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Interview with Mrs. Sadako Ogata

Conducted by David Exley
Assisted by Mr. Hajime Seki
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UNICEF History

Interview with Mrs. Sadako Ogata*
by David Exley

Assisted by the UNICEF Information Officer in Tokyo,
Mr. Hajime Seki
Tokyo, 16 May 1983

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* Mrs. Ogata was representative of Japan on the UNICEF Executive Board from 1975 to 1981. She was Chairman of the Committee on Administration and Finance from 1976 - 77, Chairman of the Programme Committee 1977 - 78 and Chairman of the Board 1978 - 79. Among her diplomatic assignments Mrs. Ogata held the rank of Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary in the Permanent Mission of Japan to the United Nations. Before serving in her country's Foreign Service, and since leaving it, she has been a professor in universities in Japan in the fields of diplomatic history and international relations.

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First Impressions of UNICEF

Exley: Mrs. Ogata, I believe you were the first Japanese woman to head the Governing body of a major United Nations Programme. Could we perhaps begin by talking about the circumstances of your appointment as Minister to the Japanese Mission to the United Nations, and subsequently as Japan's Representative on the UNICEF Executive Board?

Ogata: I was appointed to serve as Minister to the Japanese Mission to the United Nations in 1976 and I believe I was the first woman who went in laterally to the foreign service at a fairly senior level. The circumstances leading to my representation on the UNICEF Executive Board were probably accidental. This was one of the first meetings that took place after I joined the Mission. Perhaps the Mission felt that it might be a nice work for a woman to do as a starter, and I went in without knowing anything about UNICEF. My image of UNICEF until then was very much the average image of UNICEF in Japan - UNICEF was a good organization, that dealt with children, and provided milk. My understanding of UNICEF was nil beyond what was a common image.

Exley: You've answered, my other question which was had you been involved at all with UNICEF prior to joining the Japanese Mission?

Ogata: No. Not at all. Not really.

Exley: I wonder if we could talk about your experience. I believe, you spent six years all together on the UNICEF Executive Board. What were your impressions of those sessions during which you served on the Board and could you tell us something about how you saw the role of the Board, how the Board acts. For instance, does it normally follow the recommendations of the Executive Director and the Secretariat or perhaps to what extent does the UNICEF Board actually initiate policy?

Ogata: I was Japan's Representative on the UNICEF Executive Board from 1976 to 1981. In other words, I did six Boards and of the six I was in the Bureau for three years. So, I had a fairly intensive involvement with the Board. Now, until I began serving on the Board, not only did I not know anything about UNICEF, I did not know really about development assistance work. So, I was doubly handicapped.

Japanese Government interest in UNICEF

I think the way the Japanese Government followed the Board was not in a very intensive way, because, I think UNICEF was considered a good organization and Japan was cooperating to the extent that was necessary, providing funds and so on. But there

had not been any intensive involvement by way of following programme proposals, implementation of the programmes, and so on. So, I think, when I went in, not only because of my personal handicap, I do not think our Government was all that much involved in the Board matters or in the work of UNICEF as such to assist me.

Executive Board

General role

Now, to answer your question, as to the role of the Executive Board, I think, the Board has been active in setting up broad policy of UNICEF. For example, way back in the past before my time, UNICEF that was engaged primarily in emergency assistance changed into a development assistance agency, with a great deal of encouragement by the Board.

At the same time when it comes to programme proposals I believe that the Executive Director and Secretariat had very much the lead. To the best of my knowledge, I don't think there was ever a programme proposal that was rejected by the Board during the time that I served. Of course there were questions like, for instance, when the proposal for Chile comes up there are questions, there are comments. A programme on Viet Nam that came up, there are questions and comments. Some comments were rather difficult comments and not in full support of the proposals. But I think at the Board questions were raised in a way to caution the implementation of the proposals. But I don't think there was any outright rejection of a proposal. In that sense I think the UNICEF Board followed very much the kind of board meetings of other development assistance agencies with the Secretariat taking the lead in many ways.

Rejection of 1981 budget proposals: ACABQ

But a very dramatic instant took place at the Board meeting of '81 when the Board did not adopt the budget proposals presented by the Executive Director. The Board substantially cut the supplementary budget and this, from what I understand, had never taken place. The Board sent the two-year budget for examination by the ACABQ. So, in that sense that was a dramatic year in the relationship between the Board and the Secretariat.

Exley: Why did you think the Board perhaps did that at that time?

Ogata: No. This was a new, and very ambitious budget proposal. And it came in a year when already the world was in recession. Many of the donor countries were feeling the effects of the recession, were not prepared to follow the proposals of the Executive Director that were based on the assumption of continuing, substantial increase of income. So, there was that cautious note. This was the Executive Director's first major budget

proposal and I think the Executive Director was very ambitious in trying to present a budget that would support the kind of future plans that he had. I think, coming from a new Executive Director, this was maybe something to be expected. At the same time the times were not good.

I don't think the Board members were over-cautious and I think they decided to send it to a third party to really have the content of the budget examined. Especially, a substantial increase in personnel, involving some ninety-six new posts seemed very much out of place because it was already a time when people, we, Board members were not thinking in terms of personnel expansion.

Exley: Perhaps we can just for a moment pursue that point a little further. I think this was the first time that the UNICEF budget was submitted to the General Assembly's Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Question for approval.

How do you feel about that move which perhaps some people might think will have a limiting effect on UNICEF's freedom in these matters?

Ogata: Well, I had two feelings. I was really torn between two considerations. I thought that maybe the UNICEF budget was already becoming quite large. There was this great increase in personnel that I felt was much too much, myself.

And the personnel proposals indicated that UNICEF maybe was changing its nature. Some of the posts proposed seemed to indicate that UNICEF was thinking in terms of having a group of advisers and this was the most delicate point because UNICEF was either going to be a kind of intellectual, advisory, theoretical organization or very much the down-to-earth, field-based, field-oriented, wisdom-coming-from-the-field type of an organization. My own feeling was that UNICEF should remain a field-oriented, field-based, operational organization. So, I had my own reservations about having a big advisory group at the Headquarters. My own viewpoint can be found in the speech I made at the Board in 1981. And there was also a big division among the Board members, within the Secretariat, too.

If that was the case, I felt perhaps the budget should go to a third party like the ACABQ that could take UNICEF in the context of the overall UN system and see what and how legitimate UNICEF's budget was, in terms of administrative and budgetary considerations.

So, I was not opposed to sending the budget to the ACABQ. However, for that year's budget I felt very strongly that at least the 1981 budget, one year budget, should be approved because I was thinking very much of the effect on the field and for the field people who are really working very, very hard, day by day, in consultation with the governments, to be left without

a budget is a very bad thing and I tried to find some kind of compromise by suggesting that we would at least approve part of the budget that would keep up the operation to the end of the year and leave the rest to ACABQ.

But that proved technically difficult. I did not get the support of the good many of the more budget-minded Board members at that time, so in that sense the whole thing, whole budget, was decided to go to the ACABQ and I made a statement, making sure that this should not affect the field operations, that every consideration should be made so that it would not affect work at the field level.

Exley: In fact I think the subsequent income was a little, somewhat better than some of the more conservative estimates at that state.

Ogata: Then, I think Mr. Grant worked very, very hard at fund-raising especially because of these circumstances.

Political issues in Board

Exley: Now, you spoke earlier about the role of the Board and how comments were sometimes asked about individual programmes or projects. What are you able to say about the attitude of Board members generally? For example, to what extent did political issues influence discussions during the period you were on the Board? For instance, East/West issues or North/South problems, to what extent did these surface during the discussions?

Ogata: At the Board meetings, we did have discussions reflecting East/West tensions or North/South tensions, but not anywhere to the point that we find in other UN forums and I think there was an understanding by East/West or North/South that we were talking about some things that were of common interest and that political considerations should never affect programme proposals. The developing countries always wanted to make sure that programme proposals be approved and I think the donor countries also had that interest. So, even when the political issues came up like, I can give you an example - this was also at the 1981 Board - the Eastern countries wanted very much to have a Board statement on disarmament and the Western countries did not want to have that because this was part of the Soviet peace offensive and there was a great deal of unnecessary discussions over that, but that did not affect any programme proposals.

I believe for those Board members who are, have been involved, the most important thing is to keep programme proposals intact and have the programmes approved. That is the most important part of the Board work and I don't think the political consideration ever affected that aspect.

IYC and Post-IYC issues

However, I have to add at this point that there was a great deal of sophisticated understanding about what politicization means on the part of the Executive Director, at that time and I can cite Mr. Labouisse and also some of the Board members. If, for example, when IYC was to be observed and when the Secretary General suggested that UNICEF would be the lead agency, Mr. Labouisse was extremely cautious and hesitant, almost.

At that time the Chairman was Dr. Ordonez-Plaja of Colombia and the Programme Chairman was Ambassador Oyono of Cameroon and I was the Chairman of the Administration and Finance Committee and we had a small meeting of the Bureau. It was inter-session, and I think it was more the Board Bureau that encouraged Mr. Labouisse to accept the lead agency and our argument was that if UNICEF didn't, who else would and we didn't want a worse agency (laughter), there is no worse agency, but we felt, the Board members felt that UNICEF was probably the best equipped.

Mr. Labouisse did not want the operational work of UNICEF to be so much distracted. That was done.

And then Mr. Labouisse was very much hesitant to have a world meeting, world conference, because when you look at world conferences you know that, that is the time when hard politicization takes place.

For certain conferences politicization may be necessary and might be desirable. But for UNICEF's work, if all the politicization concerning children of this area or that area or children to fight this, that and other things comes up, that is going to make the work of UNICEF difficult and this is why Mr. Labouisse was very much cautious before accepting the role of the lead agency and very much against having a world conference. And I thought this was a very interesting point because Mr. Labouisse was one person who had gone through the Biafra time and has led UNICEF through many difficult operations. He cited several examples to me when I commented on these points, that had UNICEF come up with all sorts of declarations on political grounds, UNICEF would not have been able to do humanitarian work in such places as Nigeria, the Middle East, Viet Nam, and so on. And to do humanitarian work, I think you have to have highly sophisticated political understanding, and I think Mr. Labouisse showed his possession of such understanding very clearly. Also I think the Board members knew how to approach political questions. For example, in approving programme proposals at the Board meeting they would raise all the problems or all the questions but, not touch the programmes. And this sort of political sophistication has worked very well.

Exley:

What about the particular headaches or responsibilities to be a Chairman of the board?

Ogata: In my time, I think - I talk about my own experience - let me see, first was the IYC. My chairman year was, a good part of it was the IYC and since it was almost known that I would be the Chairman from the year before, how to carry out IYC was a bit of a headache. But since the IYC had a separate office, there was a Secretariat set up, I had no charge, no direct responsibility about carrying out the IYC.

My own feeling was that the IYC would go well. That was not my concern. But how to follow the IYC was my concern from even before the IYC started because I thought IYC would be a lot of fanfare, a lot of support, enthusiasm. But when IYC finishes, how to finish up that year, absorb what has to be absorbed within UNICEF work was my greatest concern from the beginning. There were grounds for that concern because, for example, a very simple thing when the IYC ended the Secretariat had to be cut down. Cutting down the Secretariat was not an easy thing, at that size phasing out the IYC Secretariat.

There was also - and this was difficult - at the end of the IYC there were some voices raised as to post-IYC, its work should not only be tied again to the developing countries, but many children at the developed countries required assistance from UNICEF as well. And this was a big issue but if children throughout the world are going to require UNICEF assistance and I'm sure there were grounds for requiring UNICEF assistance. It affects UNICEF enormously. It involves the re-allocation of human resources and requires a lot larger budget for the programme and so on. So, this was one point but I think I was rather determined to finish up the IYC, absorb all the IYC work relating to children in regular programmes of UNICEF rather than to carry on the IYC forever. I cannot say in concrete terms where I said this, but that was my general line of thought and I think I made that clear on several occasions.

Exley: One of the ideas was that the national committees that had been formed during the IYC be encouraged to carry on the advocacy role for children both in developed and developing countries.

Ogata: Yes. And there was a study carried on. I did my study of the follow-up of the IYC in Japan and I can give that. I have a copy of it.

Exley: Thank you very much. Before we leave shall we say more about IYC at this point? How would you evaluate, what do you think were the principal achievements or accomplishments?

Ogata: Oh, UNICEF benefitted a great deal from the IYC. The advocacy role, the advocacy part played by IYC brought in a great deal more support, not only more support but operational support and new clients, new sponsors, new patrons.

Taking the example of Japan, before IYC, probably UNICEF supporters were the directly-UNICEF-connected, UNICEF committee and maybe one or two other organizations. But after the IYC we had a broad sector of UNICEF supporters. Also in Japan development assistance through children, and social development were never brought so clearly before our country. It was educational in that sense.

So, since I remember Mr. Labouisse's anxiety before accepting the IYC role, I think it was really a good thing that UNICEF took the lead, UNICEF benefitted a great deal. So, I feel good about the IYC. Then, I was also glad that UNICEF did not start another big organization as an IYC followup organization which happens very often when you have a world conference. You end up having a new Secretariat. And I think many of the Board members and myself were determined not to have that.

Viet Nam

I can give you one more example. When I was invited by the Government of Viet Nam to head the UNICEF delegation and to sign the basic treaty agreement, my trip was to take place in February. The Vietnamese invasion to Kampuchea took place in January. So, every day there were meetings on the Kampuchean case in the Security Council. I was Chairman of the Board but I was also a member of the Japanese Mission and so this was a little bit delicate to go to Viet Nam just at that time. Viet Nam wanted the international organization's executive directors, chairmen, and so on, to come to their country to see what they had done with their assistance they received. So, to go was delicate but not to go would have politicized UNICEF. For me to go without the clear understanding that I was going as the Chairman of the UNICEF Executive Board and also that I was doing a few other trips and this was nothing special but just one of several trips. Without that understanding to go would have also been political. I think Mr. Labouisse was very clear in understanding the delicacy of my position and gave me appropriate advice I appreciated very much.

Methods of work

Exley: During the years that you were not only Chairman of the Board but Chairman of the Programme Committee and of the Administration and Finance Committee, you had a very close experience with the Board's methods of work as well as of its members.

How did you find the Board's work methods and, including perhaps the size of the Board, do you feel that these were efficient or could be improved?

Ogata: Well, the size of the board was 30 at that time. I think there was no reason for that number but it had grown into that size. The allocation of seats, the various geographical regions were also accidental till that time.

It had also happened that half of the Board came from the larger donor countries and I'm counting the Soviet Union and Eastern European countries as donor countries, and the rest, the other half were developing countries. So, the understanding at the board, and this was followed up in practice, was that the Chairman would rotate between the developing and the developed countries and the Bureau would also reflect half-half distribution, which I think in comparison to other UN development assistance agencies gave much more favourable position to the donor countries. But, and I knew, I felt that would probably not continue forever because the size of the developing countries were so much larger and their voice had to be reflected. At the same time, if UNICEF is a voluntarily funded agency, which works on the basis of voluntary contribution, it is very important to have the Board members from large donor countries. And so, this was the situation with regard to the size. I didn't think it would continue forever but at the same time I thought it was important to keep in mind that the donor countries really had an interest in the work, that donor countries with great interest in the work of UNICEF should be given representation, in other words good representation.

Board composition: continuity

So, that was the composition of the Board. As far as representation on the Board is concerned, there were quite a few really experienced, dedicated UNICEF supporters represented on the Board and I think that helped the work of the Board immensely. UNICEF Secretariat and the Board together was considered a family and that was really unusual in the UN system.

Exley: So, that gave continuity?

Ogata: Continuity, and the Board and the Secretariat together considered themselves a family and they spoke about the UNICEF family and so on. The size helped, continuity of the Board members helped and there was continuity on the Secretariat. You will recall that Mr. Heyward, Mr. Egger were there from the beginning. There were quite a few like Jack Charnow, who were there from the beginning and there were so many Mr. UNICEFs on the Board as well as in the Secretariat who knew each other very well. They helped smoothen Board work. At the same time, that Mr. Labouisse retired, many of his old-time assistants were retired. Also at the Board level, Dr. Conzett is still there, Mr. Thedin is still there from Sweden, and so is Dr. Mande from France, but many of the other old-timers like Dr. Kozusznik from Poland who spent years on the Board are no longer there.

And so there's been a generation change on the part of the Board as well as the Secretariat. So, the 1981 Board meeting that I referred to, this difficult Board meeting, was also an outcome of a new generation of Board and Secretariat, who had to come to grips with each other.

Role of Chairman

Exley: Turning again to your experience as Chairman of the Board, what was your experience as to the role and influence of the Board Chairman? Can you, perhaps recall specific examples of intervention by the Chairman for constructive solution of difficult issues? Perhaps who were the key delegates and key delegations during the period that you were on the Board in addition to yourself?

Ogata: The old-timers such as Mr. Nils Thedin of Sweden was definitely a very important asset to the Board. He knew the work, he was dedicated and so I would always consult him on major issues, also Dr. Conzett of Switzerland, of course the United States although their delegate had just changed. Mr. Grant was the new delegate at that time and I had close contact with Mr. Grant.

When I think of others who come up, there were many who were important people. Canada, Mrs. Margaret Catley-Carlson, who came on the Board maybe a year or so after, I think, she was already a very outspoken and lively and intelligent person.

Ogata: My involvement with UNICEF was immensely rewarding and an educational process. I have really come to appreciate the kind of work UNICEF is engaged in the way that I don't think I'll ever get by reading, or hearing about it.

Another thing that I gained when I went to the field. Through my UNICEF involvement, I was able to go to Thailand, Indonesia, Philippines, Mexico, Viet Nam, Kampuchea, Kenya and some other countries. I went especially to see UNICEF work and I got to see a country from the social development angle, in other words from the bottom side of a country and really learned a lot in that sense.

But when I went, I always made a point to see how the UNICEF people were working, because the staff are a very important part of UNICEF and I wanted to make sure that they were working the way they were supposed to, that their needs were well met and so on. And I think the Board Chairman should also not just be engaged in policy aspect but have an understanding of the organization as a whole. And I got to know a lot of people in UNICEF and I really appreciate their friendship, and it's by knowing them that they will trust me and consult me.

Composition of delegates

Exley: Could I ask about the composition of delegations? Perhaps at the UNICEF Board they are somewhat different from government delegations to some other bodies and that they often include, I believe, people from the national committees, for the NGO side.

Ogata: Right. Mr. Thedin is head of the UNICEF Committee of Sweden. Dr. Conzett is also head of the UNICEF Committee. I think they more or less founded the committees. And they had government people as well in their delegation. The United States' delegate was usually from the private sector. France from the private sector. UK usually from the Ministry of Overseas Development. The larger delegations usually were composed of both Ministry of Foreign Affairs and development assistance agencies and sometimes from NGOs, sometimes from the National Committee.

I was very envious that the larger delegations had people who were specialists of overseas assistance. Our delegation consisted only of foreign office people and especially after I started serving on the Bureau I felt very uneasy that I was not getting as expert an advice as some of the other Board members. For instance, Mr. Thedin would say, with regard to certain countries, I believe, at that time, it could have been Bangladesh, that he felt the country proposals of UNICEF were based on estimates that were much more optimistic than the estimates of his own Overseas Development Agency.

How did I find the situation? I had no such material with me. So, I did two things while I was Chairman of the Programme Committee. One was to ask our Foreign Office to send out questionnaires to some of the embassies, especially in Asian countries, to follow up UNICEF work in the countries where they were stationed and get some input from my own Government.

And then, the other thing I did was, when there were possibilities, to go on field trips. At the invitation of UNICEF when the Government was able to release me, I went on trips to make up for this lack of expert knowledge. But many of the delegates were really experts not only in Board matters but actually had field-based knowledge, in the programmes themselves and their evaluation.

Board venues: New York/developing countries

Exley: How did you find the discussions on the Board, for instance, were they generally businesslike and to the point?

Ogata: Well, that depends. When the Board meets in New York, it's very much like a shareholders' meeting. The atmosphere becomes very businesslike and the countries that have a lot of, what shall I say, investment in terms of contributions, also in terms of expert knowledge are the ones that dominate the discussion. Very efficient, high level. The delegates from the developing countries are more quiet and they would explain their position but never really get into a discussion as to the quality of assistance in general terms. But when the Board meets in the

field, and while I was a representative, out of six meetings two meetings took place in the field - Philippines in '77 and Mexico meetings in '79 on the invitations of the Governments of the Philippines and Mexico, there was much more participation by members of the developing countries. Also the Board usually had the chance to make field trip surveys. They go and visit UNICEF-assisted programmes in the country and so on. And I think it's very educational for the Board members. So, my own view is that it is very important for the Board to work efficiently.

But at the same time it is very important, even more important for the Board to understand what UNICEF programmes are, and the context in which programmes are carried out in the developing countries. So, I would hope that there will be more occasions for the Board to meet in the field. It could be more costly, but I think UNICEF could supplement some funds required to help developing countries host Board meetings, because I find that some of the Board members do not know what UNICEF programmes are.

Kampuchea: role of UNICEF in emergencies

Exley: Well, that year 1979-1980 was really a momentous year for UNICEF because you had not only the IYC but you had Kampuchea. That was the year when UNICEF was designated as the lead agency of the UN system for relief operations in Kampuchea. Could you tell us what was your involvement in those events in Kampuchea? Can you recall any specific episodes?

Ogata: UNICEF's possible involvement in Kampuchea emergency assistance came clear in the course of the Board meeting in Mexico and there was no question of asking for Board approval because there was no programme. Besides, emergency assistance would not be paid out of the regular budget, it would require a lot of voluntary contributions for that specific purpose. At the same time, the possibility of UNICEF becoming involved in Kampuchea emergency assistance had to be understood by the Board. So, I think it took the form, something like an information sheet from the Executive Director, Mr. Labouisse, and in the wording, I believe, asked that emergency UNICEF assistance be sent to all regions, something to the effect of covering the whole region of Kampuchea - because there were difficulties, the political questions - and if that was clear then, I thought, most of the countries regardless of their political position would be able to approve. There was no question raised. It was that understanding that was cleared at the Board and from that summer on, UNICEF started its emergency assistance, and UNICEF and ICRC were the first to go in. Again, it showed that UNICEF was trusted by governments as being capable of handling an extremely difficult political assignment. I don't think UNICEF really relished at that time what a big operation it was going to get involved in. So, I feel

that I was part of the whole thing from the very beginning and therefore when Mr. Grant invited me to go with him in '81, I was only happy to see with my own eyes what UNICEF had done and when we met people, the authorities there, Mr. Grant explained that I was the Chairman of the Board when the whole thing started. It was very nice of him to do that.

The major concern, I think, of many of the donor countries including my own Government, was to make sure that UNICEF assistance was reaching the right kind of people and for that, I think, I was able to ascertain with my own eyes the enormous efforts made. The problem is if you want to make one hundred percent sure you could not do emergency assistance of that sort. So, the question was how, to what extent, are you going to be satisfied by the efforts made and satisfy the donor countries. Because there were many difficulties, all sorts of critical articles and so on. For instance, I went at that time when the operation at the boarder between Thailand and Kampuchea was a politically difficult operation. UNICEF was first giving coupons to women, only women and children over ten years of age or something like that - I think, yes, only women and children - and giving three or four persons' worth of rations per every woman and they would give the tickets out one day. The next day they would be giving the ration food itself only to those who had the tickets and the tickets were distributed in a way that the same person could not come and get double rations by going from one camp to the next camp the following day. It was a very complicated system. At the same time, distributing tickets and distributing food were no easy task - really, to go through the dust, through heat, and so on.

And when you see with your own eyes the dedication with which the people in the field are carrying on this mission at least you are convinced yourself and try to tell that to the Board members, to your governments and so on. So, I thought it was very important that I could see this, the efforts made and making sure that UNICEF was carrying out the mission entrusted to it by governments. Then, I think, the fact that UNICEF's record had been continuing support under very difficult conditions. With regard to Kampuchea emergency assistance, though, at the Board, there were many pros and cons with regard to the priority attention UNICEF gives to emergency assistance. Because emergency assistance especially the Kampuchean one took away a lot of man power and time, a lot of resources, manwise, timewise and at the Board meetings members wanted emergency assistance to be at the minimum and work in the development assistance which is continuous.

But I know how much our Government appreciated UNICEF because of its emergency assistance work; especially the Economic Cooperation Bureau of the Foreign Service started to understand UNICEF by coming across UNICEF's work in emergency assistance. It was a way to prove UNICEF's usefulness and served a very important purpose. I think I did not want to write off UNICEF's role in emergency assistance.

Besides, I felt that very few organizations in the UN system had the experience and expertise in carrying on emergency assistance in which a few people were moving things, moving a high bulk of goods. And UNICEF was good at this. There is no doubt about it. And also I do not think emergency assistance is going to be fewer and fewer. I think in the future there will be continuous emergency assistance and so I was very happy to see a new emergency unit set up within the Secretariat now, because I feel that UNICEF should not disregard the capacity that it has in mobilising people, things, goods and transport, these things that UNICEF has accumulated ever since its beginning. The transport unit in Kampuchea was a very impressive one because there were about a hundred trucks, Japanese trucks all over Kampuchea and there was the factory there, where all the parts were Japanese parts and there were few technicians from Eastern Europe trying to repair trucks and teach truck repair techniques to whoever Kampuchean had a little bit of experience in the past. This sort of thing UNICEF can do quite well. I don't know whether many of the other emergency assistance organizations in the UN system which have assisted more through funds but not through field work can quite take root. So, I felt, by having gone to Kampuchea, I could really see what emergency assistance involves and I felt it myself and I think my Government benefited and I think the Board through hearing about it benefited from a former Chairman going there.

Exley: Were you able to travel within Kampuchea?

Ogata: Well, I was there for only three, four days, so I didn't have the chance to travel. I would like to have, but from there I went to Bangladesh, so schedules were quite tight.

Exley: But in general, then you think the Kampuchea emergency programme was highly evaluated by the governments on the Board?

Ogata: Yes, yes, I think so. And I think there were several governments, United States, Japan, which wanted UNICEF to continue on as the lead agency, but there were others who felt that UNICEF should not be tied down so much with the emergency but should go on with the daily emergencies or the silent emergency.

Exley: Silent emergency, yes.

Global targets

Ogata: In the 1970's UN organizations had adopted global targets. If it were water, it would be clean water for everybody by the year 1990 or something like that, and there was at that time, a study - I don't remember who asked for the study - but a study done to see whether UNICEF could come up with a global target like reducing children's death rate by a certain percentage by a certain year. I think as far as global targets were concerned the Board decided that for the kind of work UNICEF was doing it was not possible to have a global target nor was it necessary. But there were some who still felt that there could be some

intermediary targets and that having a target would be one way of knowing where our work was directed, concentrated - whether we had an impact or not.

UNICEF impact

I believe that with Mr. Grant coming, his emphasis was much more on the health sector and so the primary health care angle of basic services was to receive a great deal of emphasis, and so primary health care, drinking water, environmental sanitation - these were agreed upon by the Board to be the major areas of UNICEF work and I feel personally that this should be the case.

Water

At the same time it would be helpful to have some way of evaluating whether UNICEF has made an impact, even if the drinking water programme was having any impact or not. Perhaps Mr. Seki, you will remember that when we went to Bangladesh, this was a country where UNICEF had put in a lot of efforts in providing clean water supply and so on. But, we found that the water people were saying that there was no substantial impact on the health situation because after having provided clean water they now had to provide means of educating people thoroughly to keep the water clean, such as not putting dirty hands into the water faucet and so on.

Scope

So, it's a continual education programme that has to be run, and in that sense it is extremely difficult to reach a point where UNICEF is going to have a direct impact on child life expectancy. I think UNICEF started with four programmes directed very much to children, in health, education, drinking water or sanitation, nutrition and so on. But it cannot really make a big impact so long as you just concentrate on children. So, you end up trying to educate mothers and then the whole village and so on, and then you end up assisting the entire environment in which a child lives.

Then, you turn into a development agency without much characteristic, and then UNICEF's uniqueness loses. This emphasis - where do you put, how far are you going to expand your emphasis - where do you put, how far are you going to expand your programmes - is important. This has also been the Board's concern.

Seki: What was your opinion on that?

Ogata: Well, I felt that of course mothers are important, and of course a whole village is important, but at the same time after you give some consideration to the supporting elements, UNICEF really had to go back to the child. Because if UNICEF wanted to continue to maintain the kind of support that it has so far, it is on the basis of being of help to children rather than mothers and

villages that UNICEF has been receiving support and recognition. So, I felt that always you have to go back to the children.

Exley: Are you saying that you think sometimes it is too diffuse?

Ogata: It goes too far. Too diffuse. If you want to do it thoroughly you end up diffusing, but when you diffuse you lose your specialization speciality.

Exley: It's very hard to measure impact.

Ogata: Certainly. It's very much harder to measure impact, especially when UNICEF moves from giving things which was UNICEF's uniqueness like Father Christmas. But from there to bringing more advisory services, technical assistance, training and so on, is more and more difficult in measuring. In fact, this is the stage of UNICEF right now and this is where the difficulty lies.

Donor understanding: development education

Exley: Do you think this poses difficulties for donors and it's hard to explain how their money was spent?

Ogata: Well, I think you have to train donors, too, and this is a big part in the developed countries. Development education which is very useful, I think, is just beginning to have an impact in Japan, too. In the countries where donors are sophisticated, have a sophisticated understanding of programmes, you don't have to sell so much, but in many other countries UNICEF has been looked at as a kind of charity organization and I think the donors have to be educated to the point that they are not just giving things and charity money and things to UNICEF but they are part of the development process. That requires a great deal of education. I think, perhaps IYC did a lot of good in Japan but this aspect of educating the donor countries to that needs and the real meaning of development assistance will have to continue in an intensive way in Japan.

Japan and UNICEF

Ogata changing views

Exley: Perhaps you could be personal for a moment and recall something about your own view - maybe you answered this before - what was your own view of UNICEF at the time you joined the Executive Board? And, how your views changed during the period you were on the Board? Since looking ahead how do you see UNICEF in the future.

Ogata: When I joined the UNICEF Board, my view of UNICEF was giving a lot of food and milk to children. But always, when I address the public here in Japan, I always use the example of water supply project because, I think, that is the easiest way to understand the changes in UNICEF work, because of the changes in the context of UNICEF work. In Japan UNICEF could provide milk, powdered milk, because Japan had plenty of clean water supply and a school system to distribute the milk.

But when UNICEF goes to a developing country, we have to start from developing a clean water supply and network for distribution, and so on. When I went to the Board the first time, the Foreign Office briefed me. It said it was hesitant about UNICEF going into water supply work. That was outside UNICEF. Why should UNICEF do water supply work?

I don't think that sort of question will ever be raised now, because the Government has become much more sophisticated in understanding the work of UNICEF. In that sense I learned a lot, and through our Board participation, through UNICEF becoming much more interested in providing information in Japan. I think there is much greater sophistication and understanding of the work of UNICEF in the Government as well as by the public.

Government contribution: changing views

Exley: Could we speak a little more about the attitude of the Japanese Government towards UNICEF? Certainly, in financial terms, there appears to have been a very significant development between 1976 when Japan's contribution, the Japanese Government's contribution to UNICEF general resources was \$2.25 million and this year when it's five times as large, \$10.2 million. What do you think has been the impact of Japan's participation in the UNICEF Executive Board on the Government's view of UNICEF and what are some of the other factors? Kampuchea, perhaps?

Ogata: Well, Kampuchea, IYC, and maybe participation in the Board. I think I served on the Board at the right time, just before the IYC and it gave a kind of momentum. But everybody recognized that Japan's contribution to UNICEF is much too small. At the same time there was nobody, no pressure, no group of people within the country pressing for the Government's increase in the contribution to UNICEF general resources. There were maybe some efforts on the part of the Secretariat but nothing really to the point that will change Japanese attitudes.

And so, UNICEF was considered a good organization, maybe a safe organization, did a lot of good, but it was never taken as serious organization to reckon with in terms of development assistance. So, when I first served on the Board I realised that many Board members had the ulterior motive of getting me involved in the Board to get more contributions from the Government. I was like a hostage in that sense. But I knew that it was not that simple to get Government contributions increased substantially.

But two things were in my favour. One thing was that people felt bad that I was hostage! During the IYC, we had this Committee, National Committee of IYC and the Chairman promised to do everything so that I wouldn't feel embarrassed. I got personal pledges like that from the IYC National Committee, for the Foreign Office people. So, I think, there was that feeling to do something because Ogata is there as a hostage, that sort of thing. Also you would recall that in '77 Prime Minister Fukuda promised doubling of the ODA.

So, there was this overall readiness to double or increase economic assistance, and the IYC was there, I was there and so it was in '79 that they doubled. And I personally feel that it was quite an achievement because I don't think we have doubled any contribution in one year. The base was very low, so it had to be doubled. But that was kind of my target at that time to double this year's base, then from thereon a certain percentage increase would be a good way of continuing the contribution. But the first time it had to be doubled because it was so low. I really went to some people, I don't think I told this to the Board or the Secretariat, but I did approach key persons whom I knew, that help was necessary to double this. So, the doubling was a very important aspect.

And then, from thereon, I think the IYC worked very much in UNICEF's favour because UNICEF's message was spread all out, we got new customers, clients, and so UNICEF became a nationally-known organization in Japan. And on top of that the Kampuchea emergency assistance questions of Indochinese refugees were also a national concern, and UNICEF was playing a very important role.

So within the Government UNICEF started to work closely with the Economic Cooperation Bureau, not only the UN Bureau but the Economic Cooperation Bureau that had the money for economic assistance, the ODA money. So, that is the way, I think, it has spread a great deal. Also, perhaps we can say that the Japanese foreign policy thinking finally started to take in the human aspect. This is my own view. I think Japanese foreign diplomacy started heavily economically oriented, and then, it was only in the '70s when like Foreign Minister Sonoda and that Japan's role was I think he said this in his speech - to use economic power for political purposes. So, there was the addition of the political role of Japan that had entered the consciousness of our leaders. And it was just around '79 with these Indochinese refugee questions, the human aspect of international questions became an important consideration in Japanese foreign policy thinking.

Seki: They started talking about 'Hitozukuri'.

Ogata: That's right. This was exactly what I was saying in development assistance it became 'Hitozukuri'. That was also refugee assistance.

Exley: What does 'Hitozukuri' mean?

Seki: Social development. Literally translated, it's "building people".

Ogata: Development of human resources and when Prime Minister Ohira mentioned 'Hitozukuri' Mr. Labouisse came to me and said "I think that is really for UNICEF," but I think when Prime Minister Ohira was considering 'Hitozukuri', he was thinking more in terms of vocational training, schools, so it never really got down to the UNICEF level. But I think Japan's posture was moving towards the

area in which UNICEF has had contributions and interest. And so, I'm very hopeful that there is such conversion of interest. But UNICEF still has to convince the hard-core development assistance people that UNICEF's work is for development assistance and not charity. But the charity aspect may be effective in fundraising.

Fundraising from public

Exley: Public fundraising?

Ogata: Fundraising. So, this is the difficulty. Like Chifunren assistance. Now maybe I was a little bit of an instrument there because Chifunren came for the disarmament conference

Seki: You were totally instrumental.

Ogata: And I was asked to address the Japanese who came to New York in 1978, especially women. So, I was talking about disarmament and development and I just mentioned that the next year was IYC, to do something for IYC and I would hope that you would help this cause as much as you have helped the disarmament cause. Chifunren people were there and they started this campaign. One thing led to another thing. In Japan, I think some celebration relating to international year may accomplish something by attracting attention.

But the most important thing is the followup. So, whenever there is some year, those who are promoting it should think of the follow-up rather than the year itself. That was the way I approached the IYC I still feel that that was right.

UNICEF use of Japanese volunteers

UNICEF, I think, could also do more in bringing Japanese people to the field, the UNICEF field - maybe even get, I hope it might even get, some young volunteers, a UNICEF volunteer system, something like that, take them into the field, make them work and realise what UNICEF work involves, what development assistance at the field level is. Because UNICEF is the organization that has the greatest number of people at the field really working with the people, and like when you went to Bangladesh there was the question of at what level should the Japanese technical assistance be given. This was related to eye sickness ... Traditionally Japanese technical assistance was directed at the highest technical level, the National Institute of Research level, assuming that the technology transferred will go down to the provinces and to the people. But very clearly it does not trickle down.

So, the problem is to decide at what level the most effective technology transfer would take place. UNICEF has really gone down to the village level. So, there has to be more thinking of the level of our technical assistance. Obviously bilateral government technical assistance cannot go down to the village level but it might be linked at a certain intermediate level in a

way that Japanese assistance will help UNICEF to work at the village level. Then there will be much greater overall impact by linking bilateral donors as well as multilateral agencies. And this requires a lot of arrangement. I realize how complicated and difficult the whole operation is, but I think there is still room for taking young people to the field and sensitizing them to it.

I would hope that UNICEF can do more along those lines, too. I don't mean just ten-day visits - a whole summer, several months of voluntary assistance. It would help the Japanese people in their education which means really getting supporters. I don't think it's sufficient for UNICEF to have just an evening of some kind of show to raise funds.

Exley: Are you thinking of something like the UN Volunteers for UNICEF?

Ogata: Uh huh.

Exley: What were your impressions of the quality of the calibre of the UNICEF field staff, their attitudes, and the effectiveness of programmes at that level?

Ogata: Well, in the areas that I visited I was immensely impressed by the calibre of the UNICEF people. I think they knew what they were doing, very dedicated, also they had established good contact with the Governments, and that is a very important aspect - and in no easy circumstances, very difficult circumstances. In Hanoi operations were not easy, Phnom Penh is not easy. And even in countries that are more advanced, the areas where UNICEF work takes place is usually the least developed areas. So, the whole Kon Kien area in Thailand that I visited was not an easy area to be either. I will go to the field any time.

Future UNICEF emphasis

Seki: Going back to UNICEF's proper character or uniqueness, what would you say UNICEF needs most, besides money, to develop as a particularly child-oriented agency?

Ogata: UNICEF needs good people even more than money and so, when there is a great increase in funds, I think, the concern of some of the Board members especially experienced Board members was to make sure that we can get good people administering funds - and this will continue to be an important element of UNICEF to keep in mind, not just money. We can spend, UNICEF can spend a lot of money, there is need for funds, but the funds have to be administered thoroughly well. If you start building roads you can use a lot of money but that's not what UNICEF wants.

Now, for the children, the health of the child, I think, UNICEF can do more on the education side and family-based practical education, health education, things like that. There is room for improvement. I think the concentration should be more on health and education, and for that mothers are important to some extent, but really more emphasis on children.

Labouisse; Heyward

Exley: What is your recollection of people like Mr. Labouisse, Mr. Heyward and other key members of the Secretariat, their contribution to the evolution of UNICEF?

Ogata: I think both Mr. Labouisse and Mr. Heyward had full dedication for UNICEF and UNICEF staff. That I think was a very unique set up. The Secretariat was relatively small. Mr. Heyward knew everything. He's one person who knows everything. He's like a teacher, and that is the comment I heard from many of the staff. He knows everything. But I suppose from now on UNICEF cannot rely on just one person for everything. His knowledge has to be spread out, but this was a very unique person. The other agencies say that he is a tough opponent, Mr. Heyward.

Mr. Labouisse, I think, had a marvellous common sense and diplomatic sense, political sense. And I could always trust his judgement and that was very helpful, very assuring. We travelled a lot together, so I got to know him very, very well. So, I think UNICEF is fortunate to have had these very outstanding, dedicated persons.