

Chapter 13

An Alternative Order

Towards the end of the 1960s, leading figures in government and international affairs launched a process of examination into why the results of the UN's first Development Decade had not lived up to expectations. In relation to the target set for the Decade—a minimum of five per cent growth in the Gross National Product in each developing country—results were extremely promising. Certain countries had not managed to reach the goal, but on average it had been surpassed: among the less well-off, the average was five per cent, and seven per cent among the middle-income countries. These were higher rates of growth than ever attained by the industrialized nations in their earlier history; slightly higher even than their rates for the same period. In spite of everything, however, the inescapable fact was the new wealth generated by these rates of growth had made little impact on the majority of people living in the developing world, most of whom continued to live in deepest poverty.

In the developing countries themselves there was a sense of disillusion that they were not moving ahead at the rate they should; among aid donors, there was a widespread feeling that their assistance programmes were ineffective. It began to seem that the transfer of technical know-how and financial investment from the rich world to the poor—at least in its current form—was not after all a very effective instrument for rapid development; it was only an effective instrument for increasing the growth rate of GNP, which, essential as it was, was not sufficient on its own. One reason for the upset in calculations was the high population growth rates, which meant that the fruits of progress had to be shared between many more people. Another was that capital and technical assistance had been invested in such a way that the fruits of progress were very unevenly distributed, both between countries and within them.

In accordance with conventional economic norms, investments had gone to the most promising countries and the most promising ventures, almost all of which were large-scale industrial or agricultural enterprises. The effect had been 'to he who hath shall more be given'. Among the developing countries, the poorer were falling further and further behind; within the countries, the same was happening to the people. Little of the increase in national wealth was trickling down to households in the lowest

income groups, many of whom were experiencing the effects of land shortage, un- or underemployment, low prices for their agricultural produce, higher food and living costs, and were not receiving very much compensation in the form of improved community services—credit, jobs, water supply, health and education services—which might help them break out of the cycle of low income, low skills, and low expectations.

During the 1950s and 1960s, the membership of the UN had swelled from the fifty-one countries who signed the original charter in 1945, to 128 by the end of the first Development Decade. Almost all the new members were developing nations, and during the decolonization process the task of international co-operation in development had become the largest activity in the UN system. The UN now began to make preparations for a second Development Decade. With the experience of the first behind it, and with the benefit of the work being done by the increasing number of economists, planners, administrators and technical experts who had taken up careers in Third World development, the preparations made for the second Development Decade were much more thorough than they had been for the first.

One important contribution was a report produced by an international commission set up in 1968 at the request of the World Bank, and headed by Lester Pearson, ex-Prime Minister of Canada. Pearson's commission conducted a 'grand assize' on 'the consequences of twenty years of development assistance', and published their findings under the title *Partners in Development*. The commission noted that 'the climate surrounding foreign aid programmes is heavy with disillusion and distrust', but its analysis was that this reaction was unjustified. Its recommendations for a revised development strategy included an increase in the flow of international aid: the UN member organizations and their partners must renew their appeal on behalf of mankind, some of whose members still lived in conditions which amounted to a denial of human dignity. Two of the ten recommendations made by the report were in the social field: population growth rates should be slowed, and aid to education and research must be revitalized.

The UN adopted its official strategy for the second Development Decade at the General Assembly of 1970. Some of its ingredients were the classic precepts: rapid growth in the GNP of the developing countries, for which the target was raised from five to six per cent; and increased flows of international development assistance from the countries of the industrialized world, for which the target set was one per cent of GNP. But a new dimension of the strategy was a preoccupation with 'human development'. How the growth target set for the Decade was to be reached was now regarded as equally important as the target itself. The measures for reaching the target were spelled out in some detail, and they included putting a brake on population growth; the creation of jobs, particularly in the countryside from which people were emigrating in great numbers towards

the cities; the provision of education, health, and nutrition services; and the participation of children and youth in the development process.

Gradually, a new climate of thinking was evolving. Now that it was clear that rapid economic growth did not automatically wash human misery away in its wake, it was necessary to pinpoint precise activities which would do something to reduce poverty and relieve distress without at the same time destroying the prospects for economic growth. Policies must be designed to have direct effects on the basic essentials of ordinary people's lives—food, housing, education, health; this was the only way to ensure that the benefits of local investment and international aid did not stop short before they reached into the lives of the poor. During the course of the next few years, economists and planners began to lay aside many familiar norms and reorientate their thinking. In the past, they had looked down on welfare considerations as 'consumption': their business was with investment in productive enterprise, in the build-up of technological and managerial capacity. They had not given much serious consideration to how their poor relations in the social sector spent the wealth they generated on housing, health, nutrition, or education. Now things began to change.

One institution whose policies both reflected and helped to shape new attitudes was the World Bank. In 1968 Robert McNamara became its President, and during his first five-year term there was a significant shift in the Bank's policies. Not only did it increase its lending to the least developed countries, but it tried to find investment opportunities that would spread their benefits widely, particularly among the least well-off.

In 1972, McNamara made what was regarded as a landmark statement in his annual address to the Board of Governors. He stated that the task confronting the governments of the developing countries was to reorientate their development policies to attack directly the personal poverty of the poorest forty per cent of their people. He did not suggest that they should abandon a policy of vigorous growth, but that growth targets should be set in terms of human needs such as nutrition, housing, health, literacy and employment. If this led to a reduction in the pace of growth, so be it. Social justice—reinforced by political prudence—demanded some sacrifice from the privileged few on behalf of the desperately poor majority. McNamara was only one of many leading contemporary figures to champion the idea of an all-out attack on poverty as the cornerstone of the 1970s development strategy. 'Redistribution with growth' and 'meeting basic needs' became the economic slogans of this new line of thought.

One effect of the growing interest of the policy-makers in human development was the discovery that, in their own little ways, some of the projects in the Third World which had been fostered and funded by the humanitarians—the voluntary agencies and organizations such as Unicef—had met the new development criteria rather successfully. These obscure participants in international development co-operation had never tried to

do anything other than reach poor families with a modest improvement in their well-being: better food for their children and some gardening tools to grow it; a fully-equipped health post and an auxiliary nurse or a trained midwife to run it; a new classroom for the community school and some slates for the children to write on.

Where Unicef primarily concerned itself with these items at the level of national policies and programmes, the voluntary agencies with their smaller budgets and necessarily more limited focus usually dealt with them in the context of what had come to be known as the 'micro-project'. Most such organizations did not have the resources, clout, or expertise to fuss about Five-Year Plans or calculate the development potential of a hydro-electric dam or a textiles factory. They had focussed on the village, the community, the family and the children; and the counterpart organizations through which they assisted projects in the Third World—the local co-operative society, the women's club, the mission hospital, the village council—gave them a direct link with the poor whose lot they were trying to alleviate.

Unicef's exclusively humanitarian mandate was unique among those member organizations of the UN system concerned with long-term development. So, therefore, was the range of its experience with trying to meet the basic needs of the poor—experience enhanced by its relationships with the voluntary agencies. Some of its preoccupations—rural water supplies, applied nutrition projects—had clear implications for the rural economy independently of their health and welfare benefits. Unicef had made an attempt to influence Five-Year Plans and development strategies in favour of the child, with only a modest degree of success. Now a new legitimacy was conferred on these efforts. Doors opened where before they had been closed, or at best held condescendingly ajar. In its 1973 annual report, the World Bank commented warmly on its growing association with Unicef in fields such as training, nutrition and population. The post-civil war, rural-water supply programme in Bangladesh, which represented the first Unicef programme in association with the World Bank, had opened a new chapter in institutional partnerships.

While the development establishment pursued their search for alternatives to their old models for progress, another search for alternatives was also underway. Many people in Europe and North America were challenging the values of 'the good life' as defined by materialism and unfettered consumption. Leaders of the Christian Church preached that 'Enough is Enough'. Others agreed with E. F. Schumacher that 'Small is Beautiful', and criticized the assumption of power by large, impersonal, inaccessible institutions in extensive areas of people's lives. The ideas of self-reliance and community action which had gained popularity in the 1960s took on new force and depth of meaning. The pressure that Mankind was exerting on the planet's dwindling resources reinforced the idea of the global village in which the lifestyles of one section of humanity were interdependent with

those of others. The high level of energy consumption by those in the West threatened the future of the whole human race, and the 'haves' therefore had an obligation to share the resources of a finite world more equitably with the 'have-nots'. An alternative development model, according to this view, was something everyone needed, not merely the less fortunate inhabitants of the poorer parts of the world. Many of the ideas generated by the debate about alternatives were about society as a whole; they were not exclusively about the Third World, the First World, or any other specific, notionally separate, 'world'.

No sooner had the second Development Decade opened than events occurred to inject new urgency into this ferment. If the 'population crisis' was the international theme to emerge most strongly in the late 1960s, followed very soon afterwards by the 'environmental crisis' in which the population crisis was itself a critical part, in the early 1970s these were temporarily eclipsed by two other crises with which they were closely connected: the 'oil crisis' prompted by the formation of the OPEC cartel; and the 'food crisis', caused by two disastrous world harvests in 1972 and 1974.

The UN responded with an agenda of international conferences designed to address the various interlocking world problems. The first, on the environment, took place in Stockholm in 1972; it was followed by others on population, in Bucharest in 1974; food, in Rome also in 1974; women, in Mexico, 1975; human settlements, Vancouver, 1976; employment, Geneva, 1976; water, Mar del Plata, 1977; desertification, Nairobi, 1977. Whatever the individual and collective outcomes of this series of international talking-shops, these conferences helped to clarify the issues, and establish where different international, governmental and organizational players stood; they were also an opportunity for public debate and the dissemination of information.

Meanwhile, at a moment when the international community had on its hands the fullest agenda in its entire experience, a series of natural and man-made disasters afflicted Third World countries in what seemed to be a remorseless round of catastrophe. It began with the cyclone in the Bay of Bengal which inundated East Pakistan in late 1970; was followed in the same area by civil war and the refugee exodus to India; continued with drought over large stretches of Africa during 1973–76, inflicting famine on some of the countries of the Sahelian zone, and on Ethiopia; included some of the world's worst-ever earthquakes—in Managua (1972) and Guatemala (1976)—as well as other natural disasters, military conflicts, and refugee crises. The toll of human misery from all these disasters created a demand on the international community for relief and rehabilitation operations on a scale never before undertaken.

The ferment of ideas, fuelled by events, reached its climax in the middle of the 1970s. The developing countries, now in a majority within the UN

General Assembly, had begun early in the Decade to call for fundamental change in the international economic order. To offset the effect of industrial man's reckless consumption of resources, they sought adjustments in international aid, trade and financial mechanisms to create a world in which every human being would have enough to live adequately. Their call was reinforced by religious and humanitarian leaders all over the world. In April 1974, a special session of the General Assembly was summoned—mainly at the insistence of the oil-rich Third World nations exerting their new economic and political muscle—and the UN adopted the first of its resolutions calling for a New International Economic Order.

The debates which led up to this resolution had important repercussions in Unicef. The world economic crisis and the world food shortage had serious implications for the health and well-being of the 400 to 500 million children who lived in the countries designated 'most seriously affected'. Harry Labouisse, addressing the Unicef Executive Board within two weeks of the end of the 1974 special session of the General Assembly, spoke in sober terms of a 'quiet emergency that, unfortunately, affects children at all times in many developing countries—a quiet emergency, as distinct from the widely-publicized emergencies associated with natural disasters and disasters related to war. Now these unpublicized, continuous emergencies have reached a new pitch, an amplitude requiring a new level of world co-operation'. In the twenty-five countries designated by the UN as 'least developed', in twenty-five others almost as poor and with very large child populations and in twenty very small countries with special needs, the current emergency circumstances would make it hard for their governments even to maintain existing services for children, let alone expand them.

Unicef Pakistan delegate, Professor Zaki Hasan, representing a developing country, spoke about the plight in which so many poorer developing countries now found themselves. His country was one of those most seriously affected by the current crisis. The cost of importing essential raw materials would multiply by five in the coming year, and Pakistan looked set to spend more than one half her export earnings simply on importing food, fertilizer, medicine and other essentials. 'To say the least', he concluded, 'the outlook is bleak for the children of Pakistan and other seriously affected countries'. He and others supported the Executive Director's suggestion that the Board should make a formal Declaration of an Emergency for Children as a way of calling the attention of the world community to the sufferings of children as a result of the crisis. Experience showed that social services were the first to be cut at such times, and children would be the first victims of deprivation. Unicef could expect urgent requests for vital drugs, medical equipment and transport—the kind of supplies normally associated with disaster relief—simply to help these countries keep on doing what they were already doing.

The food situation was causing particular anguish. The gaunt images of

the 1973 famine in Ethiopia, in which at least 100,000 people had died before the local authorities and the international community had roused themselves sufficiently to put in place a full-scale relief operation, were still painfully fresh in many minds. Drought was still affecting other African countries, including those in the Sahelian zone in the western part of the continent, where livestock was perishing, water courses dwindling, the desert consuming arable land, and millions of people being thrown onto the mercy of relief. The effects of the climate were only the most visible cause of the world's food problems.

In the previous two years, a mixture of scarcity and demand had quadrupled the price of cereals. The world's food stocks were dangerously low, and the amount of surplus food available for emergency aid and development assistance was less than half its normal average. The price of oil had carried the price of fertilizer along in its wake, and of this too there was a world shortage. In the hardest hit countries, the cost both of growing food commercially and of buying it was becoming prohibitive. Without fuel for tractors and fertilizer for the fields, the new hybrid seeds could not yield the bumper harvests needed to refill the world's breadbasket and the 'green revolution' would stop in its tracks. Before the recent price rises, according to Unicef's figures, there were some ten million severely malnourished children in the world, and many millions more in a less serious condition. Their numbers seemed likely to increase rapidly over the months and years ahead.

While Unicef could not itself try and tackle directly the global problem of food availability, there were immediate actions to be taken to try to prevent child malnutrition from spreading. One was to encourage governments to set up early warning systems about crop damage, poor rainfall, rising prices in village markets and the general deterioration in children's weight or health. Another was to promote the applied-nutrition approach: school and village gardens, community fish-ponds and poultry projects.

Most of the people in the rural Third World still grew their own food supply, and ways had to be found to help them both to grow more food and to grow food of a more nutritious kind. Certain crops, protein-rich legumes for example, did not feature as extensively in the agriculturalists' calculations as cereals and livestock, because they did not command the profitability and status of grains. Greater efforts were needed to impress upon ministries of agriculture, rural extension workers and home economists that these crops had a special role to play in promoting maternal and child health and nutrition. Villagers also had to be shown how to store food better: rats and rot often consumed one-quarter of the harvest in the family food bin. Ignorance, too, was an important barrier to good nutrition. Some plants and local products were neglected as food for children because mothers did not understand that they had dietary value. The 'child emergency' demanded that Unicef encourage governments to adopt national-nutrition

policies which took account of all these elements, and dovetailed with the spread of maternal- and child-health services and family-spacing techniques.

When the UN first took up the call for a New International Economic Order, the industrialized countries had not shown any great enthusiasm for the idea. They were reluctant to embark upon a process of reforming the monetary and trading system that they had invented and they controlled. There was no guarantee at all that any overhaul would actually help the poorest half of mankind. Meanwhile their own already hard-pressed economies—on whose health so many others depended—were likely to suffer. In 1975, yet another special session of the General Assembly—the seventh in UN history—was summoned to go over the ground again. By this time, the views of the key industrialized countries had begun to shift. A sense of deepening crisis about the fate of the least well-off countries, and the fate of the least well-off people within those countries, helped to prompt their change of heart.

They had also begun to see some merit in the thesis of global interdependence. The sudden rise in oil prices had underlined the fragility of international economic equations and shown how quickly they could be upset. The richer nations were still dependent on the raw materials of the poorer, particularly on their oil and their minerals. Meanwhile, the trade balance sheets showed that the poorest countries, almost all of which were dependent on agriculture and imported oil, were even more seriously damaged by economic crisis. The international market mechanisms were indeed discriminatory and, unless they could be adjusted, a prospect loomed of trying to mount relief operations for whole countries of people on the brink of disaster.

In September 1975, Henry Kissinger delivered a speech to the seventh UN special session which indicated that the industrialized world was ready to enter into serious negotiations with the developing nations on a restructuring of global institutions. It finally seemed that an alternative order was around the corner, one whose hallmark would be a new respect for the countries of the Third World and a concern for the needs of its poorer inhabitants.

Within Unicef, the 'child emergency' acted as a stimulus for the elaboration of its own alternative order, something more modest but as radical in its way—an alternative order that showed a recognition for what the poorer inhabitants of the Third World could themselves provide towards the effort to set development in motion. Labouisse, speaking to Executive Board delegates in 1974 about the nature of the 'quiet emergency' affecting children in the developing countries, used a term which began to take on great significance during the next few years. He said: 'From whatever angle we view the situation today, one essential conclusion emerges, namely, the need of these countries for vastly-increased assistance to help them

maintain, and then enlarge as rapidly as possible the basic services reaching children'. The idea of 'basic services' and how they might be put in place, administered, staffed and paid for was to become the cornerstone of Unicef's strategy for the alternative order for children.

When the leading institutions in international development co-operation began to realize in the late 1960s that economic growth was paying few dividends among the poor, they began to cast around for ways to invest money profitably in the social sector. The area which had immediate appeal was education.

When Unicef had first opened the policy door to providing aid to education in 1961, the African countries had been the principal customers. In 1960, the literacy rate in the continent as a whole was only sixteen per cent. In some countries, less than ten per cent of children attended school. Many of these emerging nations had arrived at independence with no more than a handful of university graduates and a dearth of scientists and technicians of all kinds. The appetite for learning was voracious; a rapid turn-out of well-educated, well-qualified personnel to man all branches of government, industry and the professions was seen as a precondition of national development. Over the decade of the 1960s, education had been one of the largest growth industries in the average developing country. Public expenditure on schools, training institutes and universities had risen from around fifteen per cent to around twenty-five per cent of government budgets. Unicef's own support to education had also grown, particularly in Africa, where by 1965 schooling absorbed nearly half its overall assistance on the continent.

By the early 1970s, however, some of those who had helped to expand schools, training colleges, universities, and all the institutions of the modern educational system in developing countries began to diagnose a 'world educational crisis'. Foremost among them was Philip Coombs, an American economist who had served the Kennedy Administration as an Assistant Secretary of State for Education and was now head of the International Institute for Educational Planning, a division of UNESCO. Within the past generation, there had been a two-fold increase in both the proportion and the numbers of children attending school; this was, as Coombs put it, the bright side. However, he went on: 'The figures are silent about the dark side. They do not reveal the vast social waste and the human tragedy in the high rate of drop-outs and failures. They hide the large number of costly "repeaters". And, most important, they say nothing about the nature, quality and usefulness of the education received'.

In the early 1970s, as the economic crisis descended on the world like an ugly blanket, it was clear that the poorer developing countries could not afford to go on opening up new schools and classrooms and training more

teachers at the same rate as they had done over the past two decades. Yet, even to keep the existing proportion of children in school, a high rate of expansion had to be maintained. The population profile of the developing countries was changing; year by year, the edges at the base of the pyramid were creeping wider, meaning that more than forty per cent of the people in many countries were now under fifteen years of age. If the growth rate in educational expenditure could not accommodate these children—and it was already showing signs of slowing down—the authorities could expect much disaffection from parents and students aspiring to the better life for which schooling was a necessary prerequisite.

If the authorities tried to keep pace with demand, the quality of education was bound to suffer; yet its existing quality was nothing to boast about. Not only were classrooms packed, teachers underqualified, textbooks in short supply, but what most of the children were learning was still largely irrelevant to the life most of them were destined to live. The entire educational structure was geared to providing the chosen ten per cent—those who managed to stay in school and fight their way up the educational ladder—with white-collar jobs in city offices. At the end of the line, most Third World adolescents emerged from their brush with academic learning with raised expectations, dashed hopes and disenchantment with rural life. Here was a recipe for profound social trauma.

A country's education system is a mirror image of its social values. The embryo education systems that the ex-colonies inherited from their Imperial masters were a mirror image of their masters' values. Some of their anachronisms were legendary: geography syllabuses which required African children to know the names of towns and rivers in Europe, and almost nothing of their own continent; history lessons where they learnt about the campaigns of the ancient Gauls and Britons, with no mention of the ancient Hause, Nuba, or Masai; home economics lessons where girls learnt how to match wallpapers and bake cakes, instead of learning about the protein content of legumes and eggs and how to protect the weanling against kwashiorkor. The students sat matriculation and examination papers set in Paris and London, and were steeped educationally in the values and mores of other cultures. The ultimate ambition was a scholarship which would allow the student to travel abroad, see and experience 'developed man' in the industrialized world, and join him in disregarding, intentionally or otherwise, the values of his own cultural background.

Whatever the shortcomings of the educational syllabus being taught in many ex-colonies, now that the countries were independent and equal few of their leaders wished to replace it with something more culturally home-grown. Most of those now in charge took for granted the virtues of Western-style education, the type they had themselves received. Few claimed, as Jomo Kenyatta had done in *Facing Mount Kenya*, written in 1938, that traditional rural societies had systems of 'education' more suited

to their own environment than anything colonizers and missionaries wanted to put in its place. If the leaders of the new countries wanted to debate on equal terms with their ex-colonizers, they must have the same intellectual weapons and talk the same language—both literally and metaphorically. If they wanted to modernize, they needed modern skills and ideas. How else to impart them to the up and coming generation except by mimicking Western schools and Western syllabuses? They must, and quickly, turn out doctors, accountants, civil servants, lawyers and businessmen who were free of the old, out-worn, traditional values which used to sustain farm and tribe. Scientific understanding must replace superstition; initiative must replace resignation.

For the tiny minority who managed to make it through the most demanding educational forcing tube in history, well-paid jobs, often in the industrialized countries, awaited. But by far the majority of its products were the eighty per cent of primary school leavers who did not qualify for the narrow openings in secondary education, were stranded in the stagnant rural economy of the countryside, and had been equipped not with ideas and methods for transforming its fortunes, but with the mark of failure by the standards of sophisticated urban society. The content of what they had learned had failed them. In failing them, it failed their societies likewise. The cities of the developing world were full of young people with half a school certificate, few prospects of gainful employment, and a sometimes frightening, sometimes pathetic, determination not to pass up their slice of the action.

Back in the villages, many of their brothers and sisters—particularly their sisters—were still out of school. Either they had never been at all, or they had dropped out, often because their parents could not afford to do without their help in minding younger children, tending goats, fetching water and firewood, and other domestic and farming tasks essential to the family's survival. Some skimmed and saved desperately—even uniforms, shoes and exercise books represented a major investment—to put a boy or two through school in the hope that he would be one of the lucky ones to make it to a big desk in the city and the kind of money that would save them all from destitution. Others shook their heads over the young layabouts who no longer respected their parents or the old beliefs, and who thought themselves too good to dirty their hands now that they 'knew book', in a phrase from rural Nigeria. In all its dimensions, the 'modern' education system, the boast of so many industrialized countries, was serving the vast majority of people in the Third World extremely badly. The transplantation of the Western educational model to the developing world, like the transfer of high technology, was not 'appropriate'. Alternatives must be found.

The search for alternatives within the formal school system had begun early in the 1960s. The most obvious place to start was with the primary

school curriculum, changing its content to make it more attuned to the social, physical and economic environment in which the majority of students were likely to spend their future. The first programme of this kind to which Unicef lent support was in the early 1960s in Upper Volta, whose experimental Farm Schools taught agriculture alongside more conventional academic subjects. In Africa, and to some extent elsewhere, educational experiments of this kind became relatively common. Some were carried out by educational nonconformists who set up their own schools and raised financial support from nongovernmental agencies. Others were administered as part of a government service, sometimes part of youth and social services rather than education, and were carried out in their own separate institutions.

Kenya opened 'village polytechnics'; Thailand offered school drop-outs a second chance in Mobile Training Schools; Upper Volta had a network of Rural Education Centres. In Colombia, thousands of *campesinos* tuned into the radio programmes of Accion Cultural Popular, beamed to remote rural areas where group leaders passed out simple textbooks and led discussions. The aim of these experiments was to impart 'basic education', the knowledge and skills to make a modest, but better, living in a rural setting. In these schemes, and many others, Unicef was a keen supporter. So, increasingly, were other international donors: UNDP, UNESCO, the World Bank, the Ford Foundation, and many local and international voluntary organizations.

The most thorough and philosophically complete version of the same idea was introduced by President Julius Nyerere throughout the Tanzanian primary school system. 'Education for Self-Reliance' was the phrase he used to describe his educational policy, introduced shortly after his declaration of African socialism in 1967 and central to his entire political philosophy. Nyerere, who was a teacher by profession and was known familiarly to all Tanzanians as 'Mwalimu' ('teacher' in Swahili), wanted schools to promote co-operative rather than individual success, and to teach pupils how to transform from within, rather than to despise, the social and economic mores of traditional rural life. The school was a laboratory where new techniques and entrepreneurial activities benefiting the entire community could be pioneered. Every school should establish farming plots, and each class spend some of its school day hoeing and planting, feeding rabbits, building chicken coops and tending goats. Not only would the profits from these projects help offset the costs of the school, but the improved techniques they demonstrated would be passed back from classroom to family *shamba*. The schools would also serve the community by providing day care for toddlers and classes in adult literacy. The keynote was the participation of the villagers, their use of the school and the meshing of their needs with those of their children.

Unicef was an enthusiastic partner in helping to shape the new style

primary school education in Tanzania, helping equip prototype 'community schools' and acting as a source of advisory and material assistance; its close co-operation in 'education for self-reliance' with the Tanzanian educational authorities still continues today.

In the early 1970s, the world educational crisis identified by Philip Coombs and others began to inspire a much more radical attack on the content and quality of existing educational systems. Some of the inspiration came from China: although no-one was invited to go and look at it, the cultural revolution showed how a rigid educational and class mould could be broken, and many Western progressives applauded from afar the idea of despatching the university professors off to the commune to do something useful. Another revolutionary creed was propounded by the Brazilian educator, Paulo Freire, who became an exile from his own country and a cult figure elsewhere. Freire described the ignorance of the poor as the result of their economic, social and political oppression, and the current educational system as an instrument for keeping them that way. The process of learning should not submerge them in a 'culture of silence', but instead bring them to reflect on their environment as a first step to changing it. 'There is no such thing as a neutral educational process', he wrote. Learning to read and write must be a means of self-liberation.

Many of Freire's ideas were very difficult; this only added to their popularity. So were those of Ivan Illich, whose *De-schooling Society*, published in 1970, advocated the removal of schools altogether. 'The mere existence of school', he wrote, 'discourages and disables the poor from taking control of their own learning'. The ideas of these two educational thinkers were very influential, not so much in helping elaborate alternative educational systems, but in exposing the human damage of those that existed and in challenging people and organizations who claimed to align themselves with the poor to think very deeply about what they were offering as solutions. Above all, they reinforced the thesis that people, however poor and ignorant, had good reasons for what they did, and that they might be right in rejecting or ignoring some of the solutions being offered. They went further: the active participation of people in any programme designed for their benefit was not only necessary for its success, but also a development strategy in its own right. Freire's idea of 'conscientization' was a new version of the 'psychological shock' proponents of community development in the late 1950s had wanted to use to dispel the apathy and fatalism inherent in uneducated rural attitudes. Community participation not only helped get trenches for water pipes dug and new village classrooms built, but the acts of digging and building and their results brought villagers to the realization that they were capable by their own efforts of transforming their destiny.

The impact of these ideas was by no means confined to the field of education *per se*; but education in its broadest sense was where the impact

started. The world educational crisis meant that millions of children, particularly girl children and therefore the mothers of the next generation, were growing up without the knowledge and openness to new ideas normally inculcated in the classroom. This was a problem of direct concern to Unicef.

In 1971, Unicef commissioned Philip Coombs and his team from the International Council for Educational Development (ICED) to carry out a major research study into what more might be done, outside the formal school system, to help prevent the social and economic waste represented by the millions of half-lettered and unlettered children and adolescents who had either dropped out of school or had never managed to get there in the first place. The ICED was simultaneously undertaking a related study for the World Bank. The Bank was interested in increasing its investment in education, particularly in the kind of education which would promote its new goal: an attack on rural poverty. Unicef also asked the ICED to focus on the underprivileged, underserved rural areas; but its concern was with the plight of the educationally-dispossessed child, not on changing the rural economy.

Inevitably, these two major studies, both led by Coombs, had much in common. They, in turn, drew upon another contemporary study: that carried out by an International UNESCO Commission on the Development of Education, whose landmark report, 'Learning to Be', was published in 1972. The scope of the Unicef study was as broad as any similar exercise Unicef had ever commissioned; it included special case studies in a score of countries and looked at scores of others; it tackled shortcomings in the formal school system as an adjunct to its mainstream; it brought into its mainstream subjects—family diet, child-raising—normally regarded as adjuncts to education; it took more than two years to complete. The two reports it engendered, in 1973 and 1974, brought a new concept into Unicef's regular vocabulary: 'non-formal education'.

Non-formal education was not a new term. It had become increasingly used to distinguish other types of educational activities from those carried out in the formal academic hierarchy of school and college—a type already supported by Unicef. But this was the first effort to carry out a systematic analysis of what non-formal education was and what it should be, and what was being done in its name in programmes all over the world.

The first report took as its starting point the growing recognition that education was a lifelong process of learning, in which what people learned as children at their parents' knee, and what adolescents learned as they tried to find their way in the adult world, was as significant as the prescribed chunk of their lives they spent in the classroom. Learning did not begin and end with the clang of the school bell; nor need education. It could happen in the day-care centre, the marketplace, the village co-operative, the mosque, the church, the age-set group, the boy scouts, the girl guides,

the women's club, the football team, the maternity ward, the under-fives clinic.

The report listed what it called a 'minimum package' of attitudes, skills and knowledge that every young person needed for a satisfying adulthood. The package included positive attitudes, including towards learning itself; basic literacy and numeracy; a scientific understanding about the person's own environment; and functional knowledge about raising a family, running a household, earning a living and taking part in civic life. The thesis was that non-formal education would supplement what everyone in any society picks up informally simply by living; that in the case of the unschooled rural child or adolescent, what they picked up in this way needed a supplement because without it they could not even aspire to change the misery of their circumstances, or know how to set about improving the quality of their own, and eventually their children's, lives.

Among the clients for non-formal education were the child of preschool age, whose physical growth, intellectual curiosity and emotional well-being would determine whether at a later stage he or she could make any use of classroom teaching. But by far the most important category were the adolescents and adults who had dropped out of school or never reached the classroom door. Among these the great majority were girls and women. In many rural areas, where modern education and modern aspirations were the exclusive preserve of boys, well over ninety per cent of girls reached maturity without knowing how to read a label on a bottle of medicine, write her child's name on his health card, count the number of eggs the hens had laid, or measure the distance between the rows of ground nuts in the plot she farmed.

This 'unfinished business' of the schools meant that other programmes for social improvement which depended on women to absorb their messages and put them into effect—health programmes which counselled the dangers of drinking dirty water, nutrition programmes which extolled the virtues of lentil soup and eggs, family planning programmes which explained the value of spacing births—would fall on unreceptive ears. Where there was no knowledge, there was no will for change, only an unquestioning dependence on beliefs and behaviour patterns handed down through generations of mothers and grandmothers with scarcely perceptible adaptations to the seamless continuity of rural life.

Women not only raised the children, but in many countries, particularly in Africa, were also responsible for providing the family's food, fuel, water supply and most items connected to children's welfare. A woman's interest in learning could be aroused by teaching her something that might help her fulfill more easily her regular functions. Whatever form her demand took, its satisfaction would start a process whereby she could begin to enjoy the ability to take in and use new ideas. This would bring her and others like her closer to the mainstream of society, opening a new chapter in their

attitudes to health, welfare and the quality of family life.

The two complementary ICED reports on non-formal education were presented successively to the Unicef Executive Boards of 1973 and 1974. The first was hugely popular, and was printed and widely circulated to university departments and learning institutes all over the world. It represented a seminal contribution to ideas about the role of education in development, both in its formal school setting, and in its many non-formal settings elsewhere. The enthusiasm it engendered carried the authors rather further in the second than many were prepared to follow.

At the 1974 Board session, Coombs and his principal assistant, Manzoor Ahmed, from Bangladesh, raised more than a little dust. In spite of the fact that they stated the need for formal and non-formal educational systems to march hand-in-hand towards the objective of rural transformation, the 1974 report appeared to many of the Board delegates to go too far in its criticism of the schools, and to describe so optimistically the potential of non-formal education that its authors unintentionally conveyed the impression that they regarded it as a panacea.

UNESCO was decidedly frosty. 'Learning to Be', the 1972 report of its own Commission, had fully accepted the schools' shortcomings, particularly the rigidity and outdatedness of their curriculae, which prevented young people from learning the things 'that best suited their aptitudes'. But this did not mean that the whole formal education system was obsolete. Coombs and Ahmed were congratulated for providing 'a systematic conceptual framework for many *ad hoc* and unco-ordinated learning activities'. But UNESCO believed that they had somewhat overstated the case on behalf of non-formal education. However useful radio programmes, film-strips for youth clubs, after-school literacy classes for women and all sorts of other activities could be in filling in educational gaps and compensating adults who never had a chance to go to school, they were nonetheless a poor cousin to mainstream education. In the end, there could be no substitute for reforming the schools and pressing on with the expansion of the formal educational structure.

Whatever the shortcomings of schooling and its over-emphasis on paper qualifications which were no automatic passport to the good life, the reality was that not only did educational authorities rate conventional schooling more highly than any non-formal version, but the people of the developing world were voting for it with their feet. The parents who wanted education for their children wanted them to go to school, and they did not want them to spend their time there hoeing ground nuts and minding chickens which they could have done more usefully if they had stayed at home.

Students felt the same way. In the Serowe Brigades of Botswana, students bitterly protested a work schedule of carpentry and construction which left them too little time to prepare for their examinations. Those who

took advantage of non-formal courses of instruction in Kenya's Village Polytechnics wanted a certificate upon completion; and when they got one, they set off for the city to look for a job as an auto mechanic or a factory worker.

International experts might argue that educational budgets were overstrained, and that the choice for many children who would otherwise have gone on to secondary school was not between formal and non-formal, but between non-formal and nothing at all. But in the villages and shanty towns, people who thought they knew second best when they saw it were not convinced. While city jobs paid more than the hard slog of casual labour in town or countryside, non-formal education was at best a limited tool for rural transformation.

Within a few years, the sting went out of the debate about non-formal education. In the meantime, the work of Coombs and his team, both for Unicef and for the World Bank and others, had put in place a conceptual framework for support to education outside the school system. Their wide circulation within the education community helped to create a favourable climate for non-formal education. During the next few years, youth clubs, radio programmes, women's groups, credit unions, community newspapers and co-operative societies enjoyed new prestige and financial support from Unicef and others.

By the time that Unicef next examined its role in basic education, in 1977, schooling and non-formal learning were moving closer together. Except in oil-rich developing countries, public expenditures on expanding networks of schools and colleges had levelled off. Coombs's original diagnosis—that rising numbers and increased costs would end by swamping the schools—proved to be correct. By this stage, more education ministries had accepted the need to use every kind of alternative to the conventional classroom, standard syllabus and examination routine in the effort to give their uneducated and untrained young adult population some kind of future hope and prospects. The classrooms of the rural Third World had not been abandoned. On the contrary: many had been co-opted into a wider developmental role. No longer did the land of primers and exercise books, blackboards and chalk, only belong to children at a certain age and stage. Nyerere had led where others followed. They were beginning to belong to everyone.

The ferment of ideas about formal and non-formal education was essentially a re-examination of what the up-and-coming generation needed in the way of knowledge, skills and learning, in order to join fully in the process of development, both for their own and their societies' sakes. It was, therefore, part of the reconsideration of the nature of development itself. Within Unicef, the quiet emergency which Labouisse described as confronting the

children of the developing world prompted a series of reappraisals, of which education turned out only to be the first, and the one which helped prompt discussion about where and how all kinds of learning—including that about health, nutrition, hygiene and child care—took place.

In 1975, the year after the second report on non-formal education was presented to the Executive Board, Labouisse presented the results of two other important studies. One had been carried out by WHO with Unicef's participation; it outlined 'Alternative methods of meeting basic health needs'. The other had been carried out at Unicef's request by Dr Jean Mayer of the Harvard School of Public Health, and its subject was the priorities for child nutrition in developing countries.

As each of these successive studies helped to fill in the picture of the children's situation, and as so many of their findings converged, Unicef's version of the alternative order began to emerge. The neat dividing lines between what constituted educational services, health services, water supply and sanitation services, nutrition services, or social welfare services, were becoming increasingly blurred. All programmes designed to expand or improve such services had to be mutually reinforcing; their inputs, whether aimed primarily at social or economic advance, should be integrated.

This theme had first been sounded during the late 1950s when the community development approach was becoming popular. In due course, it had been reflected in Unicef by the concept of integrated services for the 'whole' child. This policy shift of the early 1960s had encouraged Unicef's growing network of country representatives and programme officers to seek out ways in which all the needs of the child could be served by programmes whose own components were interconnected. In the mid-1960s, it had seemed essential to go for commitment at the national level: involvement of the planning ministry, recognition in the Five-Year Plan. In many countries, it had taken time to convince officialdom of the need to plan for children as part of mainstream social and economic development, of the virtues of interministerial committees, and of the 'country' programme which brought all the elements of the picture together and addressed them together.

Even where governments had taken these initiatives for themselves, or been gradually persuaded into doing so, there were many cases where what was discussed and agreed at national level was scarcely reflected by what took place on the ground. Sometimes the plans still looked immaculate at regional, provincial or district level; but there some essential thread snapped. Personnel were overstretched; transport or fuel for going out into the countryside unavailable; trainers and teachers unenthusiastic; equipment ill-used or inappropriate. In one place a water supply had performed a miracle, but no health care could be had for miles in any direction; in another, the health centre functioned admirably, but the village children did not have enough to eat; in another, the women's club had a beautiful

vegetable garden, but it was bound to wither in the dry season because they had no water.

The integration of services did not appear automatically to trickle down the administrative hierarchy, any more than did economic growth. The directors of agriculture and health might meet for an occasional co-ordinating session at district or provincial headquarters. But meanwhile, out in the villages, a rural extension worker and a nutrition advisor doing their rounds might travel the same beat in the same neighbourhood and never meet to discuss how their admonitions to their 'clients' clashed or complemented each other. The way services—health, nutrition, water, education—were structured was inhibiting their effectiveness. It was also somewhat bewildering, and sometimes time- and energy-wasting, to those the services were meant to serve. Villagers untaught in the ways of the modern world did not think of dividing their problems—lack of financial resources, low agricultural prices, a poor food crop, too many mouths to feed, a dried-up water source, lack of a community road—into compartments and bringing the relevant compartments to the relevant authorities. Until the first knot between the villagers and the appropriate authorities had been firmly tied, the services provided reached people, if they reached them at all, with an impact refracted through misperceptions, misapprehensions and misfits. Yet as far as Unicef was concerned, the child emergency demanded that the services reach mothers and children more quickly, with a greater impact, at a time when economic crisis had placed government budgets for social expenditure under heavy pressure.

To reach the villagers and tie the knot required a strategy for 'basic services'—not health, nutrition or education services—which covered and contained all these and others—water supply, sanitation, food conservation, family planning, support to women's activities—in an integrated package. Instead of putting the chief emphasis on improving the co-ordination between administration departments at levels above the village, the essence of the new perspective was to make the services dovetail more closely with the villagers' own uncompartmentalized view of their lives.

One lesson that the experiences of the 1950s and 1960s had brought home to all those trying to alleviate poverty in the Third World was that people's attitudes towards programmes, which governed the degree of their involvement, were fundamental to those programmes' success. People's energy, which in the earlier days of community development had been seen as something to be harnessed to a programme to help it along, now appeared to be the critical force which could make or break it. Something more than 'harnessing' was needed; something more subtle and complex, in which the villagers' views and ideas—their minds as well as their labour—were enlisted.

Where once the catchphrase had been 'community development', now it had become 'community participation'. During the previous few

years, the various studies and reappraisals undertaken not only by Unicef but also by organizations, research institutes, and government and university departments throughout the Third World and within the international-development community had forced those involved to consider more carefully how the anonymous mass of the millions of people who lived in poverty actually went about their lives and why they made the choices they made. Until answers could be provided to such questions, within each country, region, province, district and community, it was impossible to solve the problem of how to reach directly into their lives and help them improve them. It was possible to arrive at a model of their basic needs at the round table conference, in the government planning department, at the research institute seminar. But without a picture of their 'felt needs', it was impossible to identify where the two might coincide, and what agent or agents could make the liaison.

During the early 1970s, considerable attention began to focus on certain micro-projects and mini-programmes which had shown success, often within a limited radius and sometimes under exceptional circumstances, at raising the quality of life for the poorest members of society. Many had grown out of spontaneous organization in villages or shanty towns, and were often led by charismatic individuals who had sought financial help from church and voluntary agencies. These groups had a direct contact with their constituency, and their relative freedom from rigid bureaucratic structures had allowed them to pioneer and experiment. Verghese Kurien's programme at Anand in Gujarat, whose village dairying co-operatives had provided a springboard for a national co-operative dairy movement and a range of improvements across the whole spectrum of rural life, was one such example. Plenty of others existed elsewhere in the developing world.

Many of these projects had begun in response to a crisis, or a sorely felt need of some kind. But whatever impulse had set them in motion, they usually moved rapidly into other activities. Almost by fluke, rather than design, they had taken on the character of the multi-purpose, integrated programmes now being held up as the development model. A community-health programme in the highlands of Guatemala stated as its top priority social and economic justice; land reform was next, malnutrition came fifth, and curative medicine was last on the list. A slum-housing programme in India did not stop at sympathetic architectural and urban planning, cement and construction materials for poor householders, water points and latrines; it worked just as hard to provide small loans for rickshaw drivers and *dhobis* (washermen and women), and set up health-care services for the under-fives. Nutrition recovery centres for children suffering from drought in the Sahel set people along a path which led to well-digging, village pharmacies, and road-building. It did not take the experts long to observe that the success of these ventures derived from their popularity with the communities concerned, who mobilized their own efforts behind them.

In some countries, the same ideas had already been adopted as part of government policy. Tanzania's 'education for self-reliance' was one element of 'ujamaa' (fellowship), Nyerere's doctrine of African socialism built upon traditional ideas of mutual self-help and community co-operation, and called upon people to build the nation from below. In Indonesia, General Suharto declared that the centrepiece of his new order was the traditional system of mutual help—*gotong-royong*—and extended budgetary aid directly to village development councils. In the Peruvian province of Puno, the Indians' traditional pattern of community ownership had been revived, and part of the revenues from silver mines and cottage industries used to pay for children's services run by the people.

The mobilization of the people which characterized these examples and many others came to something considerably more than organizing work parties to dig trenches across the hillside or putting school pupils to work in the fields. In these programmes, the people in the communities not only helped set the goals, but also took part in their planning and execution. Their views, opinions, and existing knowledge, as well as their labour, were reflected in what services the programme managers set out to provide, and how they were run. The people enlisted not merely as spectators or passive recipients of services designed to help them, but as operators and participants.

In many cases they did so through one of their own representatives. Certain community members had been selected for some training, and were now playing a leading part at the community level, answerable to the community for what they did, but under the technical supervision of those who were professionally employed to run the project or the service. In different places, these workers went under different names: health promoters, motivators, animateurs, monitrices, first-aiders, village-based workers. Whatever they were called, and whatever their specific function, they represented a whole new class of development personnel. They lived and worked in the community, undertook their tasks on a voluntary or semi-voluntary basis, received only a short period of training, and were seen as the front-line workers in the programmes which counted on their services. Not only did their use cut personnel costs to a minimum, but it filled the vital and elusive gap, culturally and administratively, between a programme and those it was meant to assist.

Independently of the growing recognition of the potential of community participation as part of a strategy for the attack on poverty, Unicef's own programme experiences in the Third World had offered many practical lessons along the same lines. Long ago, in Leo Eloesser's health-care programme in northern China, in Dr Kodijat's yaws campaign in Indonesia, in Mexico's effort to eradicate malaria, lay people had been recruited and given a little training to carry out simple tasks. Other examples of the importance of community organization were even closer to hand: the

many rural water-supply schemes, especially those using villagers as hand-pump caretakers in Tamil Nadu and elsewhere; the Gujarat dairy co-operatives; the grass-roots women's group movement in Kenya; *animation rurale* in Senegal; *educacion inicial* in Puno; Mobile Training Centres in Thailand; *gotong-royong* in Indonesia; community schools in Tanzania.

The 'strategy for basic services'—the strategy whose promotion was to dominate Unicef's policy during the second half of the 1970s in the way that planning for the needs of children had dominated during the 1960s—was an important landmark in the evolution not only of Unicef's own philosophy, but also was a major contribution to the ideas about meeting human needs and establishing a new international economic order which had been circulating since the beginning of the second Development Decade. An approach which could be adapted to local social and economic circumstances; which had built into it a means of tapping the views, the resources and the latent energies of the individual community; and which attached to the existing health, education or rural extension services an outer, labour-intensive layer of personnel who acted as the conduit for ideas and material assistance under the technical supervision of the professionals . . . this approach had a great deal to recommend it. It did have to overcome suspicions that basic services were amateur and second-best; and it also had to overcome professional resistance to the idea that laymen and women with only a short period of training were quite adequately equipped to carry out simple technical tasks, give out pills and lotions, discuss the virtues of improved seeds and fertilizers, and the effect on health of drinking tube-well water from a pump instead of open water from a pond.

Elaborating the basic services approach to the Unicef Executive Board in 1975, Harry Labouisse told the delegates that he believed that it was possible, at the cost of only a few dollars a head per year, to provide a package of basic services which would meet the needs of every child in the world. He suggested that an increased level of development assistance, perhaps in the order of \$2–3 billion annually, not an exorbitant sum, would be needed to implement the strategy on a global scale through all available channels. The strength of the approach lay in its modesty and efficacy: no cumbersome and expensive new machinery or institutions were needed; simply the extension of what existed already, using local individuals as their antennae to reach into the communities and encourage their active participation.

Labouisse saw in the approach a source of great optimism at a time when the negative images of hunger and famine were inculcating a sense of despair among government donors and the general public towards the attack on world poverty. 'It is my conviction', he said, 'that, if they really try, the poor and affluent countries working together are perfectly capable of meeting the children's basic requirements in a not-too-distant future. We

know enough about what needs to be done and how it should be done. With adequate help from the world community, the most essential needs of the world's children could begin to be met in practical, justified ways at capital costs the world, as a whole, can afford, and at recurring costs which the countries and communities directly concerned could, in time, reasonably bear'. There was an essential proviso: the collective will needed to do the job.

Here was Unicef's own response to the global search for alternatives.

Main sources

The Poverty Curtain by Mahbub ul Haq, published by Columbia University Press, New York, 1976.

Rich World. Poor World by Geoffrey Lean, published by George Allen & Unwin, London, 1978.

One Hundred Countries. Two Billion People by Robert S. McNamara, published by Praeger, New York, 1973.

Report of the World Bank and IDA, Washington, 1973.

Helping Ourselves: Local Solutions to Global Problems by Bruce Stokes, published by the Worldwatch Institute/W. W. Norton, New York and London, 1981.

Partners in Development: Report of the Commission on International Development, Chairman: Lester B. Pearson, Praeger, New York, 1969.

Unicef Executive Board documentation; general progress reports of the Executive Director; summary records; reports of the Board; statements to the Board by Henry Labouisse and others; special reports and studies: 'Non-formal Education for Rural Development' by Philip Coombs and Manzoor Ahmed (also issued as 'New Paths to Learning', ICED, October 1973); 'Building New Educational Strategies to Service Rural Children and Youth', March 1974; 'Basic Services for Children in Developing Countries', March 1976.

The World Educational Crisis. A Systems Analysis by Philip H. Coombs, Oxford University Press, 1968; *The World Crisis in Education: The View from the Eighties* by Philip H. Coombs; Oxford University Press, 1985.

Articles in *Unicef News* (on the child emergency); articles in *Assignment Children* (on community participation and non-formal education).

Interviews undertaken for the Unicef History Project; monograph on Unicef and Education by H. M. Phillips, September 1985.