I

## The Road to Hanoi (1958-1975)

To get to Hanoi, it was necessary for UNICEF to go through Poland, Switzerland, the Netherlands, Sweden, Moscow, Paris, New York, and what was then called French Indochina, through Containment and Domino theories, through the Cold War, and through various separate Vietnamese governments. The journey arguably started in Bangkok within a regional programme, but since this is a history of UNICEF in Viet Nam, it would be accurate for our purposes to point out that UNICEF first established a physical presence in this country on 185 Hien Vuong (now Vo Thi Sau) street in Saigon in 1958. To pull things into an even sharper focus, it should be noted that the first UNICEF official to visit Viet Nam and Indochina was Spurgeone (Sam) Keeny from Bangkok in 1950, and the first Basic Agreement between the government of South Viet Nam and UNICEF was signed on August 29, 1952. Furthermore, Executive Director files indicate that the first allocations of the Executive Board to Indochina amounted to \$457,900, between July 1948 and March 1949, to be split equitably between Viet Nam, Kampuchea and Laos - with UNICEF showing wider interest in assisting those parts of Viet Nam and Indochina that were categorized at that time as not under direct French administrative control. There was also a first contribution of \$30,800 in 1948 that evidently was not implemented 'in view of the complexity of the situation', though allocations for hospital drugs were made two years later and again in 1954.

The evolution of the UNICEF mission in Viet Nam and all its protracted efforts must also testify to the single-mindedness of a number of determined people. Great names seem to frame the history of the great efforts made to bring this all about. There were, for a start, Spurgeone Milton Keeny and Margaret Gaan, Sir Ralph Richardson, Dr. Arthur E. Brown, Newton Bowles, Maurice Pate, Henry Labouisse, Henrik Beer, Dr. Boguslav Kozusznik, Edward Iwaskiewicz, Brian Jones and James P. Grant. There was the Indochina Peninsula Liaison Group, with Martin Sandberg, Jacques Beaumont, Dr. Charles Egger and Hasse Gaegner. There were their Vietnamese colleagues and counterparts, including Nguyen Co Thach, Pham Van Dong, Nguyen Tinh, Vo Van Sung, Madame Nguyen Thi Binh, Pham Minh Hac and Vu Van Mau. And there



were various organizations, including the highly regarded Mother and Child Protection Committee, and titles such as the Republic of Viet Nam and the Provisional Revolutionary Government and the Democratic Republic of Viet Nam that have passed into the history they helped create.

The point being that one key factor in the success of UNICEF is the quality of the individuals in the organization. UNICEF's brightest chapters have been the result of its strongest personalities, leaders and their collective efforts. But the base of the foundation rests on something definitive that endures beyond the individual.

### ***The Cornerstone***

The greatest strength of UNICEF is its mandate. The desire to distribute aid to women and children 'without discrimination because of race, creed, nationality status or political belief' and the integrity to bear this out has kept UNICEF alive.

**Fouad Kronfol (Representative 1980-1983):** *'Unequivocally, this coda was capital to our relations with the Vietnamese. The late Henry Labouisse, as Executive Director, involved this to initiate support to North Viet Nam despite tremendous negative pressure from his own [American] government – a fact the Vietnamese never forgot.'*

**Henry Labouisse (Executive Director, UNICEF 1965-1979):** *'I think one of UNICEF's greatest strengths is its non-political stance, its integrity, which I think countries have accepted. They don't think we're trying to play politics or get involved in politics. We have a clean record and I think it is a very valuable thing not to get mixed up in politics. UNICEF has been a good and very effective agency because it has been a practical agency and if we start getting into ideologies and theories, then I think you're going to lose a lot of the importance UNICEF can have. Part of its success has been because the mandate is so flexible, that we are able to operate [without the constraints that prevent other agencies from doing so].'*

The fact that UNICEF can operate in any country accepting its assistance, whether internationally or UN recognized or not, lends further credence to its political impartiality, as well as valuable flexibility for negotiation and intervention. Prior to its attempts to reach North Viet Nam, UNICEF had already achieved a record of working on both sides

of conflicts. This was critical in a divided Viet Nam, not only for the reassurance of the North Vietnamese representatives, but for the ability of the Executive Board in New York, itself divided, to remain level-headed and at least outwardly impartial during what became a protracted decision making process.

**Dr. Charles Egger (IPLG 1973-75)\*:** *‘The Board has always been led by a few delegates with vision and commitment who knew how to raise questions diplomatically. What you had with Viet Nam was a UN agency that was prepared to...discuss what aid could be provided with a government that was not a member of the UN, was at war with the government recognized by the UN and many other countries and a powerful ally of the U.S. It was the feeling of many Board members as well as of the Director and his staff that UNICEF had to address itself to this problem of helping Vietnamese children not only in the South but also the North, irrespective of whether it pleased other governments.’*

**Jacques Beaumont (IPLG 1973-75)\*:** *‘There was the thinking that ‘if you work on both sides, you were approving both sides’. By refusing to take a stand, for or against, we automatically were in the wrong with governments on this side or that side. It always was this way, and we said, ‘No, it was not the role of UNICEF to pass a political judgment on one side or the other.’ The job of UNICEF was to bring colleagues and services to children irrespective of the side. Children transcend all of this, so we try to deal with the children as best we can.’*

## **Country Dynamics**

In order to better understand the dynamics of UNICEF’s mission in Viet Nam, it is important to first understand the setting and aspects of its history.

Viet Nam is a winding, S-shaped country that hugs the South China Sea coast, sharing borders with China, Laos and Cambodia. Its ports and mineral and agricultural wealth have always made it an attractive territory and have resulted in a history steeped with foreign invasion and occupation. Though Viet Nam acquired its independence in 1945 under Ho Chi Minh, and then again in 1975, the country is layered with traces of bygone foreign influence.

In the modern era, a centenary of French colonial rule divided Viet Nam for economic reasons long before the 1954 Geneva Accords established

the end of France's occupation. The Accords cut the country along the 17th Parallel, an act that left the North with industrial and mineral wealth and the South with agriculture and related industries. It was an ex post facto confirmation of the French vision of Viet Nam as two separate regions. This expedited the country's evolution into two significantly dissimilar economic zones, which were then further turned away from each other through the political divide.

By the time America increased its military presence in South Viet Nam to 500,000 troops in 1968, Viet Nam was no more united than the two Koreas, with its own deadly no-man's land, the demilitarized zone which hugged the 17th Parallel. American policy promulgated the ideological divide while attempting to redesign the under-developed infrastructure of the South. Internationally, recognition - or the lack of it - of the respective governments in North Vietnam and South Vietnam corresponded to greater Cold War politics. These ideological and economic complexities were to have significant consequences for UNICEF in its attempts to establish a presence in the North and then a subsequent national programme of assistance.

## **War**

The story of UNICEF Viet Nam cannot be separated from what in Viet Nam is called the American War.

In February 1965, North Viet Nam was exposed to the start of intense and sustained bombing campaigns, while the North Vietnamese Communist forces were penetrating deeper into Southern territory. As the war intensified and the 17th parallel that marked the politically-created border was overrun, the divide in international opinion grew more angrily polarized. By 1967, there was no greater global controversy than the war in Viet Nam. And the divisions that existed in global opinion were also evident deep in the UN, and within UNICEF's Executive Board.

The fact that UNICEF's Executive Director, Henry Labouisse, possessed a French surname but an American passport meant that his actions would be under the microscopes of both sides for signs of partiality. This alone strained an already delicate situation. To further complicate matters, UNICEF could not actively get involved in the North without first receiving the legally required invitation, and the North Vietnamese were hesitant towards early attempts to set up a dialogue.

But the problem was not how to get a programme established in Viet Nam, for UNICEF had been on the ground in Viet Nam and in operation for decades. The problem was that the programme was located in Saigon - the capital of the Republic of Viet Nam (RVN).

## **Saigon**

The UNICEF Saigon office, since its opening in 1958, had been busy with its agenda of the Maternal and Child Health Programme, communicable disease control, health education, applied nutrition, building classrooms and training teachers. It had been set up as a liaison office at the behest of the United Nations Economic Commission for Asia and the Far East to cover both South Viet Nam and Cambodia. According to Mr. Luong Huynh Sam, the first Chief of the UNICEF Liaison Office for South Viet Nam and Cambodia, it had been the insistence of the American government that Saigon become full-fledged representative office.

**Luong Huynh Sam (UNICEF Chief, Liaison Office, Programme & Supply Officer 1958-73)\*:** *'[After] the coup d'état that resulted in the 1963 assassination of the Brothers Ngo, the United States began to press UNICEF Headquarters in New York to convert the Saigon liaison office into a representative office with an international staff as UNICEF Representative. The proposal would enable the United States to make greater contributions to UNICEF's resources. The proposal was accepted the second time by the Ministry of Social Action. On the basis of this reply, Headquarters began to look for a candidate for the post.'*

**Dr. Egger:** *'The change was largely semantic, as the budget for the programme remained essentially the same. More important was the job that Bernhard Klausener was doing. He made a brave attempt to keep the programme and the office running, to the satisfaction of both sides, despite the fact that it was all but inevitable that it would be shut down.'*

Bernhard Klausener, a Swiss national and newcomer to UNICEF, became the first official Representative of the first fully-fledged UNICEF office in Viet Nam in September, 1966. He expanded the office to a staff of fifteen, and maintained the status quo of the programme, with the notable addition of an Emergency Feeding Programme for the growing number of refugee camps. Klausener and Ho Thi Tuyet, the Feeding Programme Officer, often traveled to the 'border' areas by helicopter (as guerilla patrols rendered roads and night travel unsafe), checking on programmes.

**Ho Thi Tuyet, Feeding Programme Officer, UNICEF Saigon:** *'We would often travel to the central areas, which were very poor, with very rudimentary houses, surrounded by hot sand and therefore very difficult to get anything to grow. The people there spoke with very strong accents, very difficult to understand. We would ask them questions like, 'Did you get the rice?' but their answers were almost incomprehensible. We just stood there with blank faces, trying to understand what they were saying. On the one hand, it was amusing – being separated by a common language, but on the other, it was truly frustrating.'*

*We had a milk programme, which was Klausener's idea. It was for the poor in the government schools and set up to make sure the children were getting enough protein and nutrients. This programme was referred to as 'the milk drop programme', and when we first went to the schools with it, the teachers said, 'But why just one drop of milk for each child? Why so little?' We laughed and said that it was a cup, not a*

*drop. Even so, there were many children that did not want the milk and would spill it rather than drink it. We tried to get them all to drink a cup, but in the end, in order not to waste any, we had to give very little to those children who wasted it and save the rest for the ones who cooperated.'*

While UNICEF's work and travel in Cambodia was unrestricted, the confines of the Geneva Accord all but dictated the office's jurisdiction in Viet Nam to the provinces below the 17th Parallel. Security in the southern provinces began to decrease around 1961, forcing the liaison office into a programme of emergency aid and relief intervention. Programmes including UNICEF water supply assistance to southern Viet Nam had to be shut down and UNICEF maintained the emergency stature in Saigon for the duration of the war, until the office closed up on April 28, 1975.

**Ho Thi Tuyet:** *'Mr. Klausener wanted to go to difficult places, and we often went by helicopter. One time we had to visit a programme for the Quang Tri province, near the border area with the North. It was necessary to fly. This was during the hostilities and you could feel it close by. We were supposed to head back to Saigon at 4pm, after our visit, but the helicopter had a technical problem, and so we were delayed. We had to have our dinner there while the helicopter was being repaired, but there was nothing to eat. We were given duck soup, but the ducks were so underfed that there was no meat on the bones. They were actually too thin to eat. All of this was going while the loudspeakers were broadcasting their messages across the border. Finally, we were very happy to leave around 8pm, when the problem had been fixed. But it was very nerve-wracking, as the helicopter came from the United States...and we could only fly very low. I was very happy to get home that time. But we would go up to the border every few months to check up on things.'*

### **Meanwhile, back at HQ**

*In New York in 1967, the UNICEF Executive Board was having an increasingly difficult time approving monies spent in Saigon for two reasons: a) much of the progress paid for was soon and repeatedly damaged by the escalation of the war, and; b) no aid was going through to the North. These factors had political implications. To continue to fund the programmes in Saigon without equal efforts made in the North would be to court criticism that UNICEF was less than impartial. The*

*fact that a large portion of UNICEF's resources (in general and for Viet Nam) came from America made the political tripwires all the more sensitive. The US delegation did not oppose the idea of assistance, but it was acting very cautiously. Nevertheless, steps had to be taken, both to avoid confrontation and to clarify future activity. Lobbying efforts by the Polish, Swedish and Swiss delegations, among others, to push for relief for the North, and a proposal by the French delegation to find a way to help the children on both sides were pushing UNICEF into action.*

**Dr. Charles Egger\*:** *'It started with the UNICEF Executive Board, in a number of meetings, expressing concern with the need situation in Viet Nam, where children were suffering. [Members] repeatedly stated that UNICEF should be prepared to explore every possibility, to raise and explore the question of humanitarian aid with the two sides at war...[This] was important because their declarations were carefully noted by all sides and helped to pave the way. Mr. Labouisse was particularly concerned himself about exploring every possibility to see if UNICEF could assist children in Viet Nam suffering from such an extraordinarily terrible situation.'*

There were cruel ironies in all of this. Now that the hostilities had escalated and expanded (Hanoi itself was a target of 'limited' bombing), hardship was evident throughout the entire Viet Nam. Children on both sides of the parallel were suffering, and the argument for humanitarian aid could be made universally. This evidence may have helped to build a consensus in New York, but it did not automatically translate into intervention in Viet Nam. Now that Labouisse had the green light from the Board to develop a plan, UNICEF needed a response from the North Vietnamese authorities. To expedite matters, Labouisse pursued negotiations through diplomatic back channels in Paris and Moscow, and used contacts in Cambodia and Bangkok. But ultimately, it all came down to the ball being completely in Hanoi's court.

### ***Permission Granted***

However broad UNICEF's mandate may be, it must respect sovereignty of countries. UNICEF cannot actually distribute aid unless permitted by the government of that particular country. To do otherwise would not only violate international standards of law, but - more importantly for the ultimate success of the mission - to deliver goods where they are not accepted or recognized may actually be throwing them away or into

unintended hands. Though there was great need for emergency assistance – particularly in basic medical supplies – North Viet Nam was not asking. Even despite these realities, there was still pressure on Labouisse from the Board to push UNICEF to send supplies.

**Ian Hopwood, first Programme Manager for UNICEF Hanoi (1975-77):** *‘I believe the North Vietnamese were a bit suspicious about UNICEF – that’s why negotiations took so long. The initiative only intensified after the Paris talks in January, 1973. Then, as you slowly built confidence with them, you would get access to all party and technical people.’*

**Dr. Charles Egger\*:** *‘...[It] required a great deal of diplomacy to convey what UNICEF was about: that it wasn’t a capitalist organization, that it was not under the thumb of the US, that it was supported by all political denominations. It took some talking. If we didn’t have success initially, then we would continue talking. It was a long process to demonstrate that this is what we were doing and in what spirit.’*

**Jacques Beaumont:** *‘You must remember that the Vietnamese certainly had to open up to discussion with international agencies, with the UN agencies, and it took some time to become fully aware of what it meant. It is not something that happens overnight.’*

In December of 1967, the silence was broken. Apparently an earlier letter indicating UNICEF’s desire to help the children struck the proper chord. In roundabout fashion, this letter was passed to the Cambodian Foreign Minister in Phnom Penh, who then forwarded it on to Hanoi. North Viet Nam then sent their answer in an invitation for a UNICEF representative to make direct contact through the Polish Committee of UNICEF. The invitation was made with the stipulation that all aid be delivered through the Vietnamese Red Cross. This was clear progress and hopes were high. But in early 1968, the war escalated, and UNICEF’s efforts to send an emissary to Hanoi were delayed a further eighteen months until June of 1969.

### ***A Pole to Explore the North***

Dr. Boguslav Kozusznik, a member of the Polish Committee and passionately concerned with the situation in Viet Nam, was chosen to travel to Hanoi to act as Henry Labouisse’s personal representative. His was an exploratory mission, with the aim to open the path for further



talks. He was instructed to inform the Democratic Republic of Viet Nam of the terms of cooperation and UNICEF's policies, and return with a list of the urgent needs of children. It was made clear that he did not have the authority to negotiate any formal agreement. What apparently should have also been made absolutely clear to Dr. Kozusznik was that he was not to have the freedom to express private opinions on potentially combustible topics, including America's recent bombing activities in the North.

**Dr. Charles Egger:** *'Professor Kozusznik [was] a man entirely devoted to the idea of UNICEF and its humanitarian mission. As a representative of the Board, he went to Hanoi to transmit a message, namely that the UNICEF Executive Board had agreed to provide some assistance through the channel of the Alliance of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies. If this first aid got to North Vietnam and would be properly utilized, then other assistance could be forthcoming. It was, of course, only a gesture, but it had an important connection.'*

*Before he left Viet Nam, he was quoted as having officially condemned American bombing, and this created with some delegates a very bad impression...What he actually said and to what extent he was misguided, how much of this was inadequate interpretation is not clear.'*

In any case, upon his return, Labouisse had to reconcile Dr. Kozusznik's statements that could appear to have been his own, with the further disappointment that Kozusznik had only met with members of the North Vietnamese Red Cross Society and not with any Government officials. Labouisse also had to hold back Kozusznik's report from distribution, out of concern that it would harm proceedings. It was, in short, not nearly the start that Headquarters had hoped for.

## ***They Can't Take That Away From Me***

Given the passage of time and the advantage of hindsight, Dr. Kozusznik's mission has gone through favorable revision. The reality is that he took the first concrete step towards opening negotiations between the DRVN and UNICEF. That the mission required a representative from the Eastern Bloc was no accident, as Cold War polarities essentially disqualified any Western representative. That the representative came from Poland was also no accident; it was the Polish Committee's concern that had helped instigate the proceedings.

**Jacques Beaumont attests\*:** *'It is true that the Poles were really the people who wanted to be sure the children would be helped.'*

**Henry Labouisse\*:** *'It did open a way for us to send two representatives to Hanoi and we started our programme from that...It [was] a very delicate situation...[and] we'd skated on thin ice... but it turned out all right.'*

**Dr. Charles Egger\*:** *'The mission of Dr. Kozusznik had a far greater positive impact than he was given credit for upon his return...His report was not on actual needs but rather a political report [and] what he proposed had nothing to do with what UNICEF could do as an organization. His visit was seen as political, and Labouisse could not accept that. Although he did not focus on the factual analysis, he indirectly established the contact...and loosened the situation so that it would be more acceptable.'*

In any case, in retrospect, Boguslav Kozusnik was the man both sides needed to start it all. He was, as Beaumont describes him, 'the key to the confidence of the North', and it was his recommendation that emergency assistance in the form of cloth for children's clothing be sent through Red Cross channels that ultimately came to be the first shipment of aid by UNICEF to North Viet Nam.

## ***The Gesture that Lasted Three Years***

Kozusznik's cloth had its own adventure. In April of 1970, the Executive Board approved \$200,000 to be spent on 429 bales of cloth. This was in spite of the growing objections from the United States Government to UNICEF's attempts to help the North.

**Henry Labouisse\*:** *‘Some governments, including my own, didn’t think we should have assisted because of the war... We did it nevertheless. We finally got the Board to approve because in the first instance we managed to get some money from the Dutch government and also from the Swiss government which they said was to be used for the North. In other words, it wasn’t using any money of people who objected to it. There were objections from the South, objections from several governments, but we did it anyhow.’*

The fact that the first shipment of this cloth finally arrived in Hanoi in June of 1973, with the second and final shipment arriving one month later, takes some of the pomp away from the circumstance. It was what some would call another gesture, to show that things were moving on the humanitarian front, even when peace negotiations in Paris seemed to be stalled. But in the end, the parties in Paris reached an agreement months before the cloth reached its destination. The cloth, which came from the Russian Red Cross, experienced great delays in Moscow, a closed Hai Phong port, a re-routing through Chinese ports and then transportation into Hanoi by Vietnamese trains.

Upon its long overdue arrival, the navy-blue cloth was designated for children attending day-care centers run by the Central Committee for the Protection of Mothers and Children and distributed through Red Cross channels.

### ***The Indochina Peninsula Liaison Group***

It took close to four years for the shipment of cloth to go from a recommendation to a reality. It took eighteen days to create a working document that was to be the basis for UNICEF assistance and cooperation in Viet Nam and Indochina.

The thinking in New York was to create a regional plan of action that would reach the children not just of Viet Nam but of the entire Indochina. Henry Labouisse assembled a group in New York who were to produce a draft. They met over a span of eighteen days and called their meetings ‘Sunday school’ – for the purposes of UNICEF, it was called the ‘Indochina Peninsula Liaison Group’, and was led by Martin Sandberg, with Jacques Beaumont, Charles Egger, Dick Heyward, Hasse Gaegner.

**Dr. Charles Egger\*:** *'In order for UNICEF to operate effectively both in North Viet Nam and South Viet Nam, and carry out a rather large relief programme, UNICEF had to organize itself for the first time in a novel manner. A special task force was set up...that prepared its members thoughtfully for their new tasks. This training included knowledge about the country, its policies and the philosophy, studying different writers, French, etc., who had written about the history, political system. The group reviewed experiences in emergency situations in which UNICEF had previously been involved.'*

**Jacques Beaumont:** *'Labouisse wanted to prepare us for working for the reconstruction of the whole of Viet Nam. At the time, they did not conceive two years or more of work, 1973-1975. And when I was sent to Hanoi in June of 1973, in fact it was to ascertain the possibility of working for children in all parts of Indochina – in the three parts, as Indochina was divided into three political parts – and then to reconstruct Viet Nam. But the main concern of Labouisse was to be able to work for all children irrespective of the political condition – North and South.'*

In 1973, there may have been a Peace Agreement, but it was to prove illusory at best. Between January 1973 and January 1974, approximately 25,000 Vietnamese were killed. In such an atmosphere, UNICEF could hardly be expected to create a programme around anything other than emergency relief. Furthermore, subsequent events in Indochina - particularly the genocide in Kampuchea - resulted in aid emergencies that would greatly exceed the parameters of the IPLG's regional strategy, as far-reaching changes in ideology and alliances in South East Asia were developing just beyond the foreseeable future. But that is getting ahead of the story.

### ***Location, Location, Location***

The question was then where best to base this plan. The option of using the regional office in Bangkok was unacceptable to the IPLG, not only because Thailand was American leaning and this would infringe upon the desire to operate as an agency that worked with all political denominations, but because of the desire to build relationships openly and without the proximity and influence of a regional authority.

While the US-backed South Viet Nam government was falling to the North Vietnamese forces, UNICEF found it would be negotiating with the Provisional Revolutionary Government in the South, and the DRVN

in the North. The PRG was essentially a southern branch of the DRVN, and thus the conclusion was that any organization wanting to operate effectively in Viet Nam had to be based in Hanoi.

**Margaret Black (author, 'Children First'):** *'The...victory of the Communist forces...meant a rearrangement of UNICEF's activities. Previously there had been 'the Indo-Chinese emergency' in which ad hoc arrangements, mostly for emergency relief, were made from day-to-day with whomsoever was in control in a given area. Given the decisive political reorientation, the critical theatre of operation was now in North Vietnam.'*

Furthermore, the fact that UNICEF's charter also allowed it to deal with the North - a government not recognized by the UN - greatly facilitated the Board's plans for Indochina in general, and Viet Nam in particular.

### ***Hanoi, Revisited***

**Jacques Beaumont:** *'The [IPLG] document was about cooperation, and it had to be formulated as such, as the Communists did not like assistance, and they were right in that...The document dealt with education, health, nutrition, water, rehabilitation...In my view, it was a modern document written for people who had no experience in dealing with the West.'*

The IPLG document was then forwarded to the North Vietnamese Ambassador in Paris, with the hope of setting up a meeting. It ultimately resulted in the seven days worth of ground-breaking meetings in Hanoi Sandberg and Beaumont made in July, 1973.

**Dr. Charles Egger\*:** *'UNICEF did not necessarily go by invitation. We took the initiative. We tried to explain what we do, and we wanted to make sure they understood and agreed to the visit. The UNICEF approach was to take the initiative and not stand back just because Viet Nam was not a UN member. We wanted to provoke action that could be later worked out in great detail.'*

*It was certainly not easy, and a rather unprecedented situation. It was difficult to operate in a country that had lived through a most crucifying war begun already at the time of the French occupation of Indochina followed by a more heavy-handed American involvement. One had to cooperate with a government that was sure about its rightfulness of its*

*own stand, had a clear political doctrine, and its own views on how to conduct international negotiations. It was only prepared to collaborate with an international organization on its own terms.*

*It is certainly due to both the vision of the Executive Director, the operating stubbornness of Dick Heyward, and the skill and practical experience of people like Martin Sandberg, the diplomatic ability and basic philosophical belief in people of Jacques Beaumont and others, that UNICEF was able to conclude and start an assistance programme.'*

After waiting for their DRVN visas in Laos, Beaumont and Sanberg flew to North Viet Nam. Essentially, their goal was to expand, with specific results, on Dr. Kozusznik's earlier mission: To meet with the relevant ministries, the Central Committee for the Protection of Mother and Children, and establish contacts at senior levels. They were also to follow up Kozusznik's work with the Vietnamese Red Cross.

The talks were in two phases.

**Jacques Beaumont:** *'During the first phase, you didn't agree on anything. The meetings were extremely official. Co Thach, [our] counterpart, was extremely polite and intelligent. We knew in advance of subjects and what the outcome would be. What was more important was the dinner afterwards. Many of the questions raised at the meeting were brought up over dinner. They argued your points and you responded. You had to be responsive to them, and careful, and courteous – that is the tactic that I had to get accustomed to and I enjoyed it. Co Thach spoke French during the dinner and you could quickly go on to the problem with no interpreter. What they were concerned with UNICEF was more the child at large. The child suffering from hunger or the children who needed to be nutritionally rehabilitated. They wanted schools and they wanted medical supplies.'*

The other critical element was funding.

### ***Funding the Fund***

**Jacques Beaumont\*:** *'The group worked effectively – also from the point of view of fundraising. UNICEF was the only UN agency in Viet Nam and many countries wanted to contribute. We were very effective in raising large sums of money; that had to be done quickly and directly. Sandberg was an effective operator. He personalized the situation in*

*Viet Nam and jointly worked with the governments. Viet Nam was funded mainly from the special funds.'*

The 1973 Executive Board agreed to expenditures of up to \$30 million over two years for the expanded Indochina programme (which now included North Viet Nam and was expanded to \$44 million a year later to cover to the end of 1975), with an approval of \$3 million from its general resources to be used as immediate assistance to children and mothers anywhere in the Indochina Peninsula. The \$3 million should be noted as a quiet triumph for Labouisse, who was adamant - against considerable opposition - that such monies be made available to any administration that would use it to help children.

### ***Where It All Went***

The first period of cooperation and assistance was initiated in September of 1973. For the next six years, everything would be within a framework of emergency relief. As it was, anything beyond the short-term would also have been premature, since UNICEF was still operating without formal recognition from the DRVN administration. Nevertheless, UNICEF was able to contribute to some of its already proven areas of emergency expertise, as well as respond to newly emerging needs like refugee population and orphans.

UNICEF provided emergency assistance in the following:

**Health:** Upgrading training facilities for midwives; Basic equipment for rural maternity; clothing; Midwife kits; Kerosene stoves

**Rehabilitation of Handicapped Children:** Equipment for operating rooms in Da Nang and Qui Nhon; Beds and a bus for the National Rehabilitation Institute; Training grants for the National Institute of Public Health

**Education:** Construction of 1,000 primary school classrooms; School kits and exercise books; Blackboards

**Water Supply and Sanitation:** Equipment for the installation of a water supply in 350 rural primary schools, maternities and provincial hospitals as well as for ethnic minority villages; Equipment for women's centers, primary schools in the Central Highlands

**Child Welfare:** Training of day care center staff; Basic medicine kits for orphanages; Bicycles for provincial social services

**Nutrition:** Rural development projects focusing on production of rice, corn, fruit, vegetables

### ***Beaumont in Hanoi***

So UNICEF was in North Viet Nam with a programme that confirmed its goodwill and expertise. It was clear that its services would be required over the foreseeable future. But in order to move the intervention operation to the next level, it needed a physical presence of its own. For Viet Nam and Indochina, for the greater part of a year, UNICEF was essentially a mission waiting for a home, and this was beginning to drag. Its desire for a base in Hanoi was beginning to seem overdue.

Jacques Beaumont had been sent over to investigate greater Indochina and then stationed in Hanoi to expedite the proceedings. But there wasn't much he or anyone could do. Part of the problem was that the Paris Peace Agreement ended the war with South Viet Nam still under the control of the American-backed Republic of Viet Nam – a stipulation that was reversed almost immediately when the North began its drive towards Saigon. And once Saigon's future was all but decided, it was clear for UNICEF that there could only be one, all-inclusive country programme, and for UNICEF's purposes, it would have to be based in Hanoi. So Beaumont and UNICEF were forced to play the waiting game while the political picture cleared.

For the DRVN, the picture had been clear for quite some time. They also, for their own reasons, wanted UNICEF's presence to only be in Hanoi. But unlike UNICEF, they saw no impediments to finalizing an agreement while the war was winding down. So they sent a car to the Hoa Binh Hotel to Beaumont to get his signature.

**Jacques Beaumont:** *'In 1975, an invitation from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for a round of talks arrived with the driver. At the Ministry, there were twelve people sitting around the table, with the Vietnamese in the middle. There were flowers, fruits, cookies and tea. They said: 'We are here to sign the agreement'*

*I said I would like to see the agreement.*

*What they showed was a full agreement, all in Vietnamese.*

*I said: 'This is not the way we proceed'.*



*They said: 'We will translate it. We are ready to proceed.'*

*I said: 'In the name of whom?'*

*The agreement was in the name of the DRVN.*

*I said it was not logical to expect there to be a normal succession. 'We can begin the cooperation with a provisional agreement until Viet Nam becomes a country again.'*

*They said they had no time to make it right immediately.*

*And they never agreed on the working terms about local staff and who should be responsible for them. Hence the four year delay for permanent delegation status.'*

And so, despite similar intentions and the necessary momentum, cooperation between UNICEF and the DRVN remained unofficial. But from every angle, it was clear that both sides were grateful that UNICEF was going to remain in Viet Nam and operate out of Hanoi.

## ***Day of Days***

In early May, 1975, only a few days after the world watched the last of the American presence in Saigon being airlifted out of the country, the DRVN arranged a ceremony to officially recognize UNICEF. At 6:00am on May 2, a government car with two Vietnamese-made UN flags delivered Jacques Beaumont to a stadium in Hanoi. The entire diplomatic corps was present, and Beaumont was introduced as the Representative of the UN system.

**Jacques Beaumont:** *'There were no other UN agencies there. We were the first. From the first day of a united country, the Vietnamese showed the intention to recognize the mission of UNICEF officially. In the afternoon, we had an official drink at a government reception where I was again introduced. This was in line with the declaration of Co Thach, the then Minister of Foreign Affairs, who said that as soon as the war was over, Viet Nam would assume its right place in the UN system.'*

In point of fact, the actual official Agreement of Cooperation between UNICEF and the DRVN - which had changed its name in the meantime to the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam (SRVN) - was signed four years later, on February 12, 1979. Nguyen Co Thach's declaration also took more time; Viet Nam only became a member of the UN on July 20, 1977. But these details do not change the fact that 1975 marked the start of a new phase in UNICEF development assistance to the newly reunited Viet Nam.

## ***Post War***

Estimates of the results of the war vary widely, but generally place up to 2 million Vietnamese military and civilian deaths, 362,000 invalids, 1 million widows, and 800,000 orphans. According to documents from the U.S. Library of Congress, North Viet Nam saw all six industrial cities, all but two of thirty provincial towns, ninety-six out of 116 district towns and 4,000 out of 5,788 communes either severely damaged or destroyed. All power stations, 1,600 hydraulics works, six railway lines, most roads, bridges, and sea and inland ports were also either severely damaged or destroyed. In addition, estimates of 400,000 cattle were killed and several hundred thousand hectares of farmland were damaged.

Hanoi claimed that in the South, 9,000 out of 15,000 hamlets were damaged or destroyed, 10 million hectares of farmland and 5 million hectares of forest lands were devastated, and 1.5 million cattle were killed.

There was great need for both humanitarian and economic aid, and it was all played out against the backdrop of a newly unified country. The war had stripped and devastated Viet Nam, and the immediate postwar would see a further UNHCR estimated 1 million citizens form a mass exodus. These were the 'Vietnamese boat people', refugees during the post-war reconstruction and reunification efforts, and among their numbers were tens of thousands of skilled workers, professionals and former leaders in their respective fields.

There was tremendous social scarring. During the protracted war years, family life had been torn apart. In both the French and American wars, the fight, or at least active resistance, reached down to the children on both sides. This meant that war was ever-present as a part of life. And while family structures were devastated, the cities, particularly in the South, saw their populations explode. Unemployment was high even after most of the rural refugees had returned to their villages and the government had conducted resettlement and redistribution of the population along economic grounds. By the early 1970s, as many as 12 million persons, or 63% of the entire southern population, were estimated to have been displaced; some were located to government-protected rural hamlets, others in congested urban centers.

## ***The (Apparent) End of UNICEF Saigon***

The closure of the Saigon office may, in hindsight, have appeared a foregone conclusion. But it was not necessarily so. Even with the controversy that surrounded it from UNICEF's Executive Board in New York during the war, and the growing reality that all administrative control would emanate from Hanoi once a post-war structure could be established, there was still significant effort being made to keep the Saigon office up and running. In fact, plans for UNICEF Saigon were actually expanding its responsibilities when it received word from the PRG to shut its doors. Information surveys were being carried out by UNICEF to streamline Saigon's operations with greater accountability and monitoring procedures. And even when the PRG had commandeered UNICEF property, there was the expectation that the closure would not be permanent, and that soon UNICEF would re-open in the newly re-named Ho Chi Minh City.

**Tran Thi Thuy Lan, former Secretary, UNICEF Saigon:** *'Towards the end of the war, we would go to the office just to show up. There was nothing to do, but still we would go. Then, on April 28, 1975, the officials came and shut us down. Some of us continued to work until May, finalizing things.'*

After the closure of the Saigon office, UNICEF found itself in a delicate financial situation. There was a significant amount of money for the southern programme that now had to be justified and defended both in Viet Nam and to Headquarters. The remains of the allotment to the PRG were easily transferred. However, transferring the money from the former South Vietnamese Government, and integrating the existing projects into a new plan was much more difficult. According to available data, \$6 million out of the total \$11 million budget originated from the US government. Labouisse lobbied intensively and successfully to get that money, which had been exclusively dedicated to the former South Viet Nam, to be used for the entire unified country. Kudos should be given both to Labouisse as well as the US delegates for seeing beyond political differences and post-war sensitivities.

**Jacques Beaumont:** *'Rémy [the first Hanoi Representative] had to deal with the integration of the so-called remnants of the southern programme. It must be underlined that he accomplished the integration not only of the financial aspects but succeeded in building a totally national programme – bringing the southern programme into the*

*national. The Vietnamese policy was clear: one programme for all the children of Viet Nam. So all the committed funds for the southern programme were to go to the children first, and as far as I can vouch for it, it was so.'*

Not everything was as clearly or quickly resolved, however. It is interesting to note that UNICEF had two separate funds for the North and South throughout 1976 - past the date by which the country had become officially reunited. On a more personal note, none of UNICEF's Saigon original employees ever returned to work for UNICEF when the office re-opened nearly five years later. Their post-war accounts give some idea of how things were at the beginning of post-war reconstruction.

**Tran Thi ThuyLan:** *'After the liberation, I was asked to join the local worker committee. They asked about my past and I told them I had worked for UNICEF. Sometimes there was confusion between the UN and the US. I had to explain the difference between the two, as many confused the UN with the US.'*

**Ho Thi Tuyet:** *'After 1975, when UNICEF closed, I had to go back to work in the hospital as a nurse. There were many children in the hospitals, and the mothers did not have enough rice and so we had to make rice soup or soup from cassavas. But there was not enough nourishment with these meals, so they all became malnourished.*

*Some children were brought to the hospital and given milk to drink. One doctor, in charge of the small children, was named Mr. Loc. And so it happened that the mothers wanting milk for their children just started asking for Mr. Loc, who would bring it to them. The women used to joke about how much milk could come from a man.*

*But it was difficult...[And] it was even more difficult for families in the new economic zones.'*

There were bright spots. Despite a greatly reduced presence, UNICEF's earlier efforts and products had lasting repercussions. In 1975, the current Vice Minister of Education and Training, Madame Dang Huynh Mai, was in South Viet Nam and studying to be a teacher. She had recently given birth to her first child and was given a UNICEF growth chart, which traced expectations from infancy to the eighteenth year and included a calendar for vaccinations.

**Madame Dang Huynh Mai Vice-Minister, Ministry of Education and**

**Training:** *'The programme was run from a hospital room, and many women had access – particularly those that were teachers and well-informed. There were better facilities for maternity, and I had seen the UNICEF sign when I was pregnant and I signed a form and got a copy of their book on antenatal care and some breast milk substitute powder. Actually, I was given so much of this milk that I drank some, gave some to my mother, and sold some to buy the condensed milk that I loved so much.'*

*After reunification, I made it home and showed the doctor the growth chart and immunization chart. My child was one of the first in the South to be immunized, and it was due in part to UNICEF's products and programmes.'*

THE ROAD TO HANOI (1958 -1975)



*UNICEF and WHO Saigon Office Bernhard Klausener is in the back row*



*UNICEF vehicle used by Saigon office*



*UNICEF Saigon staff with Bernhard Klausener standing in back row*



*UNICEF delivering food supplies to flood victims*

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# Chapter II

## Reconstruction (1975-1980)

**Emergency strategies, well thought out, turn into good long-term plans.**

**- Jacques Beaumont -**

A little over two months after UNICEF was asked to close down its Saigon operation, Dr. François Rémy, a Frenchman who had extensive experience in childhood medicine in North Africa, arrived to initiate operations in Hanoi. He was called upon to add stability to an unofficial mission in a physically devastated country. Remy arrived at the end of July, 1975, and was actually preceded by a few weeks by Ian Hopwood, his first Programme Officer. UNICEF opened its door, or rather, the door to Dr. Remy's room 105 in the Hotel Hoa Binh (meaning 'peace' in Vietnamese) at 27 Ly Thuong Kiet Street. Remy's room had to double as the office until the procedure for a proper office could be completed.

Hanoi in July 1975 was threadbare but relatively intact. Recollections of hardship in the city and Viet Nam in those early days for UNICEF staff vary, but the gratitude in participating in an extraordinary mission is nearly unanimous:

**Dr. François Remy:** *'What I first remember about Viet Nam may be the image of a rudimentary nation, yet a nation overwhelmed with culture whose happiness and friendliness are revealed as deeply as their cautiousness and discretion.'*

**Jacques Danois, UNICEF Senior Information Officer (1969-1983):** *'Hanoi in the 1970s was a beige-colored city, with no advertisements or things like that. A very poor city, but clean. I like to say, 'the dirt was very clean'.'*

**Fouad Kronfol:** *'When I arrived, most certainly what stood out was abject poverty, the almost complete lack of material well-being, the impossible grind of daily subsistence and survival, the drabness of the whole country and the terrible state of disrepair in which everything stood.'*



## ***Hoa Binh for Peace and Quiet***

It would be difficult in any capital to pack various embassies, technical missions, journalists and other foreign delegates into around 300 available rooms in three dilapidated hotels. That was the situation facing Hanoi, and it quickly turned into a supply problem. There was no available space for those arriving, which meant those already here had great difficulty expanding their missions through importing expertise. The only option was to grin and bear it and assume a greater load of the responsibility.

**Dr. Charles Egger:** *'All the staff of the first years in Hanoi lived in cramped conditions where the one hotel room was the living room, bedroom, office, and also the room where you received the visitor. They accepted it with fair grace. I think the dedication and the capability of our first groups of staff were quite remarkable.'*

For Remy, UNICEF rented a triangular room, a suite with a terrace, dining room, bedroom, and the office all combined. Slowly Remy and his successor in 1977, Bertram Collins extended the facility to a real office.

**Helen Agryiades, Programme Officer (1979-1982; 1990-1992):**

*'During the early years, the UNICEF office was housed in four large rooms on the first floor of the Hoa Binh. On the same floor, [first Dr. Remy, then] Bertam and Claire Collins occupied the corner suite with the UNICEF flag on the balcony. Our three Vietnamese colleagues shared our offices: Mr. Kha and Mr. Tri, our interpreters for English and French, who had rare linguistic skills, and Mr. Tinh in Administration. It should be noted that Mr. Kha had been the interpreter for Madame Nguyen Thi Binh at the Paris Peace talks. He was highly respected – and it could be said that his working for UNICEF was the true measure of the importance the authorities attributed to their relations with UNICEF and the UN in general.'*

By 1978, UNICEF's presence in the hotel had expanded to a total of thirteen employees, six of whom were local staff. By then, most diplomats and other foreign staff lived in housing complexes and villas allotted by the government. UNICEF was offered a villa but refused it and continued to live and work at the hotel. The Trung Tu housing complex was an option also offered by the Government that a few UNICEF officers and others opted to try but many quickly vacated and returned to the Hoa Binh hotel.

**Dr. François Remy:** *'At the hotel, each delegation had its own table. The Swedes, the East Germans, the Soviets, and the Chinese. On my first day at the Hoa Binh, when I entered the dining room, all the tables stopped their actions and stared at me like I was the new kid in school.'*

**Mrs. Elise Spivac, widow of Simon Spivac, Programme Officer (1975-1977):** *'It was hard living in the hotel. It was very cold, with air drafting everywhere, no air conditioning and no electricity nor water several times a day. The bathroom was full of cockroaches; we all learned to make fun of them. Maya, my daughter, would say: 'Maman, quel beau cafard!'*

*We cooked on a gas stove we kept in the bathroom. In the restaurant at the Hoa Binh, there were about six or seven meals on the menu, and one Vietnamese dish. They tried to make Western-type dishes for us. I can remember the tablecloths were always wet from the humidity. At noon we would eat at the restaurant at the hotel up the road that was for journalists and the embassies. We used to joke that the chicken they served had run all around Hanoi; the meat was so tough! But the people were always wonderful and they tried their best. There was no material comfort, but mentally we were at peace... Usually when you go to a country, you give and receive. Here it was two ways, but we thought we received much more than we gave. The Vietnamese as a people really showed such kindness and attention to the other.'*

**Helen Argyriades:** *'The most important hardship was the great paucity in communication facilities and contacts with our families. There was no direct or easy contact with western Europe or Asia; we could only send cables. I spoke to my mother for the first time since coming to Viet Nam in 1979 half an hour before I left Hanoi in 1982. I asked Mr. Kha from our office to see if he could get a line at the post office. I don't know what he did, but he made it possible.'*

*Understandably, these factors contributed to a feeling of isolation as one tried to keep up with events. The radio was a lifeline. However, it was the country itself which suffered most from this isolation.'*

**Rudolph Hoffmann, Programme Officer (1977-1980):** *'Once a week a pouch would come. But sometimes the pouch would skip a week and then you would have fourteen issues of the Le Monde, all at the same time. We could, however, travel every three months to Bangkok or Hong Kong and it helped our supply line. I can recall one Christmas Eve, I*

*returned from R&R from Bangkok with 150kg of frozen food for approximately twenty foreigners in Hanoi. I had a large, logistical problem on my hands, as they were all out at individual Christmas parties, and I had to go looking for them all the entire night. What else could I do with so much frozen meat?’*

*Electricity and water supply were constant problems and affected our performance. I slept on a mattress on the floor, as there was no furniture. I remember one very unpleasant job of cutting a rat out of the hair of a young Norwegian girl who worked for NORAD and lived in the hotel. I can still remember her cries next door before we could intervene and kill the entangled animal and cut the hair.’*

**Fouad Kronfol:** *‘There is no doubt that all international staff who came to Viet Nam did so because they wanted to serve the children and women of a country that had endured the most devastating series of conflicts. Despite the material difficulties, the suffocating ‘fish-bowl’ atmosphere, the inclement climate, etc. we all had an incredible ‘esprit de corps’ and managed to give the best of our abilities because the challenges were monumental.’*

## ***From Here to Emergency***

Much of UNICEF’s and the Vietnamese government’s agenda in the post-war years of 1975-1979 was focused on achieving equanimity between the North and South. It was not purely a repair and rebuild emergency; since the South had never adequately established a network of social services or infrastructure, there was just as great a need for creation as there was for construction.

**Fouad Kronfol:** *The condition of women and children was catastrophic in most of the country – abject poverty, years of conflict, poor management, lack of technology and new approaches all contributed to making it one of the most under-developed countries. And yet, the mood of the population was optimistic, determined and willing to sacrifice for the betterment of their future generations. A proud people, hard working and diligent, but faced with apparently insurmountable problems.’*

## ***The Twain Shall Meet***

Hanoi’s answer to all of this was to stress the inherent if dormant

similarities between the two regions. These similarities were then to be grafted together through reconstruction and reorganization, lifting the South to performance levels on par with the North. The Vietnamese government wanted to extend countrywide the administrative framework of social services for women and children that had already been established to an advanced degree in the North.

**Helen Argyriades:** *'They made an effort to unify the country so that standards would be the same, but in 1975 when they were reunited, they realized that the political decision to unite was not in itself sufficient to accomplish this goal... The South and North had different priorities. The North had an extensively damaged, vast network of health centers and primary schools; the South had big hospitals and roads and no primary health network.'*

**Jacques Danois, Senior Information Officer (1969-83):** *'Even during the war, and without the UNICEF presence, the North seemed to be more active. In the South, very little was done; there were 300,000 needy children in Saigon, milling around, scavenging like sparrows on the sidewalk. There were some programmes: the milk drop, teacher training, vaccination at the orphanages, but other than that, not much. Part of that was political, to be sure, and a lot of what was being done after the war and before the reunification was through different charities. After reunification things changed. All programmes, all progress came from the North. It was better organized, and in five years, by 1980, the Vietnamese had made considerable progress, both by themselves and under UNICEF auspices.'*

### **Why It Worked**

UNICEF was then in the unique position of working in depth on problems that spanned the country – important for an open balance of interest and assistance for all concerned. Externally, Viet Nam was beginning to generate international acclaim for what it had endured in order to gain independence. The sympathy it was receiving paid off not only in positive publicity but in the facilitation of aid.

**Fouad Kronfol:** *'After unification in 1976, there was tremendous positive impetus to aiding the war-stricken country among major donors. It was a typical relief/emergency programme but with a major slant: The conventional wisdom being that the country needed to develop its infrastructure, social and economic, and that UNICEF – and others –*

*should assist with massive quantities of goods which Viet Nam did not have access to. Large sums were spent on bulk supply of food, cement, drugs and equipment for the rebuilding effort, as well as for the provision of local manufacturing capacity for a variety of social programmes. The underlying credo was that the Vietnamese knew what to do and what they needed to do it with. As someone aptly noted, 'it was Big Money, but small programming!'*

Critical for Viet Nam and for UNICEF was the earnest display by the Vietnamese officials that, above all, the children should be saved – should be nourished, educated, and protected. The Vietnamese, in both public and private life, have always been 'child-friendly' and committed to giving children as good a start as possible, a priority very much in line with the writings of Ho Chi Minh. It is an inherent value that defines the Vietnamese character and thus could conceivably be nominated as a cornerstone for re-establishing a united country.

**Dr. François Remy:** *'...[What] I saw with my own eyes and lived through those two years absolutely convinced me – whether communist or not, that the model being applied in Viet Nam, in terms of health care and policies for children, was indeed a good one.'*

*Such a model... has contributed a crucial part in the battle against under-development in the world. In the years following my departure from Viet Nam, when I was working in the Near East and encountered particular issues...I always tried to seek solutions from the lessons I learned in Viet Nam.'*

**Helen Argyriades:** *'Working in Viet Nam, UNICEF did not experience difficulty in arguing about policy with the Government. The principle was not in doubt. The priority was the children – that was a given, not like in other countries – and so on this point we were received with open arms.'*

## ***Getting to Know You***

After a cautious start, strong professional working relations between UNICEF and the Vietnamese government began to develop. This went against the commonly held belief that access to policy makers or leaders in centrally planned economies was rare for external or foreign agencies. From the beginning, UNICEF dealt with Viet Nam's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Central Committee for the Reception of Aid

(AIDRECEIPT), the Central Committee for the Protection of Mothers and Children, and Ministries of Health and Education. Later, relations would expand to the Ministry of Agriculture, the Women's Union, and the State Planning Commission.

**Fouad Kronfol:** *'It was very difficult in the beginning. Whatever I did, whatever I said, did not pass for at least three months. It just didn't work... Then one day one of my interpreters took me aside after a frustrating meeting and told me, 'I understand you are frustrated, but let me tell you the reason: They are studying you – where your sympathies lie, and whether you are honest in your intentions. Once they are satisfied, it will change.' And the change was really like a stroke of lightning. Suddenly I got access to everyone.'*

There were excellent contacts and a sense of respect and admiration right from the start for Nguyen Co Thach, the Foreign Minister, and close professional contact with other senior ministers. The same largely positive atmosphere prevailed in relations with authorities in the South and at provincial and other levels. Conversely, during the early stages, apart from formal or official occasions, personal contacts were frowned upon by the government.

**Ambassador Ngo Quang Xuan and Mrs. Le Thi Hoa:** *'At the time, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was designated to carry out all foreign assistances and our International Organization Department [IOD], where I worked, was the focal point for contacts and cooperation with all partners, including UNICEF. My husband (Ambassador Xuan) was head of the IOD section of UN Operational System Agencies and worked with all UNICEF Representatives from 1975-1993. We have many good memories of them all. They and most of their colleagues had an expertise in the areas of education and maternal and child health. They understood UNICEF's policies and its unique purpose. But most importantly, we both feel that they had a special feeling for Viet Nam – a sympathy and understanding of the country and people after the wars. We believe this was and remains the most important condition for the successful implementation of UNICEF programmes in our country.'*

### ***Necessity, the Mother of Invention***

The Vietnamese brought many valuable qualities to the challenge of rebuilding the country. The comparative advantages in social services and

infrastructure in the North were created in part from three decades of living under extremely restricted means; such conditions did not allow for inefficiency and imbued the North Vietnamese with endurance, resilience and ingenuity. For example, it was necessary to create their own pharmaceutical industry after imports ran out during the war. Results were deeply impressive and highlighted in the initial report made by Sandberg and Beaumont in 1973 for Headquarters:

**Jacques Beaumont/Martin Sandberg:** *‘Instruments were made from railway tracks; hairpins and umbrella spikes were transformed into surgical needles; scales were produced from bamboo; anti-malaria drugs from certain leaves, barks and lianas. A good deal of emphasis was placed on the use of raw materials from local plants and animals, and the production of traditional medicines developed alongside with plants producing modern medicines.’*

Much was made and invented at the level of jungle handicraft workshops. Particularly notable (in fact it made the 1980 UNICEF Viet Nam country survey) was the necessary improvisation of infusing coconut milk that was sterilized and compatible with the human serum in a wound in place of blood plasma.

A country facing severe deprivation on an emergency footing must rely on the resilience and ingenuity of its communities. UNICEF programmes, particularly those in Primary Health Care, depend upon shared responsibility and group involvement. It was a potential perfect match. What Remy saw in his initial observations, published in his book, ‘40,000 Enfants par Jour’ confirmed a reassuring inherent willingness for participation and sacrifice:

**Dr. François Remy:** *‘The North Vietnamese people had been successful in existing through deprivation. In the North, the pyramid of personal health care was working. The child mortality figure was very low... cholera epidemics were easily contained; and there was approximately one latrine for every 2.5 families. In general, there was a good health system, and even in the most remote village, the slightest fever was urgently care for, thus helping to explain the lower than expected infant mortality rates.’*

*For medicine, more than 80% of what the North Vietnamese were using was traditional, homeopathic methods. This translates into low costs. And because these primary disease concerns were well under control, North Viet Nam, unlike the South, was able to focus on secondary diseases.’*

Proof of the North's collective potential was evident later in the rapid construction of the Primary Health Care (PHC) network and the success in implementing immunization programmes. But this is not to suggest that these qualities and a common desire to help the children automatically streamlined operations between UNICEF and Hanoi. The factors that made the Vietnamese so resourceful have also been credited in fueling a post-war drive for self-sufficiency. Improvisation and ingenuity had positive long-term practical and economic consequences, but the long years of foreign occupation also colored these characteristics with a certain reserve. The first step for UNICEF therefore was to instill trust. Labouisse considered Remy's mission more diplomatic than anything else – an attempt to open the door for the UN.

**Ian Hopwood (1975-1977):** *'Bureaucracy impeded our negotiations and development in general. Remy spent a lot of time negotiating. The Vietnamese were looking for people who would talk straight and be consistent in their behaviour and promises. As you slowly built confidence with them, you would get access to all party and technical people.'*

The field of action up until around 1980 was limited to specific advice and suggestions on particular problems that could be integrated into the Vietnamese conceptual model and the supply of equipment. No long-term expertise was sought out. As it was pointed out in one of Dr. Remy's reports, the country was willing to absorb foreign aid to the extent it could be controlled and 'Vietnamised'; the role of foreign experts was therefore more of advisor than project manager.

Lingering in the background was the reality that UNICEF and Hanoi still had not finalized the agreement to recognize UNICEF as a permanent mission. This fact did not necessarily hamper day to day activities, nor did it prevent building partnerships, but it did hamper longer-term plans.

### ***Top Priorities***

Reconstruction of classrooms, meeting emergency health needs, and upgrading the rural health services were early priorities. Hanoi desired that UNICEF make a substantial contribution to Viet Nam's schools so that future generations would be able to develop the country.

**Madame Nguyen Thi Binh, former Vice President and first Minister of Education in re-united Viet Nam:** *'My task as Minister of Education was to help develop the education system in the South, so that it could*



*catch up to the North, and then we would build a unified system of education countrywide. One thing I did was to send thousands of teachers from the North to the remote and poor areas in the South to develop the system. And in parallel to the need to have a pool of teachers, it was obvious we needed to build schools.'*

**Dr. François Remy:** *'The policies of Vietnam matched the objectives of UNICEF. First and foremost was to ensure the existence, education and development of children. The childhood, for them, is what they care about the most - hence their special attention to the UNICEF assistance in building schools in cooperation with Vietnamese architects...And UNICEF supplied Vietnam with large amounts of materials...Similar things happened to the construction of nursery centers, manufacturing facilities for school equipment, and factories for children's toys.'*

**Dr. Charles Egger:** *'Since the Vietnamese did not have woods due to deforestation, UNICEF was able to quickly set up schools from Switzerland. They were very strongly taken by the Vietnamese. We were surprised but open-minded about it; these were barrack-type schools to be erected in a tropical setting. They were not to last, but the Vietnamese did not mind. They wanted something done in this completely destroyed country, and also something that could be implemented in a couple of months. The schools were accompanied by a program to educate teachers. UNICEF got a lot of support, accepted the idea and carried it out as effectively as possible under the circumstances. It was important that we were open-minded, and that we did not go by the idea that we have to do this and that.'*

Though the pre-fabricated schools may have been popular, for UNICEF they were too great an expense for the programme's budget. Remy, and later Collins, needed to persuade the Vietnamese Government that a better solution could be found in programmes that made the most of local resources and capacities. If UNICEF was going to achieve their classroom targets, it had to convince Viet Nam of the need to take advantage of the materials at hand, particularly because they were better suited to the climate and obviously easier to come by. The same argument had to be made regarding construction of the day-care centers. While it had been necessary to show UNICEF's strength of capacity with pre-fab units, it was crucial for the larger agenda to put reasonable programming over bold displays of action.

**Ian Hopwood:** *'The second round of schools was built with steel frames*

*from Japan. That was negotiated in November, 1976. What I used to tell them was: 'You don't want to bother about two storey buildings. We can provide the cement and steel, and you can do it yourself. You don't need an expensive solution like prefabricated schools.' I was quite proud of that.'*

In addition to building schools, UNICEF assisted in upgrading ten teacher training colleges, thirty-one primary level teacher training schools, and established two educational equipment production workshops. UNICEF also provided basic school materials, including paper for textbooks and notebooks.

**Madame Nguyen Thi Binh:** *'At that time, schools that were built with UNICEF help were mainly in the poor and rural areas, which is why the image of UNICEF became well-known and remembered throughout the countryside, as it was very visible: you saw these nice schools in poor and remote areas. I myself, as Minister of Education, went to visit some of these schools built with UNICEF support, so I personally am grateful for the support UNICEF gave to us.'*

### ***To Build a Creche***

In a country that from 1975 onward became a large construction site, women represented 53% of the work-force. Nearly all had to work to support the family, and in Viet Nam women were an equal partner in their socialist society. The government therefore had to meet the need of caring for the children of working parents by building and staffing day-centers for children six months to three years old.

During the war, the child care service was improvised and the shortage of furniture and supplies was acute. UNICEF, together with the Committee for the Protection of Mother and Child, agreed to build fifty-seven centers by 1980, beginning in the North. UNICEF also agreed to provide supplies like washing machines which were not available on the local market. The Committee controlled the standards and was responsible for the training of staff. According to Dr. Remy's reports, in 1976, around 28% of pre-school age children were enrolled in day-care centers in the Northern provinces. In 1977, the number had climbed to around 32%, or approximately 700,000, and projections for 1980 targeted one million eligible children, primarily in the North.

There were multiple benefits to be derived from the day-care centers.

They significantly improved the ability of the family to meet their children's nutrition, health, education and well-being requirements. At the time, the family rations were still inadequate, so the special food allocations helped reduce the levels of child malnutrition (that being said, the prevalence of child malnutrition was a problem that, though reduced, did not go away). Most of the cooperative efforts in nutrition during UNICEF's first decade were with the objective of ensuring proper food access for the whole family. In short, the most direct way to ensure more healthy children was to focus on adequately provisioning the day-care centers.

## **Hunger**

While food disbursement is not one of UNICEF's traditional activities (usually carried out by the World Food Programme (WFP)), UNICEF nevertheless found itself playing a substantial if indirect role in easing the emergency.

**Rudolph Hoffmann:** *'Food shipments were a large component of our supplies in 1977 and 1978. This included food ingredients like butteroil, oats and cereals. I went twice per month to Hai Phong to look after arrivals and distribution. Bakeries, day-care centers, hospitals and so on were the beneficiaries. It was a big logistical undertaking, and cost \$22 million, including freight. It was by far the largest project in dollar terms – a large contribution but not paid with UNICEF money - but we had little to follow up or prepare; we just monitored these donations in kind. All food shipments came from Europe and they asked for outturn reports. We had to be correct. It became a routine but we knew it was extremely important.'*

## **Health and Happiness**

The other factor in the food equation was health and disease. Viet Nam's first phase of post-war reunification saw both a severe food shortage and a significant increase in food-related and water-borne diseases.

**Dr. Pham Ngoc Len (1993-present):** *'In the 1970's, the Ministry of Health monitored for cholera and other diseases related to food sanitation in both the North and South. The Government prioritized the prevention of diarrhoeal diseases, trachoma, the endemic malaria that was everywhere except for Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City, as well as the plague that was evident in the Central Highlands. All were linked to*

*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 Kampucheans 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 Kampucheans who were grateful towards the Vietnamese for having delivered them from the genocide of Pol Pot than Kampucheans 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.'*



*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)*

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# 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*



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*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 preceeding 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.'*



*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*

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# Chapter IV

## Towards a Rights-based Approach (1990-2000)

### ***More Credit to the Poles***

Out of all the countries that have participated in the positive development of Viet Nam's history, Poland should be recognized for the immeasurable amount of good that has come directly from the concerns raised on behalf of children by its UN board members. As noted, it was the Poles that first voiced the issue of aid to the children in the North in the late 1960s, and it was again Poland which attempted to create a universal standard for children at the end of the 1970s. This latter effort, a text based on the United Nations' 1959 Declaration on the Rights of the Child listing ten child welfare and protection principles, became the point of reference for the final version of the Convention on the Rights of the Child adopted in 1989.

On February 20, 1990, Viet Nam became the first country in Asia and the second country in the world to ratify the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). The CRC sets out what governments and individuals should do to promote and protect the indivisible human rights of all children. Issues span a range as basic as the right to a name and a nationality, to protection from exploitation and harm, to the right to health, education and play. Perhaps no other country has such a strong relationship to the innovations of the Convention as Viet Nam, which found a common ideological value in its spirit and aims.

**Le Hong Loan, Child Protection Section (1989 - Present):** *'One thing that I think should be kept in mind is the impact of the Doi Moi process on the country and what this meant for the leadership with regard to the principles of the CRC. Doi Moi brought positive change, particularly on a macro scale, but some socialist principles should not have been forgotten. The socialist ideologies of human development, equity, and government support in the social sector partly overlapped with the principles of the CRC. The CRC reminds people of the importance of children – a sentiment that was in Viet Nam a long time ago and evident in the values expressed by (Chairman) Ho Chi Minh. So after Doi Moi came along, there was this call for Viet Nam to be a combination of change and basic social principles, which I think reminded the Government of where it came from.'*

*You must remember that the CRC was proposed by the former socialist bloc; it was and is a material advocacy that emphasizes much of what the old government was used to seeing. So it is understandable that there was such a quick decision to adopt it.'*

By the following year, both UNICEF and the Government had produced documents that testified to a significant change in the basis of their orientations. According to Christian Salazar, documents from the 7th Party Congress of the Communist Party of Viet Nam showed an increased acknowledgement of child-related issues. They included specific references to 'protection of children' as well as to 'lifestyles, work and education' of young people and adolescents. Also notable was the first reference to the issue of HIV/AIDS in official party documents. This was progress. But it should also be noted that the term 'children's rights' would have to wait until the 9th Party Congress ten years later for its introduction into official Party language.

From this surge in awareness came the signing of two major laws on Universal Primary Education and on the Protection and Care of Children by the end of 1991. At the same time, the former Vietnamese National Committee for Children was renamed and significantly upgraded in staff, budget and legal basis. It was now called the Committee for the Protection and Care of Children (CPCC).

**Christian Salazar:** *'The new Committee for the Protection and Care of Children (CPCC) became the major advocate for children's rights in Vietnam with impressive results in advocacy vis-à-vis the Communist Party, the National Assembly and other government agencies. This institution was set up to advise the Government on all matters relating to children, to co-ordinate and monitor the implementation of the CRC and is a concrete expression of the commitment of the Vietnamese Government towards children's rights.'*

**Madame Tran Thi Thanh Thanh, Chairwoman of the CPCC (1992-2002):** *'This was a memorable time. At first the CPCC only had ten members, but we soon expanded to thirty five. We worked very closely together with UNICEF, and I recall Mr. Farooqui offering advice, equipment, even a car, as well as expertise in capacity building. Our early goals were to work on implementing the National Plan of Action, for which we worked with UNICEF on setting up policy for children and the family, and a provincial programme of action, where we could help clarify responsibilities of the provinces for children during this time.'*

## ***On a Clear Day You Can See the Mountains***

Stephen Woodhouse followed Farooqui as Representative in 1992. He arrived to find a dynamic country riding a wave of investor and donor attention and a government that was increasingly accessible. Viet Nam's international favor continued to climb over the next five years, spanning Woodhouse's time in Hanoi and part of Rima Salah's, his successor. With the signing of the Paris Peace Accord late in 1991, the Vietnamese removed their last troops from Cambodia and subsequently returned to the international community. This resulted in the lifting of embargoes against Viet Nam – though the United States would wait until 1994 before lifting the embargo it had put in place for Viet Nam's actions in Cambodia. Once lifted, however, it took less than 12 months for each country to open liaison offices in their respective capitals. Thus, the benefits that had been apparent from the early stages of Doi Moi were now set for further expansion.

**Stephen Woodhouse:** *'The Ministry of Foreign Affairs was very smart with appealing to the West and getting attention with the global situation – the fall of COMECON and the 1991 Paris Peace Accords. It positioned itself very well with its establishment of a free market and the drive to not experience any social disintegration, and one could see the global attention, as Viet Nam became the 'flavor of the month' – or rather, the 'flavor of the half-decade'. I was able to piggy-back on Viet Nam's positive international recognition, in terms of donor support, which improved significantly. It was a country on the move, and there was an overall dynamism, both in the country and in the office.'*

### **New Players in the Old Neighborhood**

By the time Stephen Woodhouse arrived, massive Official Development Assistance (ODA) had begun to flow as international agencies and NGOs began to settle in. Suddenly the donor landscape was filling up. UNICEF now had a score of potential contacts that saw the organization as a point of first reference, and a new role as an authoritative voice for social development. At the same time, it also began to have competition for the donor dollar.

**Helen Argyriades:** *'By 1990, the situation had changed. NGOs working in a variety of fields were openly welcomed by the Government. The needs were so vast and in so many sectors that it would seem that no number of organizations would suffice. I never felt this increase in NGO*

*presence lessened the impact of UNICEF. It became gradually evident that there were areas where joint methodology and coordination were necessary if we were to be useful to the country where we all worked. [UNICEF took] the lead in calling a meeting of all interested agencies.*

*Soon we identified the need to have some uniformity in the instruments we used - for example to collect information on child health - so that it could be useful to the Government and others at the national level and by all involved in this field. By 1992, these gatherings had some regularity, were democratically run and recognized as necessary.'*

This collaboration with development partners had its own United Nations (UN) version, with monthly meetings for the seven different UN agency heads. Cooperation had been slowly increasing, but in 1992 it took on a greater degree of importance simply because six of the seven heads were new to Viet Nam. UNICEF, owing to its seniority, acted as secretariat and facilitated the information sharing during the meetings. Two notable outcomes that year were the creation of an interagency task force on HIV/AIDS and a National Workshop on Aids held under UN auspices. The time had come to acknowledge HIV/AIDS and other pressing social problems that had been spreading throughout the region under various degrees of silence.

## ***A House in Order***

Relations between UNICEF and its counterparts had grown stronger, with each side more comfortable in its understanding of the others' methods and intentions.

**Stephen Woodhouse:** *'UNICEF's relationship with the Government was extremely positive and supportive. Shortly after I arrived, I met with the Deputy Prime Minister at the Hanoi 'White House'. He gave me a positive endorsement, saying, 'Do what you need to do'. And he continued to take a personal interest and keep personal contact through phone calls every nine months or so, even though his position was not the official contact.'*

At the outset of his term, Woodhouse appraised the situation of the UNICEF office. Whereas Farooqui had reorganized the internal structure and staff, Woodhouse initially tightened the focus of the programmes while streamlining office efficiency. The point was to concentrate on UNICEF's established areas of expertise, identify the

most disadvantaged segments of the population, and shift programming in the direction of child rights issues.

**Stephen Woodhouse:** *‘There was great optimism, though there were signs of disparities, particularly between urban and rural areas. UNICEF came in to fill the gap, to be the ‘voice of the dispossessed’, so to speak. We could see the problem of the widening income disparities indirectly created as a by-product of the free-market. I spoke with the Ministers, trying to tell them not to throw away the positives of socialism – in other words, not to throw away the social benefits, which for UNICEF meant child rights.’*

**Madame Tran Thi Thanh Thanh:** *‘Mr. Woodhouse brought us to the world – he put our children in the international spotlight. He was a very good fund raiser. At the time, UNICEF financial support to East Asia had been declining, but Woodhouse worked hard to raise UNICEF funds to Viet Nam.’*

**Stephen Woodhouse:** *‘We had a solid operations team, our national officers were tip-top. My Senior Programme Officer Bertie Mendis was very detail oriented, which made for a great team, as I was able to focus more on donor support, speech making, and general programme direction and strategy.’*

*However, the country programme seemed to be losing its focus. We needed to tighten things up, put the attention back on the poorer, which led us to concentrate on the people living in the mountainous areas in the North and Central Highlands. We also paid attention to the Mekong Delta, particularly in the areas of clean water and the growing interest in proper sanitation, and we were fortunate to depend upon very capable people in the HCMC office. But our prime area of focus was going to be the ethnic minorities in the mountain villages; the Vietnamese Government was also recognizing these groups as emerging areas of need and attention.’*

## **Group Diversity**

Viet Nam’s population can be divided into two main categories: The Kinh majority, which makes up 85% of the 80 million population, and the 53 ethnic minority groups that comprise the remaining 15%. But such a summary masks significant differences. Ethnic minorities have been grouped together for ease of identification and recognition – a practice



that has created as many issues as it has attempted to solve – though each has its own history, culture, and at least one language or dialect (recent National Linguistic Institute studies have revealed about 100 different spoken languages in Viet Nam, with only 30 having scripts). This cultural individuality has a downside on the road to development, as the groups and those helping them must often tread the fine line on issues of cultural sensitivity and economic viability and investment.

**Christian Salazar:** *‘From an economic standpoint, this [was] easy to understand. A poor, developing country has to invest in its people in a way that their dollar will go as far and as fast as possible. It is a weighing of alternatives, and the reality is that difficult areas are just that: difficult. They are difficult to reach, cost more money in reaching, and take more time, effort and investment. But the more progress Viet Nam [achieved], the less acceptable this weighing of alternatives [became].’*

A direct result of this shift in priority was the start of close relations with the Committee for Ethnic Minority and Mountainous Area Affairs (CEMMA) in 1993. Ethnic minorities, at the time, were overwhelmingly entrenched in poverty: By 1992, 79% of all minorities were categorized as poor, as compared with only 21% of the Kinh majority. UNICEF sought to address this disparity partly through revamping its Education programme.

**Stephen Woodhouse:** *‘With Education, UNICEF wanted to target the poorest, but we were focusing on secondary levels. The reality showed that the poorest children were finding it hard to even finish primary schooling, and those who were able to finish secondary schooling had been comparatively better off from the start. So we switched our focus [back] to primary.’*

## ***Back to the Blackboard***

In the same way that the Water programme was able to incorporate the benefits of other UNICEF programmes in its community projects, the Education programme built in health and nutrition lessons as well as a new programme called Environment Education, which introduced clean drinking water and latrines in primary schools.

Under the 1991-1995 Country Programme, UNICEF supported the Ministry of Education and Training on improving the quality of education to the bottom 10% of the population – with new attempts to reach those children who had dropped out or never previously attended school. The most critical part of the plan was the development of multi-grade teaching in 20 schools in four remote provinces.

**Hoang Van Sit, Education Programme Officer (1990-present):** *‘Multi-grade teaching has a long history in Viet Nam, and in 1991 UNICEF started a 5 year programme of cooperation on ‘Multi-grade Teaching’...We designed multi-grade teaching techniques to help the teachers, particularly those in the ethnic minority regions, to know how to handle two or three different grade levels of students in the same classroom at the same time...It became the Multi-grade Bilingual Education project for ethnic minority children. The bilingual component was not as we expected, due to the sensitivity of the issue of local languages...However the biggest success was that we organized a writing competition and developed 21 bilingual big books (H’mong-, Bahnar-, Cham-, and Khmer-Vietnamese). They were highly appreciated by everyone – the local authorities, teachers, and children – because it was the first time that bilingual books were printed and distributed for school use. They...focused on the cultural heritage of the ethnic minorities.’*

**Madame Nguyen Thi Binh:** *‘We have made great efforts to improve the education in remote and mountainous areas, and we have substantial investment for education in these areas, but much more still must be done. For example, during my time as Minister, we had built a system of boarding schools in the ethnic areas, fully subsidized by the Government. These primary school boarding schools were at the district level. The lower secondary boarding schools were at the provincial level, and were focused on training local students to become teachers to serve their own areas. At the village and hamlet level, it was difficult to build boarding schools. The teachers were provided by the*

*Government but the food and administration was paid for by the local people, so it was a joint effort to bring the children to school in a remote area. We built these schools in a cluster, so that children from all around could come.'*

## **Water Works**

As Education expanded its work into the more remote areas, UNICEF's Water programme shifted its orientation. Under the 1991-1995 Country Programme Plan of Cooperation, it sought to attain National Plan of Action goals and the International Decade of Water and Sanitation aim of universal access to safe water and sanitation facilities by the year 2000.

At this point, Water and Sanitation began to blend its traditional work of well construction and latrines with broad educational and communication activities, advocacy and social mobilization. It also emphasized further integration with other UNICEF programmes especially health, nutrition and education.

By the time Rima Salah replaced Woodhouse in 1995, more than 170,000 new water supply facilities such as tube wells and dug wells with hand pumps had been constructed throughout the country, providing safe water to about 24 million people in the rural areas. During the same period, more than 120,000 household latrines were built and 2,900 primary schools were provided with water and sanitation facilities. More than 100,000 managers, technical staff, masons, health workers, Women's Union members and teachers were trained in issues related to water and sanitation, along with thousands of reading material products distributed during campaigns and training sessions.

Despite these achievements, the programme was not able to shake the discrepancy in priority for clean water over the need for proper sanitation.

### **Chander Badloe, Chief UNICEF WES Section (2001-present):**

*'Sanitation did not get the attention that the clean water programmes did in the beginning. Water supply has always been a high priority – for example, the international water decade declaration – while sanitation has been more a case of periodic voices coming out. And unlike water, sanitation was not specifically included in the Millennium Development Goals. The Country Programme for 1988-1991 was the beginning of a*

*greater focus on hygiene and sanitation for our programme; UNICEF wanted to deliver a package for the maximum impact of health and living conditions. It was, naturally, water first, then sanitation – as it still is. But as the water programmes began to have success and began reaching greater parts of the country, support for sanitation grew stronger.'*

## ***A Matter of Timing***

Rima Salah arrived in 1995, the first female Representative for UNICEF in Viet Nam.

**Rima Salah:** *'I was the first Representative to live from the start in a villa outside of the Ly Thuong Kiet office. I came at a time when Viet Nam was opening up to the world and Hanoi was going through its own visible changes. Hotels were opening up, the Opera House was refurbished and people started going to the cultural performances there. Events like the Asian financial crisis did little to affect the sense of optimism in the street.'*

*I could also see, though, how development was creating problems for the fabric of society. With development, there is sometimes the case that women and children are put aside. So we needed to be very active in reinforcing the place of the family at the center of community development, in helping to empower women while also ensuring they had more time with their families, and in increasing the importance of child protection and social work.'*

Up until around 1995, UNICEF had emphasized quantitative achievements. The thrust was in getting more children into schools, extending the health care network and services, expanding delivery. The 1994 Situation Analysis, with its revelations of different types of problems like HIV/AIDS, geographical and gender disparities, and children living in especially difficult circumstances, introduced a new direction. UNICEF was going to devote more programming effort towards these emerging issues.

For the first time, a separate project for Children in Especially Difficult Circumstances, consisting of two subprojects entitled 'Ethnic Minority Development and Urban Poor' was incorporated in the 1996-2000 Country Programme. These projects were parcels of UNICEF's main goals of promoting 'the survival, development, protection and

participation of children and women', stipulated in the programme text and another expression for the principles enshrined in the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Viet Nam's leaders showed similar priorities. In 1996, the 8th Party Congress produced an agenda explicitly mentioning hunger eradication, poverty alleviation, family planning, and introduced a public policy combating 'social evils' - a new term that linked drug abuse and prostitution to contracting HIV. This label was meant to curb high-risk behaviour, but over time it led to discrimination and stigma of people living with HIV/AIDS. These issues, as well as the goal to reduce child malnutrition from 33% to 20-25% and universal lower secondary education, became the main tenets of Viet Nam's socio-economic development strategy for the first decade of the 21st century.

Furthermore, the Government began a more active role in United Nations affairs. For 1996-1998, Viet Nam served as Vice Chair of UNICEF's Executive Board, and followed this with a position on the UN Economic and Social Council for 1998-2000, and to the UNDP/UNFPA for 2000-2002.

### ***Backslide***

But just as Viet Nam was poised to become a major player in Southeast Asia – with its accession to ASEAN, its newly normalized relations with the United States, and its economy averaging around 8% annual growth, the wheels began slowly to come off. In 1997, most of South East Asia was wrecked by a currency crisis. Talk of the country being the next Asian tiger began to taper off. It was not long before foreign investment had lost its faith and interest, and by the third quarter of 1997, Viet Nam was moving into recession. Foreign investment approvals were down 75% from 1996 but even more telling was the fact that only a quarter of the \$32.5 billion in pledged investment since 1988 had actually been disbursed.

The Government's renovation policies, which had been in place for a decade, began to show a mix of great progress alongside evidence of emerging disparities. The good news was that poverty rates had declined significantly, and people's overall living conditions were on the rise. The under five mortality rates and malnutrition rates for children had dropped, and access to primary education was becoming a possibility for almost all Vietnamese children.

On the other hand, disparities were now evident and growing. Furthermore, the rapid adoption of a freer market system meant that the Government expected families and individuals to take on a more direct responsibility for their own social welfare. User fees for health care and day-care centers were introduced. Poorer people, in particular, began to practice self-health care, but with a lack of basic health knowledge, this quickly threatened more serious health problems. These were signs of a widening disparity among different population groups: rural and urban areas, ethnic majority and minority groups, and males and females.

As subsidies disappeared and service costs rose, the poor, especially poor women, were hit hard. Stress registered in different ways, further aggravated by nutritional deficiencies, chronic under-nutrition and, for many, a lack of education that would prevent any chance of empowerment and improvement. Those who lived at near poverty levels were most vulnerable, as any small shock like a poor harvest, natural disaster or loss of an income earner could push them back far below the poverty line.

**Morten Giersing, Representative (1998-2002):** *'[T]he country seemed in rapid change – but also somehow stalled due to the economic slowdown across Asia. The financial crisis hit Vietnam badly: many safety nets had been removed, the cost of living was rising, and the new economic opportunities disappeared with the dramatic drop in foreign investment. The crisis also raised questions about how solid the willingness to economic reform had really been established: Would the downturn also mean a turn away from the market economy?'*

Similar disparities appeared in education. Primary enrolments in the difficult to reach areas decreased for a variety of reasons: labor demands on the family, (especially for girls), language differences, increasing school costs, lower teacher salaries and the subsequent draining of teachers into the emerging labor market. 84% of primary aged children (6-14 years) were enrolled in school, in 1991. However, enrolment figures in mountainous areas were reportedly much lower - some reportedly as low as 50%. According to the Ministry of Education and Training (MOET), the primary school completion rate by the early 1990s was only 46%. Resources and equipment were cut and poor hygiene facilities also contributed to the negative impact. Government increases in public spending in education, from below 5% in 1989 to nearly 17% ten years later were an improvement but still ultimately inadequate.

**Madame Nguyen Thi Binh:** *‘Due to the difficulties of the economy in these areas, despite our building a good network of schools, it has not reached our expectations. We could not always do exactly what we wanted, and that is why the plan suffered at times. So we are quite concerned about the quality of education in remote and rural areas. The main problem, in general, is that Viet Nam is still very poor but the demand is so great – greater than what we can afford.’*

## ***Vietnamese Traffic and the Start of Injury Prevention***

Morten Giersing, the eighth UNICEF Representative, arrived in Viet Nam in 1998. He arrived to a vastly different Hanoi than his early predecessors. Gone was the relative quiet of thousands of bicycles as a primary source of transportation. Gone was the ability to hear the sound of the wooden gong above the din of the traffic. Instead, Giersing’s Hanoi streets were swollen with tens of thousands of motorbikes – but very few helmeted drivers. Traffic accidents, and fatalities, were steadily rising – to the point it could not be ignored. And what was happening in Hanoi was being repeated all over the country.

**Morten Giersing:** *‘While our new country programme 2001-2005 had a strong geographic focus and sought to mainstream programmes involving the ethnic minorities, it was another issue, with national scope, which in many ways became a priority...the issue of child injury.’*

Progress in Primary Health Care and preventive medicine had removed disease and illness from the top of the causes of death for children one month and older. In place of these came an easily preventable, and therefore a more exasperating leading cause: almost 75% of all children’s deaths in Viet Nam today are caused by injury and accident. The good work done to make infants healthier is being undone by neglect and carelessness.

**Isabelle Sévédé-Bardem, UNICEF Childhood Injury Prevention Section (2003-present):** *‘Injury Prevention grew out of a concern expressed by the then American Ambassador to Viet Nam, Pete Peterson, to Morten Giersing about the startlingly high number of children in the hospitals in and around Hanoi who had suffered from serious injuries. He had wanted America to do something humanitarian for Viet Nam, and had intended to help build capacity in the Vietnamese healthcare delivery system. During his visits to hospitals and clinics around the country, he found that the healthcare system was generally*

*adequate, but discovered that the children needed help to prevent them from being needlessly injured. He discussed the issue with Morten and a common interest arose and soon a multi-sectoral injury survey on mortality and morbidity was conducted nationwide. It confirmed that injury was the leading cause of death for children one year and above.'*

**Morten Giersing:** *The issue was brought to light by different circumstances. One was a doubt I had about the child mortality data we were using: the absolute numbers did not seem to match the (much lower) numbers we were getting from various health information systems, broken down by specific diseases. Another was the obvious hazards in the streets of Hanoi: thousands of motorcycles with whole families on a single bike – and no helmets. The realization that drowning, for children over 1 year of age, was the dominating killer of children, rather than traffic accidents, only came later, as we started actual surveys.'*

Around 70% of Viet Nam lives in flood prone areas. The Red River Delta, in the north of the country, is smaller but more developed and densely populated than its counterpart, the Mekong Delta, in the south. Each river experiences annual flooding that can affect great percentages of the population. The Mekong River Delta consistently registers the highest rate of drowning in the country, while the Red River Delta, with a smaller tributary network, has far fewer instances of near-drowning than the Mekong, and fewer fatal drownings than the Central Coast, where a large part of the population are open sea fishermen and vulnerable to storms at sea.

Viet Nam's weather patterns, its long and exposed coastline, its large rivers and mountainous terrain, make it one of the ten most natural disaster-prone countries in the world. The country not only plays host to typhoons, flash floods, and monsoon rains, but droughts as well. These calamities, spread unevenly throughout the country, are a key reason for forced migration of those living just above the poverty line. Often, the percentage of children drowning out of the total is overwhelming, as was the case in 2000, when floods in the Mekong Delta claimed 481 lives, of which 335, or 70%, were children - most of whom were under four years of age. Sadly, drowning is not always due directly to flooding or natural disasters. Many children drown in flooded paddy fields or fall into open wells.



As research began to confirm that injury was the leading cause of death for children in Viet Nam over one year of age, Giersing's next task was to convince UNICEF Headquarters to recognize the new priority area.

**Morten Giersing:** *'UNICEF HQ was – initially – concerned for rather different reasons: 'We do not need any new issue; the agenda is already overbooked.' However, it was soon realized that this was not a 'new issue'; it was rather UNICEF's core issue in new dressing: child survival. The boss herself was quite pragmatic: 'If it is a problem in Viet Nam, then we shall obviously do something about it.' New funding also meant a 'stand alone' proposal to the Executive Board and HQ provided full support in this process.'*

By the next Country Programme (2001-2005), Childhood Injury Prevention was a stand alone project, for the Country Programme (2006-2010) it will become a full-fledged UNICEF programme.

**Morten Giersing:** *'When I left...the economic crisis had been left behind and the country's determination to move forward had been clearly formulated in its new 5 year plan (2001-2005) and in the ambitious 10 year development strategy up to 2010. A bilateral trade agreement had been signed with the USA, President Clinton had been warmly welcomed in Viet Nam – and had launched a new UNICEF-supported programme to protect children, not from disease but from the millions of new motorcycles.'*



*Two H'mong women attend a UNICEF training session on gender and development issues, using the publication "Facts for life"*



*UNICEF Representative, Stephen Woodhouse (1992-1995) gives a young boy, a Vitamin A tablet*



*Ms. Rima Salah, UNICEF Representative (1995-1998) with Pham DuyTrong, UNICEF interpreter/translator, Mme Muoi and Mme Tien, long-serving UNICEF employees*



*Morten Giersing (2nd from left) - UNICEF Representative (1998 - 2002)*

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# Chapter V:

## The Present Case (2001 and Beyond)

The new millennium saw a breakthrough in human rights-based programming for UNICEF in Vietnam in conjunction with the overall progress of Doi Moi. The 9th Party Congress used the term ‘children’s rights’ for the first time in official Party Documents. The UNICEF situation analysis from 2000 was titled ‘An Overview of Vietnam’s Progress in Realizing the Rights (sic!) of Children and Women’, and the country programme 2001-2002 was named ‘A Programme to Advance Child Rights in Vietnam’. Similarly, the country programme document for 2006-2010 explicitly stated that the future programmes of cooperation will be human-rights-based.

This shift in programming had several implications. It intensified UNICEF’s work in areas such as child protection, child participation, and juvenile justice. It pushed the organization further into advocacy for child rights in areas such as HIV/AIDS and the protection of children from exploitation, violence and neglect. And it also propelled UNICEF into becoming involved in law making, policy making, monitoring of child rights and handling of child rights violations. This direction was already imminent in the 1990s but gained significant strength in 2001.

**Christian Salazar:** *‘The human rights-based approach to programming is a new way of doing business. Our programmes now go beyond fulfillment of basic needs through the provision of basic social services. We now aim to create a child-friendly society. In other words, we are giving more attention to the legal and policy environment for children in the attempt to foster sustainable social change for children in line with the principles and articles of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and other international human rights instruments.’*

### **‘Social Evils’ in the New Century: HIV/AIDS**

Since 1992, when the first case of AIDS was reported in Viet Nam, there was one standard answer to the question of how Viet Nam responded to the growing threat of HIV/AIDS: Attention was focused elsewhere.

**Stephen Woodhouse (1992-1995):** *'[HIV/AIDS] was just beginning to be an issue. It was not difficult to see its potential, as there were vulnerabilities with the increase in prostitution and drug abuse. But we were not able to do much, to my continued disappointment, as the Vietnamese authorities did not want to focus attention on this problem.'*

**Rima Salah: (1995-1998):** *'It was difficult to make them understand the urgency of the problem. HIV/AIDS is something that touches the core of the family and in Viet Nam, with the strong sense of traditional values and closed society, it was necessary to explain and try to convince them of the need to act. At that point, there was the view that there were social ills but not social problems.'*

**Morten Giersing(1998-2002):** *'The first big new issue in my period was HIV/AIDS, and it became a focus for the office to help develop a programmatic response, and to advocate for the recognition of this new risk to Viet Nam's development.'*

**Anthony Bloomberg Representative (2002-2005):** *'Viet Nam was slow to acknowledge and act on the HIV/AIDS epidemic. The types of key interventions that are required at the beginning of an epidemic are indeed concentrated on the high-risk population groups of infection which are intravenous drug injectors and sex workers. Because these are considered socially undesirable phenomena, there is a natural tendency to stigmatize these activities and the people engaged in them – this led to the Vietnamese government including HIV/AIDS as a social evil.'*

Explanations of HIV/AIDS being a foreigner's disease or only affecting the undesirable elements of society were paper-thin but unfortunately preferred over more outright information. The choice was somewhat understandable in light of Viet Nam's traditional values and reluctance to speak about personal matters. But it also effectively limited broader understanding of the disease and the ways it could be contracted, including those not linked to high-risk behaviour. Discrimination and stigma were soon widespread.

**Anthony Bloomberg:** *'In Viet Nam today, we are at the point where HIV/AIDS is spreading to the general population, and it is a very unhealthy thing to continue that stigmatized approach because you are talking about women who are infected from their husbands who have visited sex workers, children infected by their mothers – and these*

*people have not done anything socially reprehensible and they should not be stigmatized. It is important to positively influence the public away from the 'social evils' stigma and discrimination approach.'*

In 2004, the Prime Minister of Viet Nam signaled a major change in the 'social evils' approach to HIV/AIDS. He signed the National Strategy on HIV/AIDS Prevention and Control (2004-2010), which seeks to control the prevalence of HIV among the general population to less than 0.3%; moves away from communication messages condemning HIV as a 'social evil'; and identifies nine key areas for programme implementation, including the Prevention of Mother to Child Transmission (PMTCT). The Prime Minister followed this up with the important high-profile act of visiting AIDS patients in hospitals. Current estimates show more than 220,000 people living with HIV in Viet Nam. The majority of these are young people, with women and children increasingly infected and affected.

**Anthony Bloomberg:** *'There is now huge money coming into Viet Nam for HIV/AIDS from the World Bank, the US President's Fund, the ADB, and other ODA sources, so in the next few years HIV/AIDS will get a lot of attention. The strategy that has now come out has eliminated the social evils approach and has introduced the harm reduction approach.'*

### ***A Loss of Innocence: Child Protection***

Much of the brunt of Viet Nam's transitions is borne on the backs of the young. This comes as sobering but unsurprising when one considers that young people make up the largest percentage of the population, at 36%, but have only relatively recently been afforded the right to their own individual expression and collective representation. Unfortunately, the family unit that was resuscitated after years of fighting now increasingly struggles to maintain cohesion in the face of new pressures. Such stress has provoked new social problems. By-products of Viet Nam's economic progress and growing urbanisation include an increase in child labor, exploitation, abuse, family separation, trafficking, violence, homelessness, and suicide. The bulk of these cases are found in urban areas – though child labor, exploitation and trafficking are less easily confined.

While still predominantly a rural country, urban migration is on the rise in Viet Nam. Viet Nam shows a 3.6% annual urban population expansion, which accounts for about half of the annual increase in the

population. The countryside began to inundate the city with migrants, students, and seasonal laborers once the pressures from and lure of the market became impossible to ignore. Cities became seen as centers of opportunity, and unregistered thousands entered urban areas in the hope of a better life. In Hanoi, estimates now place over 1 million unregistered people living amongst a city of 2.5 million – and over half of these have no stable residence.

**Anthony Bloomberg:** *‘UNICEF has for many years had activities in the area of child protection. What we can see and foresee is that these social issues of children will become increasingly of concern in Viet Nam in the future. This will likely be one of the unintended consequences of the socio-economic development of Viet Nam. Parents will have to work longer – and have less time for their children. There will be more pressure on families to succeed economically and provide for their children with adverse effects on family cohesion and more intra-family violence. We expect these factors will lead to increased pressures on families and an increase in Child Protection problems in Viet Nam.’*

According to the Country Programme Document (2006-2010), Viet Nam now has over 2.5 million children in need of special protection (CNSP), including over 150,000 orphans, 1.2 million children with disabilities, 23,000 child laborers, 13,000 children in conflict with the law and 263,000 children living with HIV positive parents. Estimates place around 16,000 children now living on the streets of Viet Nam – most of whom come from poor farming communities and end up under bridges or on benches in cities. Most can look forward to hawking postcards, maps or lottery tickets, if not shining shoes or other menial tasks; those younger than seven or eight usually beg. It is a problem of overflow: the cities cannot meaningfully or gainfully absorb the constant flow of migrants in from the countryside, and so, in the city without registration or access to basic services, they essentially become illegal migrants in their own country.

**Anthony Bloomberg:** *‘The UNICEF Viet Nam Child Protection team has been taking stock of our strategies and interventions in Child Protection. Previously our approach has been directed towards categories of children – street children, orphans, sexually exploited children, and so on. The new approach...is more targeted towards the protective systems that need to be developed that can safeguard children with difficult social vulnerabilities. For example, we have*

*persuaded the Government to change its policy on institutional care for children – where possible children should stay with their families or alternative community-based care.'*

**Le Hong Loan:** *'In the area of child protection, the fact is that individual programmes come before putting in broad structures. At this point, we are working with the Government to put in a national child protection strategy – looking at programming perspectives and links. It is a big workload, but satisfying because UNICEF is the leader among all NGO and UN agencies on this issue. It is an important investment; it is still in the conception phase, but there are good opportunities for influence and advocacy. The Government is receptive and willing to cooperate.'*

### ***Of Human Bondage***

The majority of the negative consequences that have emerged from Viet Nam's modernization do not discriminate on the basis of gender. But there is one issue that overwhelmingly claims females as its primary targets. Viet Nam now has thousands of women and girls trafficked outside the country. Most of those trafficked are headed to China and Cambodia for work, arranged marriages, or prostitution. Estimates are grossly inexact, and count as trafficked only those that come to the attention of border police, but according to UNICEF China and the Chinese Women's Federation, there were approximately 10-12,000 Vietnamese women and children trafficked into China alone in 2003.

**Anthony Bloomberg:** *'I have always felt that the interventions against trafficking of women and children are highly strategic. This is because the phenomenon touches upon so many social issues, whether the attitudes towards girls and sexual exploitation amongst the population, or whether towards coping mechanisms of poor families who send or tolerate that their girls put themselves at risk to help the family economically. It is for this reason that I have taken a personal interest in this issue during my time in Viet Nam.'*

In June 2003, UNICEF China and Viet Nam participated in a landmark initiative to halt cross-border trafficking. For the first time, Chinese and Vietnamese authorities, supported by UNICEF, began a major communication campaign to raise awareness of the danger of trafficking with the aim of stopping Vietnamese women and girls crossing the border for forced marriages and prostitution.



**Anthony Bloomberg:** *‘A cross-border visit was organized jointly by UNICEF Viet Nam and UNICEF China, with the Government delegations on either side – and I personally participated in it. The governments had not been able to deal properly bilaterally on this issue because of other complicating factors – such as illegal immigration and historic questions like the exodus of boat people to China in 1979/80. It was only through UNICEF’s programme relationships in both countries that the cross-border visits took place.*

*During this visit a lot of contentious issues were aired by both sides, and at some points it looked as if no agreement would be possible. But I think that UNICEF’s impartial insistence to deal with the humanitarian aspects of trafficking in women and children helped China and Viet Nam agree on seven joint actions that would be implemented within the context of the UNICEF programmes in the two countries. Now there are annual bilateral meetings to review progress against the agreed joint actions and this is all very positive.’*

## **Be More Social**

Up until recently, there was no such thing as social work and social workers in Viet Nam. With the growing number of children in jeopardy, or at risk of abuse, or becoming involved in crime, the country needed to both recognize the value of professionals who could support these young people and alleviate the strains they and their families were suffering. UNICEF has long attempted to bring the social worker to Viet Nam and have the idea of social work accepted. It has pushed for the training of community volunteers and has encouraged the study of social work at university level.

**Madame Tran Thi Thanh Thanh:** *‘I believe the role of the social worker in Viet Nam is very necessary. UNICEF has helped our country understand the benefits that social workers can have on the community and done much to promote new policies and a disbursement of responsibility for the children to provincial levels.’*

**Rima Salah:** *‘I am a great believer in social work. It is crucial for development. During my time in Viet Nam, I brought in professionals from France and America to endorse what social work was all about. We had meetings in both Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City – I remember one meeting where workers from the South came up to speak with Madame Thanh Thanh in order to work on a dialogue and empower social workers.’*

**Anthony Bloomberg:** *'UNICEF has been championing the importance of social work and the need to build a national capacity of social workers and the network within which they can function effectively. I like to argue that just as we have medical personnel for health problems, the country needs social workers who are the equivalent of doctors and nurses for social problems. Just recently, the Vietnamese government has recognized social work as an official field of study. This has been the result of about ten years of UNICEF advocacy and exposing Government officials to the subject of social work.'*

**Le Hong Loan:** *'In Viet Nam, there is no title for social worker. It is not in the vocabulary, and so there are no designated social worker positions. But it is an academic discipline. Interestingly, there is the realization of the need for social work training, but as yet no actual social worker. In the future, we hope to see social workers in hospitals, schools and other places.'*

### ***The Human Rights-Based Approach***

The human rights-based approach to programming meant that UNICEF put increased attention into monitoring the rights of the child. This included improved collection and data analysis on children and women as well as capacity building for those Vietnamese institutions involved in monitoring rights progress and corresponding abuses and complaints. Key actors in this area are the state inspectorates and CPFC. At the same time, the National Assembly (the National Parliament in Viet Nam), is increasingly playing closer attention to these issues.

**Christian Salazar:** *'Governments must be accountable. I find there is a great sense of duty from Government, not just in Vietnam but in Asian countries in general. But there are also inefficiencies and corruption. As Vietnam leaves day-to-day business more and more to the people, it becomes urgent that the Vietnamese State put more mechanisms and institutions in place that monitor, as close as possible, how children are doing within the process of social change and that raise the voice on behalf of children, parents and care takers if things are not going well. We are seeing the strengthening of accountability through, for example, the prominence of the National Assembly and their action in the past two years. We have therefore engaged closely with the National Assembly and supported their work on monitoring and law making in cases such as the revised law on protection and education for children, the youth law and the law on education.'*

But despite these proclamations and the efforts of the Government, UNICEF, the INGOs and the international donor community, Viet Nam is a country where an estimated 17 million children do not have access to safe water and where 75% of all children lack proper sanitation. Each year, nearly 38,000 children die before their fifth birthday, mostly from preventable causes. Two million children under five years of age are underweight. 200,000 primary aged children are still not enrolled in primary school, the majority of these being ethnic minority children, especially girls. And despite the impressive achievement of halving poverty rates over the last fifteen years, over 20 million people are still described as poor and living below the poverty line.

**Anthony Bloomberg:** *'We have to follow the children and we have to follow the development of the country. In a country that has very high under 5 mortality rates, survival has to be the chief focus of the programme. But when you get to a country like Viet Nam, where on aggregate the under 5 mortality rate has been doing very well, do we lose interest in survival? No, but we must focus in on those populations not doing well.'*

*And what do we say about the rest of the population? Does Unicef have nothing to say? We still have the Child Protection issues. We still have issues as to the quality of education. We still have children who are graduating from primary school but not enrolled in secondary, especially in ethnic minority areas. Basic primary, in fact, primary education is not enough. They talk about primary education and lower secondary, and now I think we should talk about after graduation from a quality primary school, we want the children to be enrolled in secondary school.*

*The other issue is young adolescence. This is an age where it is still possible to influence and prepare them for what will happen in older adolescence, and this we have been working on in one of our education projects and we will be strengthening the youth programming. In Viet Nam this is particularly important, because demographically, there is a bulge in the population, where you have the largest cohort of the population is now the young teenagers. This makes it very appropriate for UNICEF to pay attention to this age group, which I think we are beginning to do, in terms of life skills, attitudes, participation in issues that will affect them.'*

## **A Crowded Stage**

Long gone are the days when UNICEF could arrange for all concerned to meet in a single restaurant to streamline activities. By 2005, according to the INGO Directory, there were an estimated 500 INGO and other development agencies operating in Viet Nam, mostly from Western Europe, North America and the Asia Pacific. At the beginning of the century, INGOs in Viet Nam acted on 1,458 projects with a monetary value of \$ 81 million. By 2005, the level of ODA had been raised to \$3.4 billion in pledges.

**Anthony Bloomberg:** *‘Over the last ten years, almost all the international overseas assistance actors in Viet Nam had increased their flow of funds to Viet Nam. The bilateral government cooperation to Viet Nam has also greatly increased. These factors have led to the UN as a whole and UNICEF in particular having an increasingly smaller share of ODA in Viet Nam: UNICEF’s share is now about 0.5%. But of course it is not the money that is the key input that we have to give.’*

The changing nature of Viet Nam, the evolution and influence of the donor landscape on UNICEF’s position in Viet Nam, the harmonization of UN agencies, and the upcoming changes in modality transfers have all pushed the organization to review its strategies and structure. The past seems to be fading faster in Viet Nam than elsewhere. Even UNICEF’s physical premises is not immune: the Government served notice at the end of 2004 that it is now prepared to demolish the ‘leaning villa’ at 72 Ly Thuong Kiet, and scheduled the job to take place in 2005. UNICEF’s next residence - an expanded United Nations compound - is currently in the planning stages.

**Dr. Cao Viet Hoa:** *‘The situation has changed over the past ten years in nearly every aspect of UNICEF’s business. In general, it was a simpler situation before: there were no emerging sectors, there was not such economic disparity, and there was a smaller Government and smaller group of aid organizations. There was less UN, less of the other groups, and it was easier to find good, professional local staff. Now, as the job market in Viet Nam becomes more attractive, locals are finding well-paid jobs that may be less demanding than at UNICEF. And though the indicators for women and children overall look much better, the reality is that life is still very difficult when you look at certain places more carefully.’*

**Le Hong Loan:** *‘There is a heavier, more intense workload than working for an NGO, but a professional satisfaction that comes from knowing your work is influencing national and sub-national policies. This is particularly the case in the protection sector, as protection services have not yet been firmly established and there is a lot of work to be done in changing values, in laying down the infrastructure and having it all accepted by the Government. The same can be said for trafficking issues and injury prevention.’*

*At the same time, the process of UNICEF’s evolution in Hanoi from supply to policy and advocacy requires a change in the profile of the staff and the nature of the work. So there has been a greater turnover over the past six years or so. You can feel the effects of this evolution.’*

**Christian Salazar:** *‘The state no longer needs UNICEF for service delivery. It needs us to create a protective environment for children, and we need our staff to work on social policies in different sectors. One such example is the Comprehensive Poverty Growth Reduction Strategy. We want to bring these poverty reduction strategies to the provinces, as the provinces now have much greater capacity and autonomy than before. We will move into the provincial level with child-friendly programming and we will sign and transfer funds directly with the provinces. This is how we prove our continued relevance, and this is how we will stay the top advocate for children in Viet Nam.’*

**Le Hong Loan:** *‘You can also see the effects of change and development on the other side of the table. There is a much stronger level of technical expertise now in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, MOFIN, MPI and others. Also, our regular partners like the CPFC, MOET have shown a lot of growth; what you have now are Vietnamese who have gone abroad for training, knowledge and observation and returned to make meaningful contributions.’*

## **How Soon Is Now?**

Success is a term that must be qualified. The attainment of targeted goals can mask gaps in treatments that will not disappear on their own. On closer inspection, Viet Nam, with its difficult terrain, hard to reach populations, and inadequate treatment/storage infrastructure, puts up a difficult fight against complete eradication of a disease or illness, or the ability to get transport enough clean water to everyone, or truly achieve a universal standard of primary and lower secondary education.

**Anthony Bloomberg:** *'It is more and more difficult to reach those last remaining percentages and it takes more effort. This is our intention for the next Country Programme: to identify and make a dent in those unreached populations.'*

## **On Health and Nutrition**

Viet Nam has achieved impressive results in health over the last three decades. Nowhere is its success more evident than in its immunization coverage. Polio was eradicated in 2000, measles is close to being eradicated and there has been virtual elimination of maternal and neonatal tetanus. However, closer inspection shows that certain groups of people are still missing out on life-saving immunization. Furthermore, the impact of government health reforms that have introduced user fees and legalized private medical practice and the pharmaceutical sector are pointing towards growing inequity.

**Dr. Cao Viet Hoa:** *'Even with the success of the EPI programme, the reality is that today there are still areas only 70% fully immunized. What this shows is that there is a great deal of effort still to be made in order to be able to truly prevent these illnesses and diseases. There needs to be mobile teams for better access to administer the new vaccines like Hepatitis B. Viet Nam also needs more and better storage facilities, but the budgets at the commune level essentially disallow for this possibility. There also needs to be training to ensure injections are made safely and monitoring for adverse effects after immunization. Progress will come if the Government and other donors increase their support. UNICEF is no longer needed for direct support or supply.'*

**Anthony Bloomberg:** *'On the whole, Viet Nam is doing very well on many child indicators – immunization is over 90%, and when you look at the Kinh majority, they are close to, and maybe even ahead of national and international goals. However, for certain populations, the figures are not so good and we need to focus on them. But even for the majority Kinh population, there are still concerns. Even amongst the majority that has enough food to eat, there is still relatively high malnutrition due to many complex factors, including the low incidence of exclusive breastfeeding for the recommended period of time, and the lack of potable water and sanitation coverage.'*

## Malnutrition

Malnutrition was and remains a stubborn problem, much more complex in scope than EPI immunization or CDD oral rehydration solutions. There is no quick cure and though the conditions that cause it, lack of adequate food, health, care - have been addressed, they are not yet all under control.

**Dr. Pham Ngoc Len:** *‘Malnutrition is a multi-cause problem; it is not only related to education or well-being. What we can see is that there is a high rate in low income areas and areas where there are few resources – like in the central and mountain sections. But the problem also exists in areas where there are good, nutritious resources. In these places, we see care-takers selling nutritious foods in the market and then buying food without any nutritional value to feed their children. So there is a lack of knowledge, a lack of the understanding of nutritional value that keeps malnutrition high even in resource-rich areas.’*

In the 1996-2000 Programme of Cooperation, UNICEF focused on five projects in its nutrition programme. These were preventing malnutrition in young children; preventing vitamin A and iron deficiencies; preventing iodine deficiency and encouraging breastfeeding. The goal was to reduce from 42% to 30% malnutrition and Vitamin A deficiency in pregnant women and infants, so that new mothers in the targeted areas would be able to breastfeed exclusively during the first six months. Success was mixed. Distribution of Vitamin A capsules was initially hampered by a supply shortage when the decision was made to cut costs by purchasing only locally produced capsules. But gains were made when distribution and training was shared between the National Institute of Nutrition, the Pasteur Institute, and the Dien Bien Phu Hospital. Iron tablet supplements were even more constrained and could only reach around 6% of the estimated pregnant women nationally. It was also unfortunate that no early attempts were made to integrate the Vitamin A and iron supplements into the EPI programme. For all health and nutrition projects, UNICEF sought to strengthen planning and monitoring at national and local levels. These programmes, it should be noted, continued to gain noteworthy results despite a background of shrinking Government financial contribution to healthcare – by the year 2000, according to the Economist Intelligence Unit, government spending on healthcare amounted to just 0.7% of GDP, and four-fifths of healthcare spending came from private pockets.

**Anthony Bloomberg:** *‘The ways of improving nutrition are subtle – not just a question of food but also of parasites, exclusive breastfeeding, health status of the mother. Even though there are quantity issues involved, there are quality issues in terms of understanding all the reasons why children are not as well nourished as they should be, and then attacking all the different aspects.’*

*It is very important that mothers and children receive sufficient Vitamin A, iodine, and other micro-nutrients needed to ensure good nutrition. We learned recently that the Mekong Delta is the region with the lowest consumption of iodised salt, and this is because the population there take their salt in the form of fish sauce – so now UNICEF has to work with the Government on how to introduce iodine into the fish sauce.’*

Food poverty fell sharply during the 1990s, but pockets of severe hunger and food insecurity still exist. A UN FAO study estimated slightly under one-quarter of the population live with a high risk of not being able to feed themselves – most of whom are small farmers in northern and delta areas. Contrast this with obesity, which has become the new nutrition problem emerging in the wealthier, usually urban areas. Officials now estimate as much as 12% of children in HCMC and slightly less in Hanoi are obese – the product of a rise in income and lack of nutritional awareness.

**Dr. Cao Viet Hoa:** *‘With Health and Nutrition, we began with hardware amounting to around 50% of the budget. Now, with the reductions and an increase in other donors, we need to spend our time and money on advocacy and sustainability of interventions, strategies and modalities. Once we come up with a feasible plan, we should leave it for the Government to expand.’*

### ***Water Environment and Sanitation (WES)***

Access to safe water and proper sanitation continues to show mixed coverage throughout Viet Nam. Urban areas consistently show higher coverage for both water and sanitation; roughly half of all rural areas have clean water coverage, and only 35-40% have adequate sanitation. Hygiene education, particularly in schools, is an increasing focus, especially since most schools have limited access to clean water and sanitation and facilities for washing hands, using soap and disposing of toilet waste.



**Chander Badloe (2001 - present):** *‘While WES has always been linked to health, and the communes have always showed this as a priority, the link now is being set on poverty reduction. Now, with the cross-cutting measures within UNICEF, WES is strongly linked to health indicators. The emphasis is on ensuring available quality and adequate consumption, and the argument is that when these are provided, then there are clear and direct benefits for the community: less money is spent on medicine, productivity rises from greater health as well as less time spent accessing sources of clean water, and so on. When this is clear, then you see people wanting to work together, you see communities building not just for community resources, but for individual housing access, and you see services becoming more equitable. This link is targeting every single household, even the poorest.*

*In the rural areas, quality, quantity and convenience are hard obstacles to conquer. Then there are the problems associated with human behaviour, such as when villages pollute their clean water access. There are other regional problems, such as arsenic levels in the dug wells, or the feasibility of gravity-fed water systems in the mountains.’*

### **Education: Face the Music**

Since 1975, The Government of Viet Nam has accorded education as one of its highest priorities. Universal primary education has been achieved and the government has now set new targets for all children to enroll in lower secondary school by 2010 as well as reaching a pre-school (kindergarten) enrolment rate of 95%. However, these impressive education statistics hide disparities particularly for children living in rural and remote areas, as well as for children affected by HIV/AIDS, ethnic minority children and children with disabilities, who are all frequently denied their right to education.

**Hoang Van Sit:** *‘UNICEF is trying to promote equality among the children. That is why we ask the question: Disparity or Majority? We now go for disparity, which means we go to the remote areas, to the areas where we are needed the most.*

*UNICEF is trying to support the raising of awareness among the ethnic minority people to educate their children, and in particular their daughters. The ethnic minority culture does not want to send girls to school because they say that investing in girls is investing in other families – not in your own. But we are saying that when you educate the*

*son, you are providing for one person, but when you educate a girl or woman, you are providing education for the whole family and community, and the nation as well.*

*We do not want to promote the old 'chalk and talk' methods, but rather an activity-based teaching which pushes the students and has them working together for themselves, even so far as the students teaching each other...It takes time for new ideas and concepts to take shape, but we are happy that the Government understands UNICEF's added value more and more.'*

## **Where do the Children Play**

Childhood Injury Prevention has expanded quickly working with the other UNICEF sections, initially, and then beginning a stand alone project in 2003, with the aim of increasing family and community awareness about what can easily be done to increase safety in a child's environment. The initial research that helped clarify why injury rates were so high has also helped shed light on the variety and prevalence of types of injuries Vietnamese children suffer. Each section has worked on issues relevant to their programmes, such as Education pushing for safety awareness in the curriculum; Health and Nutrition training volunteers to help communities create 'child safe homes'; and WES working to construct safety barriers for children around dug-out wells and other water access areas.

**Isabelle Sévédé-Bardem, Chief, Childhood Injury Prevention:** *'Our ability to provide supplies like helmets and other safety gear was never going to be a feasible solution, so we worked on prevention through active measures like knowledge and awareness and adult supervision, and measures like getting barriers put up around potentially dangerous areas.'*

The Childhood Injury Prevention (CIP) project has supplemented these initiatives by supporting the Government of Viet Nam's launching of the first comprehensive injury prevention project in the developing world in 2003, and now attempts to expand its message and impact by targeting three critical areas for prevention and protection: the education system, law enforcement, and environmental engineering. In six provinces, children, parents and care-givers have all been trained on prevention of childhood injuries. The issue of drowning has been addressed through the practical development of rural swimming pools, where UNICEF supports swimming lessons and training water safety instructors. UNICEF has also sought to improve road safety through installation of speed bumps,

crosswalks, traffic lights and speed limits. Furthermore, CIP has shown that it is not just prevention and protection that is integral to reducing harm; there must be places and spaces provided for children to play without worry. It is not enough to tell children not to play near traffic - or even worse, in areas still unsafe from landmines and unexploded ordnances left over from the wars; it is much better to lead them to a playground.

## ***UNICEF in Viet Nam: From Here to the Horizon***

**Christian Salazar:** *‘The past fifteen years in Viet Nam has seen this country overhauled, but I expect to see an even stronger jump in the next five years. Viet Nam wants to double its per capita income, to move from a developing country to a middle-income country. This means tensions, risks, and opportunities for all, and especially for children. The next five years will see a lot of growth and improvement, and this should spark trickle-down effects to the poor. But it also will be very tough on social change. A more market-oriented system may mean less time for children and less social solidarity. The WTO accession, for one, is something we all want, that will nevertheless create problems for children. The 10th Party Congress must show that the Government clearly sees the five-year stampede at its door. And this demands social reform policies that must be equally – if not more strongly – accelerated as economic and investment reforms. There has been progress in social reform, but there is much more to be done.’*

**Anthony Bloomberg:** *We have to deal with the emerging issues. Because UNICEF is for children, and here in Viet Nam the great majority of children survive and we should be interested in their development. UNICEF defines children as under 18 years of age [Viet Nam defines children as under 16]. So we should not lose interest when they graduate from primary school, or secondary school. I think that we have to follow the children in the process of development and in relation to the development of the country.*

*UNICEF needs to address the challenge of reaching those remaining vulnerable undeserved populations, including certain ethnic minorities. But we also need to address emerging social issues in the rest of the population. UNICEF is the world’s premier child agency. Who else will help Viet Nam’s Government address increasing Child Protection issues?*

*Another issue is young adolescence. Demographically, young adolescents are the largest cohort of the population of Viet Nam; the*

*time is now to support this important group of children to gain life skills in areas that are socially important to them.*

*So I think UNICEF in Viet Nam needs to look at the full life-cycle of children and continue to develop relevant interventions for all ages of children.'*

### ***The Go-Between***

Given UNICEF's relatively small share of overall external aid, it will have to shift the weight of its focus in the near term to technical assistance for law and policy development, national standards setting, and international partnerships for women and children. While UNICEF will continue to have its own programmes of cooperation, it must dedicate effort to influencing how and where the State and other development actors spend their resources. Joint programmes with other UN agencies will become more important, as will collaboration with key donors and development banks. Related initiatives such as the Comprehensive Poverty Reduction and Growth Strategy (CPRGS), Sector Wide Approaches (SWAPS) and even discussions on direct budget support for government policies and programmes will all be critical components. In addition, collaboration with and through NGOs and civil society should increase. At the same time, UNICEF will continue to push for programme innovations and expand projects where children face new challenges and the organization has a comparative advantage to address them - as is the case with childhood injury prevention, family policies, ethnic minority policies, lower secondary education and adolescent participation.

**Christian Salazar:** *'Nowadays, the Government of Vietnam is raising its own income and, in addition, receives large amounts of development assistance. We are not needed anymore in our traditional role as supporters and providers of basic social services for children. Our added value lies much more in bringing international knowledge and experience to Vietnam, particularly related to the new emerging issues for children where Vietnam does not have experiences or expertise.'*

### ***Beyond the Horizon***

**Anthony Bloomberg:** *'We are describing the next UNICEF Viet Nam Country Programme 2006-2010 as one of transition – a combination of working on unfinished previous agendas such as malnutrition and WES, and also working on new emerging social issues such as Child*

*Protection, Child Injury Prevention and HIV/AIDS...From a quantity point of view, we are still interested in the human rights approach of the United Nations - that no child should be left behind. With our work on policies and laws, we will try to make sure that there is a focus on child poverty.'*

*Even though everyone expects Viet Nam to make good socio-economic progress over the next five years, I expect that UNICEF will need to be fully engaged in Viet Nam for at least another programme after that. As Viet Nam progresses in its development, I expect that the UNICEF programme will be smaller and more focused on emerging social issues and our interventions will be more related to advocacy and technical assistance than giving materials and money.*

*In the future, as UNICEF's material programme role in Viet Nam diminishes, I hope we will increase private sector fundraising and general advocacy about children in Viet Nam. In this way, I believe UNICEF will still have a long, positive engagement with the Vietnamese people.'*

## **Epilogue**

UNICEF, in every mission and every programme in any country, is an endeavour to provide tangible and intangible improvement to the quality of life. The tangible product becomes the brand image, and many stories in Viet Nam recount the goodwill value of the UNICEF logo or UNICEF name on the side of a school, day-care center or storage facility, on a box of medical supplies, on a hand-pump or well, or on the side of a package delivery or 4WD automobile. The intangible product, however, is built-up over time, through expertise and relationships gained from time shared on projects, on-location, in negotiation. It takes much longer to establish but has a greater sense of endurance.

**Ambassador Ngo Quang Xuan and Mrs. Le Thi Hoa:** *'Most Vietnamese people know UNICEF not only for the organization having public health programmes, safe water projects and support for education in possibly all parts of the country, but also for sustainable impacts such as the results of safe Water and Sanitation activities in combination with Education, Communication and the Expanded Programme of Immunization.'*

*These programmes have helped to change a tradition in exploiting and using safe water from coastal plains to remote and mountainous areas. The most significant impact is that people have understood the sources of diseases like diarrhoea, malnutrition, trachoma, gynecological infections and others. Using water sources initiated by UNICEF has been strongly promoted and become a common need. The Vietnamese mothers highly appreciate UNICEF for initiating and successfully implementing the EPI, which has helped to significantly reduce child mortality.*

*Thus, it is possible to say that the methodology of the UNICEF assistance programme is correct and creates notable influences. With proper understanding, efficient cooperation between the Government of Viet Nam and UNICEF, together with communication to raise awareness, financial and technical tools, term reviews and lessons learned, the Viet Nam-UNICEF Country Programme of Cooperation has been successfully implemented and duly recognized the world over. Viet Nam has had the singular opportunity to have been selected to report at the UNICEF Executive Board in New York the achievements made in implementation of the Viet Nam-UNICEF Country Programme of Cooperation.'*

**Prof. Pham Minh Hac:** *'Paul Audat and I visited project sites together. There were many projects to build schools, to supply water to schools with a hand pump. To the people in the villages and schools, this was UNICEF water, these were UNICEF schools. I also made field trips with Steven Woodhouse, and others. With Mr. Woodhouse I recall one trip in particular to Tra Vinh province, south of Ho Chi Minh City. The roads were terrible, and we had to go by ferry, then by boat. But Mr. Woodhouse, Mr. Audat, all the UNICEF Representatives understood Viet Nam very well because they made these difficult travels, ate the food at some roadside stall in the middle of nowhere with the locals, or had lunch in some bamboo hut that even for Vietnamese was not up to hygiene standards. These were moments that strongly promoted a relationship between UNICEF and Viet Nam. As a result, 'UNICEF' became a Vietnamese word. Everyone knew it as a symbol, because everyone had seen it in the hard to reach areas and elsewhere. It was 'Vietnamized'. And the Representatives and other UNICEF people, became known as Mr. UNICEF, or the UNICEF gentleman. They became a bridge between people, and Government, and education, for Viet Nam to the world.*

*The Government and Vietnamese people appreciate and thank UNICEF for a number of projects over the past thirty years. UNICEF's projects and support, however, were not just tangible – more importantly, these UNICEF projects helped to change the mentality in child care, helped push policy and advocate for more government resource allocation. This is more important than the physical contributions.'*

**Vice Minister of Education Madame Dang Hyunh Mai:** *'The UNICEF name has a strong hold in Viet Nam – something that the other organizations do not have. It has weight because it was the first agency to come in and help with the very basic areas. The other organizations have followed and expanded, but UNICEF should maintain its strong name through continued programme support.'*

## ***A Tale of Two Cities***

To have heard it retold by those who played a part, life as part of the UNICEF team in Viet Nam was far more often than not a career highlight and a source of fondest memories. The testimonies, particularly from those who were around from the start at the Hotel Hoa Binh, and the first years at the leaning villa, were thick with requests to forward regards and best wishes to former staff and counterparts – so much so, that the discrepancy between first-hand UNICEF accounts and statistical descriptions of post-war Viet Nam brought to mind the opening line: *'It was the best of times, it was the worst of times'* from the novel, *'A Tale of Two Cities'*.

**Morten Giersing:** *'I can recall Madame Tien calling to the highest placed officials, in the most informal way, to prepare for my most formal meetings with the same officials – or my excellent interpreter Trong always being greeted before me by all Ministers, as he had been their 'older brother' who had taught them English – or driver Dai, who would simply walk into any kitchen, look at the available materials, inspect the cleanliness, and then take over and prepare the meal – with some assistance from the surprised staff. I also recall Madame Muoi in her tiny office, stocking 30 old dot matrix printers, in the case that they again could be needed, and reminding me of a time where everything was scarce in Hanoi...'*

And indeed, if it were possible to borrow this title, it could be made to fit appropriately, for the story of UNICEF in Viet Nam over the past thirty years and more is really about UNICEF in Hanoi and Saigon/Ho Chi

Minh City, the two great focal points on the map of Viet Nam, and the programmes that were launched and expanded from these offices that have evolved over time to cover the entire country.

The UNICEF story in Viet Nam is a testament to the amount of positive change that will occur when all involved focus on a best possible solution and accept that cooperation may best ensure the likelihood of success. In this regard, UNICEF and the Vietnamese authorities were well-suited to one another. Both have operated with clear ideas about what needed to be done and took their authority seriously, and both were in agreement as to the inherent value of a child and the desire to improve its well being.

**Anthony Bloomberg:** *‘A difference, in Viet Nam as compared with elsewhere, is in how one deals with the government. The relationship and the goodwill is always there. Here in Viet Nam, you go to the government with ideas and suggestions, and they listen, and they go away and think about it, internalize it, combine it with their own ideas. And after a period of time they may come back with something like what was first suggested but in a different form. They may have decided, ‘We’ll do that, but we’ll do it this way.’*

*...This reflects the fact that the Vietnamese Government is a strong government; it believes seriously in sovereignty, not just in token but they take responsibility for their decisions, which means they will decide things their way. And that is how it is supposed to be.’*

Thirty years on, UNICEF and the Government of the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam can trace a path of rising standards in the country’s health, education, and development. There is pride in these accomplishments, but there is also more to be done. There are old threats that have not been wiped out, and new threats to the health and survival of the country’s women, mothers and children. UNICEF’s role in Viet Nam has been molded to fit the scope of demand, and its present strengths are considerably different than when it first arrived. But while its role has changed, its mandate has remained constant, and the question of what UNICEF can do is still as valid as it was when first voiced by the Poles and Swedes on the Board at Headquarters over thirty years ago.

\* \* \*



***'I believe that this 'living history' of the basic policy of UNICEF - Children first, wherever they are - is a fundamental part of what makes UNICEF an audacious, sometimes trouble-shouting and efficient part of the UN system. It is present in many other situations and can help today and tomorrow. A tradition is not to be confined to the library but is to be passed on as a kind of living reference helping us today.'***

***- Jacques Beaumont -***

***The End***



*Young Vietnamese girls wearing motor bike helmets. Injury is now the biggest killer in Viet Nam for children 1 year and older. Viet Nam was the first country in the world to have a Childhood Injury Prevention project.*



*UNICEF Viet Nam staff with UNICEF Representative, Mr. Anthony Bloomberg (2002-2005)*



*One of the outcomes of Viet Nam's rapid social and economic changes, is the increasing numbers of young people that are at risk of labour and sexual exploitation, HIV/AIDS and coming into conflict with the law*



*Viet Nam has achieved impressive primary enrolment rates. The next challenge is for children to continue onto secondary education as well as develop bi-lingual teaching for ethnic minority groups*

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## ***Glossary***

ADB	Asian Development Bank
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
BCG (tuberculosis)	Vaccine against the Bacillus of Calme
CDC	Center for Disease Control
CDD	Control of Diarrhea Disease
CEMMA Areas	Committee for Ethnic Minorities and Mountainous
CNSP	Children in Need of Special Protection
COMECON	Council for Mutual Economic Assistance
CPCC	Committee for Protection and Care of Children
CPD	Country Programme Document
CPFC	Committee on Population, Family and Children
CRC	Convention on the Rights of the Child
DANIDA	Danish International Development Agency
DFID	UK Department for International Development
DPT	Diphtheria Pertussis Tetanus
DRVN	Democratic Republic of Viet Nam
ECD	Early Childhood Development
EIU	Economist Intelligence Unit
EPI	Expanded Programme on Immunization
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
HCMC	Ho Chi Minh City
HIV/Aids	Human Immunodeficiency Virus/Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome
IBRD	International Bank for Reconstruction and Development
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
INGO	International Non-Government Organization
IPLG	Indochina Peninsula Liaison Group
IOD	International Organization Department
LDC	Least Developed Countries
MOET	Ministry of Education and Training
MOFIN	Ministry of Finance
MOH	Ministry of Health

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MPI	Ministry of Planning and Investment
NEZ	New Economic Zones
NIHE	National Institute of Health and Epidemiology
NGO	Non-Government Organization
ODA	Official Development Assistance
PHC	Primary Health Care
PRG	Provisional Revolutionary Government
RVN	Republic of Viet Nam
SIDA	Swedish International Development Agency
SRVN	Socialist Republic of Viet Nam
TT	Tetanus Toxoid
UCI	Universal Childhood Immunization
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNFPA	United Nations Fund for Population
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
VACVINA	Vietnamese Organization for the technology for Farming, Fishery and Animal Husbandry (Vietnamese Acronym)
VND	Vietnamese Dong (currency)
VWU	Vietnam Women's Union
WATSAN	Water and Sanitation Programme
WES	Water, Environment and Sanitation
WFP	World Food Programme
WHO	World Health Organization

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# ***List of Participants***

## **Executive Directors (UNICEF)**

- Henry Labouisse (1965-1979)

## **Indochina Peninsula Liaison Group (1973-1975)**

- Martin Sandberg
- Jacques Beaumont
- Dr. Charles Egger

## **Representatives (Hanoi)**

- Dr. François Rémy (1975-1977)
- Bertram Collins (1977-1980)
- Fouad Kronfol (1980-1983)
- Paul Louis Audat (1983-1987)
- Tarique Farooqui (1987-1992)
- Stephen Woodhouse (1992-1995)
- Rima Salah (1995-1998)
- Morton Giersing (1998-2002)
- Anthony Bloomberg (2002-2005)

## **UNICEF Staff**

- Helen Argyriades, Programme Officer (1979-1982);  
*Senior Programme Officer: Health, Planning and Coordination*  
(1990-1992)
- Christian Salazar, Senior Programme Officer (2001-present)

## **Programmes (Viet Nam)**

- Ian Hopwood, Programme Officer (1975-1977)
- Rudolph Hoffmann, Programme Officer (1977-1980)

## ***Child Injury and Prevention:***

- Isabelle Sévédé-Bardem, Section Chief (2003-present)

## ***Child Protection:***

- Le Hong Loan, Section Chief (1989-present)

**Education:**

- Hoan Van Sit, Programme Officer (1990-present)

**Health and Nutrition:**

- Dr. Pham Ngoc Len, Programme Officer (1993-present)
- Dr. Cao Viet Hoa, Programme Officer (1996-present)

**Water, Environment and Sanitation:**

- Leo Goulet, Project Officer (1980-85)
- Bernard Gilbert, Senior Project Officer (1986-1991)
- Chander Badloe, Section Chief (2001-present)

**Vietnamese Dignitaries:**

- Madame Nguyen Thi Binh, former Vice President and first Minister of Education in re-united Viet Nam
- Madame Tran Thi Thanh Thanh, former Head of CPFC
- Prof. Pham Minh Hac, former Minister of Education and Training
- Madame Dang Huynh Mai Vice-Minister, MOET
- Ambassador Ngo Quang Xuan and Mrs. Le Thi Hoa, former Head of UN Operational System Agencies, Ministry of Foreign Affairs; and former UNICEF desk officer, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, respectively

**Also Contributing:**

- Jacques Danois, UNICEF filmmaker and photographer (1963-)
- Mrs. Elise Spivac, widow of Simon Spivac, Programme Officer (1976-78)
- Mrs. Ho Thi Tuyet, Feeding Programme Officer, UNICEF Saigon
- Ms. Tran Thi Thuy Lan, former Secretary, UNICEF Saigon
- Mr. Vu Hoa, former Administrative Assistant, UNICEF Saigon
- Luong Huynh Sam, Chief, Liaison Office, Programme & Supply Officer UNICEF South Viet Nam and Cambodia (1958-73)
- Per Engebak, Consultant for Water and Sanitation Programme (1979, 1980)

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Conducted by John Charnow  
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Conducted by Jack Charnow  
8 November 1984  
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