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Interview with Dr. Charles Egger*

Conducted by Jack Charnow

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Milk conservation

The European experience

Charnow: Charles, I would like to ask you about milk conservation in India. There's another aspect to this question. As you know we begin with milk conservation in Europe, one of Rajchman's major objectives from the very beginning. Then the question came as to how one could adapt milk conservation to tropical countries. Do you want to go on from here?

Egger: Well it was certainly one of the many innovating ideas that Dr. Rajchman had, to find a bridge from a purely emergency aid-oriented distribution of skim milk powder to the encouragement and building up of a national dairy industry which, this would not be only an effort to develop the production of milk through modern means of collection preservation and dehydration, but to equally introduce the idea that the investment UNICEF and the governments were making were to be repaid in the form of a subsidy on the price of milk thus milk would also be available at a lower cost to the economic weaker groups. By and large, this has worked in Europe, and in a somewhat different way it has also worked in some of the developing countries. In others some of the basic pre-conditions simply did not exist and there was no chance to erect a viable industry that could equally contribute to the improvement of the nutrition status of children.

There's no question that UNICEF made a major contribution to the rebuilding of the dairy industry of many war-affected countries in Europe. What UNICEF did in Poland, Yugoslavia, and to some extent in Italy, France and Greece, is quite remarkable. We really did help them to both reconstruct and modernize the production and preservation of milk while helping to train staff and technicians and assist in organization and management. Governments in Europe were quite prepared to follow our ideas of free milk and subsidized milk distribution.

In developing countries

As we had the staff, we gained experience, and had accumulated considerable technical know-how, it was felt this could equally apply to the situation in developing countries. I was directly confronted with it in India. At the beginning we took it for granted that milk was available in sufficient quantities or that efforts to encourage production would yield immediate results. This was true in Europe, or could be developed in Europe thanks to a variety of incentives for encouraging production. But in the developing countries you had to develop both the actual production and then equally to develop a market.

The Indian experience

In India UNICEF had undoubtedly a considerable influence in the improvement of the techniques of milk production and preservation. For instance UNICEF was instrumental in the state of Gujarat in India to assist the Kaira Dairy Cooperative in the first effort to dehydrate buffalo milk which has a much higher fat content, (about 7-1/2%). This was successful both thanks to the technique employed, management experience in the operation of the Kaira dairy co-operative headed by an entrepreneur-type of Indian manager. Co-operatives had been set up for some considerable time and had acquired experience in cooperative milk farming. They also owned the dairy. You had a strong base from the beginning in Anand, in the state of Gujarat near Ahmedabad. The first plant that UNICEF helped to set up was for the dehydration of buffalo milk which was successful. The credit certainly goes here to Don Sabin, the first director of milk conservation, and to Kurian, the manager of the Cooperation, who, together were instrumental in building the plant, working out the economics and technical aspects from relating to the dehydration and preservation of milk. In a second stage UNICEF helped in the expanding and modernization of pasteurization and slowly ration of milk. The Gujarat dairy area, as one of a really promising milk production area, was linked to the big urban consumer market in Bombay. Other dairy development areas were West Bengal, Andre Predesh for supplying, Hyderabad and Mysore and Bangalore for the supply of milk to Calcutta.

Through dire experience we had to learn how important it was to give great attention to the development of the milk shed area on a rational and economic basis so as to bring the cost of collection of milk down, to establish regular control of the quality of the milk and pay according to quality and feel content to regard your extensions services, etc. In other words to give full attention to all factors that weigh heavily on the rationale and economics of the whole project.

The contribution UNICEF made was, first to introduce a technique that, although to some extent experimental, had not become sufficiently known in India, and also to constantly adopt and improve the technique to changing requirements. Through this factor we have also helped with our Indian counterparts to help build up an Indian dairy equipment industry that was capable of producing much of this equipment in India. The various local dairy co-operatives were joined later on together in a national association of all cooperatives with their own Board, the "National Dairy Development Board". Kurian became the Chairman of this Board and wielded considerable influence. He was greatly interested in building up a cadre of qualified engineers, technicians, administrators and agriculturalists that were very essential to staff, and administered these modern plants and Dairy schemes.

Only gradually did we come to take an interest, together with FAO, and seasoned Indian agriculturalists so as to help develop the production areas from the point of the quality of the milk, the organization of the collection areas to encourage the setting up of qualified extension services to have at least an understanding of fodder production, animal husbandry and veterinary services which all have a bearing on the interrelated aspects of production and collection under the most favourable conditions.

Allotment made by UNICEF and the governments was capitalized on a one and a half time basis, and this helped to create a fund that would be utilized over a certain period to reduce the price of milk through subsidies. The subsidized milk was however, for many poorer population groups still too expensive a product for them to be able to afford. This could have been overcome through the introduction of imported low fat milk and additional subsidies. This happened in almost all the dairies that were set up in the various states - in India, in Punjab, in Gujerat, in Andra Pradesh, in West Bengal, in Mysore. It helped in the production of good quality milk to the market, met a growing demand in urban areas through the influence on cheaper types of milk and systems of subsidisation - additional poorer consumer groups were reached and at the same time various interested groups had to come forward to defend them.

The working relationship that developed between the UNICEF staff milk engineers and programme officers, the dairy cooperative and various milk marketing boards, was an interesting and lively one. It did not go without difficulties, because our colleagues were somewhat too much imbued by the new techniques they had acquired and they did not have enough experience in dairy production, management and economics from the point of view of milk processing and UNICEF at times had too simplified policies. This could be overcome when one realized the need to.

Later there was some kind of a parting of ways. This was not limited to India, in Latin America this development equally took place. In addition there was competition from the private sector.

Relations with FAO

Charnow: Was FAO unhappy because UNICEF took over this field?

Egger: No, because there was a kind of division of labour between UNICEF and FAO. FAO concentrated on the milk production and animal husbandry side, on marketing and UNICEF on the processing of milk and the organization of a dairy complex. There was an understanding that both agencies had a role to play in collaboration with Government. At a later stage, FAO developed its own expertise, and relied also more on UNIDO to provide the know-how in terms of technical processing, management, and the like.

Scope of UNICEF aid

Charnow: Am I correct in my impression that our work in this field, including interest in improving the milk sheds, which you mentioned, and also the cattle stock which raised questions on whether you get into artificial insemination and so on, raised a more general question of the scope of UNICEF. How far it should go in order to help children? In the Board the issue of UNICEF scope comes up in one way or another quite often. Perhaps this might be an the time for you to talk generally about the scope of UNICEF as a children's agency, also.

In milk conservation

Egger: Well, you're right. It is possible that the Board did not fully comprehend during a first period, how far UNICEF should become involved in problems of milk production, extension, animal husbandry, marketing, etc., all the factors that influence the increase of the production of milk at the level of individual dairy farms. As long as we were able to present this as one of the implications of a social milk production and distribution policy and the countries we worked with were requesting this type of aid from UNICEF, it was generally accepted.

Some of the engineers allowed themselves to get involved in programmes for which there was simply not a sufficient economic basis of the amount of milk available, and the possibilities of increasing the throughput--all conditions that influenced the price of milk and therefore the economic viability. You may remember at the Board meeting which took place in Bangkok, some of the delegations, had visited countries where MCP projects had been assisted for many years.. The Swiss Delegate, who had looked into the basis for such dairy development, came back with very critical remarks. He felt that UNICEF had embarked on schemes which were not viable, and could not for many years to come, reach the objectives that had been laid down.

In applied nutrition

Similar discussions took place, in relationship with the production aspects of applied nutrition, eg. the production of fish - both inland fisheries as well as sea fisheries, in the effort to introduce modern methods of poultry raising, (pioneered by a famous Australian expert, McArdle,) and initiatives to expand and introduce new types of vegetables and legumes. The line that we took was that we were not out to start large agricultural programmes. We wanted to find ways and means to demonstrate and show on a sufficiently large scale that through improved production methods, it was possible to increase production without losses on a family basis, or

homestead basis. The products would be utilized for demonstrations in improved nutrition. It was also thought possible that a percentage of the production could be sold and thus pay for some of the investments made or for upkeep.

We also had a policy of rural milk production. We would not go into introducing smaller, highly technical milk plants, but concentrate on simply improving the collection of milk, to improve the quality aspects, and perhaps encourage simpler methods of collection and preservation without going into extensive heat treatment like Pasteurization.

This then became a part of our Applied Nutrition Programme policy, to this UNICEF would assist a programme on a demonstration and experimental basis until such time as the experiment would reveal that this was feasible, and could be undertaken on a larger scale. Then we would look to other resources to expand such first phase projects on a larger basis.

This remains one of the elements one would have to think of in the new food and nutrition policy of UNICEF more closely geared to a greater concentration on the young child, during and immediately after breastfeeding. Apart from the question of producing simple types of weaning food on an industrial scale there are other possibilities for families to prepare with locally available legumes and cereals, appropriate recipes of weaning mixtures that serve their purpose equally well to provide a supplement to mother's milk and ease the adjustment to share in the customary food of families. This is a very important element of young child-oriented nutrition policy which is much neglected in the present doctrine.

Adaption of Western technology to developing
country conditions

Charnow: Related to this, is there not another contribution of UNICEF, of which this is one aspect, which perhaps is not being sufficiently recorded in our records - and that is the introduction and adaptation and experimentation with forms of Western technology to conditions in developing countries, examples such as water pumps, cold chains, immunization techniques, enrichment of milk, enrichment of salt and so on?

Problems

Egger: This is certainly a very important element. You have to see that in a wider context of the whole development of the concept of technical assistance. As it was conceived in the decades after World War II, and as we were moving towards the sixties, one thought, by introducing appropriate techniques that have proven themselves in Western countries, that this could be relatively easily translated and applied to developing countries.

This proved to be a fallacy. One had neglected to identify the problems in their true dimensions. One had to see if it was possible to train the necessary manpower, that could maintain and repair installations set up thanks to such new techniques. To what extent did the perception of the communities really relate to the type of new techniques being introduced by many agencies? One had to give more attention to the aspect of cost both in terms of maintenance of such schemes, in terms of providing resources to pay for spare parts, to maintain adequate quality control, etc.

Applied technology

This led to the concept of applied technology, (ideas that Schumacher promoted in his books), technologies that were simple, more easily understood by the communities, that were effective in terms of the objectives one tried to achieve and could lend themselves to be further developed.

This ran counter to expectations developing countries had at that time of their own development. The staff expected technologies to equal 'the best in the West'. They believed this applied or rural technology was a cheap way of development - the same argument that we heard about primary health care and on basic services - that this was really a new formula of the west to keep them at a low level of development. This would never make it possible for them to move to the next stage of semi-industrialization, and later industrialization. To some extent, we may still find ourselves in this situation although the realization has grown (influenced by factors as the energy crisis, the cost of imports of both industrial products and food, the inflation, debt service) that appropriate forms of technology can still represent real progress, that such technologies are effective and do not necessarily stand in the way of development.

During my recent assignment I was happy in the Middle East to meet with intelligent people who had been experimenting with forms of applied technology applicable to poorer Arab countries. These ideas are now somewhat more easily accepted, particularly if they allow people to develop such technologies on their own. They can see the benefit themselves, they can build on this to lead to a next stage of improvement. There's no question that UNICEF has been instrumental and part of this whole critical re-appraisal of the concept of technical assistance. One has learnt to see technical assistance only as one of the many key elements both economical as well as sociological, that have to be serviced before one has assured a proper base for a balanced development.

Labouisse visit to India

Charnow: Well, Charles, perhaps, this is the time to move out of India, into the sacred precincts of Headquarters. How did that all come about?

Egger: It did come about as a result of a visit that the new Executive Director, Harry Labouisse made to India early in 1966. He wanted to get to know the various regions, and spent a long visit in India, which I had, of course, to prepare.

I did not know him at that time, nor his wife, I was not sufficiently familiar with his style and the things that he was interested in, e.g., he wanted to have very carefully laid out plans for field visits. He wanted to know in advance the names of all the people he was supposed to meet, and naturally was anxious to be briefed on all the subjects that were to come up during meetings. He wanted to know all the person's occupation and rank that had been invited to a cocktail party. His wife, on her side, was anxious that he should not be over-burdened. He hated to make impromptu speeches at receptions and meetings. Although we had organized the visits - what I thought quite carefully - it did not go without difficulties and some heated arguments. Once or twice I felt that if this was going to be the new style I'd better leave UNICEF, as this was far too difficult, too diplomatic and ambassadorial for my tastes. Once or twice, I spoke openly, to Mrs. H.R. Labouisse about it. We were travelling mostly together in the second car while her husband was with a senior government official in the first one. There she certainly opened up and became much more understanding and explained to me that this was his style which one had to take account of. It was a learning process for us as well as for those whom we visited in India.

As I had already been for over five years in India, I knew most of the people UNICEF was dealing with. I was familiar with the programmes and I was able to interpret the type of work UNICEF was associated with. I was able to really explain the setting of our work. We had a rather good relationship with the central government, in particularly at the state level, and with all officials in charge of various programmes in India. The visit went off well.

Egger becomes Deputy Executive Director (Programmes)

It was as a result of this visit, I presume, and the coincidence that Mrs. Sinclair wished to retire from her assignment as Deputy Executive Director that Mr. Labouisse asked me to come to Headquarters. After some internal reflection and discussion with my wife, I accepted the offer and I haven't regretted this decision except that I didn't realize that we would be such a long time in the U.S.

Emphasis on decentralization

Charnow: Because of my long tenure in UNICEF, I guess I have probably observed more changes in style in when new people come in than anyone else. Everybody, in taking over a new responsibility, brings

in his own style in, just as Mr. Labouisse did. What was the new style, or the new objectives and perspectives that you brought in to that post of Deputy Executive Director, having seen it from the field point of view?

Egger: At the famous planning meetings for children and development that took place in Bangkok in 1966, many of my colleagues, particularly in the planning field at Headquarters and in the field, questioned me on this and were putting forward their own views, and they made it clear that they expected a lot of changes, in particular with regard to decentralization and participation of the field. Without having perhaps too clear ideas of my own, I sort of felt optimistic and that I would be able to meet these expectations.

Charnow: You, too, wanted to shift gears?

Egger: I'm more of a pragmatist than a theoretical planner. If I list the priorities that I have given particular attention to, I would perhaps say the following: Decentralization having been such a long time in the field, realizing that the judgement of programme development is so much dependent on local knowledge, contacts with people, interpretation of locally available data, an understanding of past experiences, both in terms of achievements and shortcomings, I was certainly a determined advocate of decentralizing the whole process of planning and programming, and bring it from the level of the continuous reviews at Headquarters, down to the level of the country, or groups of countries.

Reviews in the field

I felt that it would be more economical and would make more sense, if we could, as a group from HQ and the field, review new proposals in the countries themselves. This offered an opportunity to bring staff that had themselves worked on these programmes, other staff that had been involved from regional offices along with programme people from Headquarters.

We then broke this down into a more refined process distinguishing between an early review and consultation, and a final, more comprehensive review. First efforts were instituted at that time to develop a certain methodology for preparation. How should the planning for a programme be conceived? I was certainly determined that reviews should no longer take place at Headquarters, where all the brass would be sitting over a programme, often without even the presence of the chief of the country office who had been responsible for the whole preparation.

This, by and large, was successful, or introduced entirely a new outlook. It was really a contribution to lead to the concept of country programming. This implied also to give more authority to a

UNICEF Representative in the field. This required to spell out policy in all respective fields more clearly and document it carefully and give more attention to review and evaluation of ongoing activities. It also meant to maintain a constant dialogue and exchange with colleagues in the field regarding new developments, initiatives, etc.

It was the beginning of a long process, which has certainly contributed to making UNICEF more country-oriented, to introduce a greater element of flexibility, to strengthen the sense of responsibility of our field-based staff in taking decisions, or the development of the programme, both at the early conceptual stage as well as at time of implementation. The ability and willingness to adapt a programme to changing circumstances.

Government participation: We encouraged the idea that there had to be a greater degree of participation of the country level. Not only with key government ministry, that had always been the main partner of UNICEF, but with all the other government agencies at the intermediate or local level that had a share in this process. We insisted that there ought to be a focal point around the key ministry which had responsibility for planning, or be in charge of coordination. At one time this was considered anathema to invite the government representatives themselves to take part in the process of programme development. They had to be part of all the phases leading to the preparation of a programme.

Agency participation

Limitations in programme preparation

Traditionally, the third partners were then the UN specialized and voluntary in difficulties areas. They had neither the number of advisers that could take part in this process, nor had these technical advisers. While they had often much detailed knowledge of their specific field, they often lacked overall knowledge of the comprehensive problems and the broader aspects of programmes under discussion. This as much for the general broad framework of a programme at national level as well as the more concrete aspects of the details at the state or provincial level.

It was perhaps not so much difficulties of collaboration with the agencies than the realization that the contribution of the agencies as they were organized with this type of approach, could simply not be forthcoming. We were far more decentralized, we had given staff far more authority, UNICEF had resources and UNICEF was beginning to look more comprehensively at child development.

This was also a time when more resources were becoming available to make it possible to go into longer term planning phases, to

diversify activities over several sectors while retaining a comprehensive approval. This system began really to catch the attention of key ministries or agencies concerned with planning, with coordination, and negotiations with various forms of multilateral and bilateral aid.

From technical approval of projects to broader participation

Charnow: Did this cause friction with the agencies because they couldn't participate. At what stage was there a removal of the practice that they gave technical approval to projects?

Egger: This came more as an inevitable part of this whole process. The agencies looked upon this development with a combination of concern and envy. Out of it emerged the idea that we had to work in a different way with the agencies. It was more important that we did discuss with the agencies, the policies of joint concern for both agencies involved, and try to come to basic understanding of concepts of major themes, both in terms of their objectives and criteria, that would guide the agencies and what were then the possible and desirable forms of participation that they could offer, that were really relevant to the programmes.

This led to an increasingly close relationship with the agencies through inter-Secretariat meetings, either in the formal sense of the Joint Committee on Health Policy with WHO or the Inter-Secretariat meeting with UNESCO, or the informal meetings we had with the Secretariats of ILO and FAO, the Bureau of Social Affairs, or Centre for Social Development and Human Affairs, as it eventually was called, the Centre for Urban Development of the UN, etc.

This led, then, to a different type of participation. One would not, in each case, have to ask and obtain their technical approval on projects. As a result of reviews and preparatory discussions, one would identify with the government areas where the agencies could make a specific contribution that related to their terms of reference and competence and could become available at the country level.

In terms of formulation of overall policies, criteria for programmes, developments determine phases of participation of the agencies this system came to work quite well during my time and represented a monumental change in the system of participation of the agencies.

JCHP

To give you a few examples. These were the years we and WHO met first annually in the Joint Committee on Health Policy and between the Secretariats directly concerned. We selected a major subject

for review. An independent report was to be prepared to analyse the problem under review, to bring an overview together over all that had happened in this field to examine achievements and shortcomings on the basis of indepth review of certain case country studies, and to develop the criteria that should guide the work of the agencies in the future as well as governments concerned. One subject was the policy to improve the training of health staff at the para-professional, auxilliary and voluntary level. We also reviewed MCH and family planning. We looked initially to our increasingly large and comprehensive involvement in water supplies and sanitation. Health education, both on its own as well as in relation with almost all health subjects, was also a specific subject. Communicable diseases, TB, Malaria, etc., also came up for review. Primary Health Care then became probably the most important health policy to be reviewed by JCHP.

UNESCO/Changing educational policy

With UNESCO, we also developed a fairly close partnership. As a result of a Board session that took place in Geneva in 1971, the UK Delegate severely criticized our involvement in education, which he felt was too general and which embraced assistance to primary, secondary and technical education, that we did not sufficiently emphasize the quality element in primary education. As a result of these criticisms a very basic review of UNICEF role in education was prepared. This came up for discussion in 1972. Dr. Philips was the author of the study and hammered out a first clear policy on what should be UNICEF's mandate in the field of education, concentration on primary education, in relation to quality, reform, experimentation, with emphasis on subjects of direct interest to UNICEF, e.g. health, nutrition, environment, girls' education, preparation for life, etc.

In 1973 already at the request of the Board, another study of basic education in rural areas to extend the range of policy considerations to the field of informal education in which the Board took a considerable interest as being nearer to the concern for UNICEF underlined the importance of informal education (for schoolleavers', girls and children outside the school systems), UNESCO became rather uneasy about it. They were not sufficiently familiar with the subject as far as overall policy was concerned, didn't quite believe in it. We had with UNESCO some serious discussions at the time of the formulation of the study which had been prepared by Philip Coombs, the Director of the International Council of Educational Research. In its practical application of the fine policy guidelines approved, we did not have the same positive reaction from governments.

UNESCO, other agencies and our own staff, all agreed to the general ideas, but found it difficult to apply them. It did mean, though this was not one of the objectives of Dr. Coombs, to have to set up

a parallel structure for informal education which was far too cumbersome, costly and would lead to conflicts with the formal system.

It did, however, contribute valuable ideas that fertilized the whole concept of basic education. It was also considerable spade work for a later study of education submitted to the 1977 session of the Board in the Philippines at the resources available to assist developing countries with primary education. In 1979 a report was presented to the Board in Mexico on the practical aspects of the application of all these policies for UNICEF, and the respective tasks of UNICEF, UNESCO and other agencies, and the relationship to other basic services activities of UNICEF.

So one can say that the 1970's were very much taken up by the problems of education, the search for a proper role for UNICEF and a redefinition of the relationship with UNESCO which went through different crises because of changing concepts of technical assistance and the great doubts existing in developing countries on the future of education. In East Africa and Central America, there were excellent examples of how to develop and review programmes in the field of basic education where governments and educational specialists were the main partners in reviewing concrete field operations and formulating policies for the future with the agencies acting as advisers and consultants to the responsible government delegations in these exercises.

ILO/prevocational training

With ILO, we had very interesting and searching discussions on the concept of pre-vocational training and education which had been influenced by pioneer work carried out in India, also Egypt, Tunisia, Brazil and some vocational specialists in ILO, eg. Sven Grappe, etc.

Gradually the idea emerged that vocational preparation could not be treated separately for early school leavers but that of concept of preparation for life had to be included into both formal and non-formal systems of education and integrated with other subjects, sciences, manual crafts, etc. This meant to equally making use of informal systems of education and inserting appropriate elements of prevocational preparation in the formal system.

In later years, this has not been so much pursued by UNICEF HQ, which I personally regret because I still consider the adequate preparation of the child at the end of the primary school and in postprimary courses one of the tasks which UNICEF should pursue to help governments, particularly in searching and experimenting with new educational schemes and methods more adopted to the requirements of poor developing countries, this at a time when the systems of education many developing countries had inherited from their

previous colonial masters or copied from western countries simply were not suitable, too costly, and began to create tremendous problems in terms of adding to unemployment, or disaffecting young people, contributing to the migration to cities and uproot young people from the rural areas. We felt there was a need to provide more resources for experimentation, review of innovating schemes and searching for practical answers that would take account of both overall policy expectations, realistic projections and resources available.

FAO

In both the '60's and early '70's, frequent meetings were held with FAO, both relating to priority fields, e.g. applied nutrition, nutrition training, food and nutrition planning, the role of women in the field of nutrition and agriculture, the review problems of food technology, etcetera. Somehow we failed to elaborate a real system of collaboration with FAO, first FAO was far too insistent to preserve its prerogative of providing appropriate technical assistance and also wanted to be reimbursed for its assistance. It was not prepared to accept the idea of making more use of national technical resources.

The subject of nutrition did not have a very high priority in FAO, as compared to other fields. They were willing to leave the major role to WHO. We may have failed to concentrate on really substantive policy questions. Only with the changes with role and concept of the Protein Advisory Group did FAO begin to take an interest.

There were also too many policy changes in the Nutrition Division under different Directors. FAO also felt it was not worth the effort to spend a great deal of time to argue with UNICEF. We were therefore not able to initiate and maintain a meaningful dialogue with FAO that could have led to a greater harmonization of the efforts of both organizations, in spite of initiatives taken both by UNICEF and some enlightened individuals in FAO, e.g. Dr. I.F. Yrient.

Reimbursement of agencies

As I said at the beginning, it was no longer possible for us to get the specialized agencies to follow the whole process of UNICEF's participation in programme preparation, formulation of plans and review of implementation at the country level. They were not organized to follow this development, they did not have the organization on the resources and they always came back to UNICEF to pay for their technical assistance. You remember the endless discussions, year after year, for reimbursing the agencies for their technical contribution. As UNDP reimbursed the executive agencies they felt they should have the same arrangements with UNICEF. This was also one of the factors that led to the parting of ways with

FAO. We came to a compromise with UNESCO, where we reimbursed UNESCO for a number of staff, both at their Headquarters and in Paris and in the regions. WHO rather early took the courageous decision to pay for all their technical participation and a collaboration developed with UNICEF where each organization, WHO and UNICEF, was paying for the services each was providing. So there was a sharing of cost of common endeavours.

Priorities in collaboration with agencies

Out of this grew the realisation that we had to see on what priorities one had to lay the emphasis in developing a more up-to-date collaborative system. One had to see where their technical competence lay and how it could be brought to bear in both policy and programmes. This certainly was the case for critical reviews and evaluation, in terms of developing more appropriate systems in training of both the level of planning, training, research etc., and the preparation of large numbers of auxiliary and voluntary personnel in exchanging experiences amongst different countries, in identifying in broad terms fundamental weakness in all aspects of the work we had entered into with developing countries and devising more long term policies and the need to develop the structures capable of implementing such policies. There was also room to refine methods and processes for systematic planning and programme development.

A whole change in the relationship of UNICEF with the specialized agencies emerged that was a far cry from the system of an earlier period where we were a supply source for their projects. We became accepted as partner, acquired competencies of our own and led all to adjust to look to the countries as the principal partners.

UNICEF a catalyst

Charnow: Would you say that UNICEF has been, in a very real sense, a catalyst for these agencies in their thinking about and formulating policies and examining experiences which have a bearing on the well-being of children? Do you agree that this would not have occurred as much had we not been operating and taking initiatives, which while in some ways irritated them, provided a sort of dynamism for them to put some resources into clarifying where they were going in relation to what we were doing, and how could we work together?

Education/UNESCO

Egger: I would agree with you that this has been a major contribution of UNICEF. The art was perhaps not to say it, not to emphasize our new role too openly, but rather actually apply it in practice, to allow for a gradual process of development with a greater participation of the countries themselves and allow them to pave the way in this particular direction. UNESCO would never on its own have given the desirable attention to primary education had it not been for

UNICEF. You remember at the Board meeting in the Philippines it was suddenly realized that UNICEF was the second major outside resource for assistance to the development of primary school education, UNICEF followed, coming right after the World Bank. This leaves out the WFP who had large resources in terms of food, but very little in terms of influence on the improvement and orientation of primary education as such. UNESCO would not have concentrated on looking at problems relating to the preparation of young people for their life - adult life, without UNICEF's continuous prodding. While this latter development may not have led to a wide extension of programmes, the thinking that arose out of these meetings has certainly influenced ideas and concepts among the agencies and their government partners.

Nutrition/ACC Subcommittee

When difficulties were encountered in experimenting with other sources of protein than animal protein through formulations based on soya beans, cotton seeds, etc., a Protein Advisory Group was created in which UNICEF took a great interest and through Dick Heyward provided leadership. Without this there would never have been the concentration of a number of agencies on how to develop on a far larger basis, new approaches to meet the protein/calorie gap in many developing countries. This Committee became later the Sub-Committee on Nutrition of ACC which gave it a far more adequate formal basis. It examined a number of key issues in both policy, research, dissemination of technical knowledge on how to develop coordinated approaches in the field of Nutrition for government etc. It concerned itself with the nutritional needs of the very young child and its mother.

The Subcommittee was very conscious of the need to establish a platform that made it possible for many different agencies, UN, Specialized Agencies, NGO's, bilateral aid and special Research institutions to participate in the formulation of approaches acceptable to all while permitting each agency to maintain its identity in a coordinated approach.

Local expertise

The whole effort that UNICEF had made to make far greater use of local expertise - we touched upon this earlier - through the involvement of national institutions, research group, study and Training Centres, both within the countries and amongst countries.

TCDC

UNICEF has been a major pace-setter for TCDC. We did not necessarily call it like that and proclaim it from the rostrum but UNICEF certainly did it. We continued this in many effective ways, and probably at less cost than it is being developed as part of the whole range of UN technical assistance.

UNDP

I would like to highlight the relationship with UNDP where we have made great efforts to come to a closer collaboration. Not just because we are in fact a specialized agency for children but also because UNICEF saw its role as an advocate for children that wished to encourage a greater involvement of the whole of UN's very technical and development assistance. I have given a lot of attention to attempting, through regular inter-action with UNDP at both Headquarters in New York and at the country level - to get UNDP interested in certain basic policies and such a partnership with UNDP that would allow them to support certain basic themes such as Primary Health Care, Basic Education, Rural Water Supply and Sanitation, Population, Family Planning.

Rural water & sanitation

Here again UNICEF has often been a pace-setter for some of the global orientations of the UN system as a whole, through our pioneer work in fields like the rural water supply and sanitation, a subject that was then later developed in 1977 of the International Conference in Argentina.

Science & technology

In the application of science and technology, we have made some contribution through our emphasis on applied rural technology, also ANP, PHC, water supply, etc.

Early child development

We have actively supported a whole process of re-thinking the role of education with greater concentration on the development of the child, not only in relationship to the conveying of knowledge but helping to develop the faculties and qualities of each child for its own sake. In the latter period of my stay at New York we elaborated a method, that would allow UNDP, UNFPA, WFP and UNICEF to become equal partners in a common approach to programme development through a more systematic exchange of information at the country level, to associate the interested agencies with the early stages of a programme preparation, and to permit all partners in particular UNDP to focus more on key issues and also arrange for a coordinated review of the respective programmes. UNICEF led the way to make all agencies behave and feel like partners in the development of country programmes at the country level.

UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF Memo of understanding

This led, in 1979, to the signature of the famous 'Memorandum of Understanding' between UNDP, UNFPA and UNICEF, which embodied all these principles. Under the influence of its rather independent-minded and overambitious Director-General, Dr. E. Saoume, FAO was not permitted to join.

Social development: women, girls, children

UNICEF had become the crystallization point in terms of social development that concerns young children - girls and mothers, which embraces 50 per cent of the population, and has encouraged this process through the promotion of major themes, through their close relationship with other agencies and through its emphasis of coordination and cooperation at the country level. In the preparation of the World Social Situation, UNICEF equally took initiative to reflect the problems of children.

World bank

After lengthy negotiations with the World Bank, we were able to conclude a first type of understanding in fields where common interests existed and the World Bank was to exchange views on both policies and practical experiences. UNICEF could contribute to World Bank missions for reviews of economic and social development situations of developing countries.

Often the World Bank was interested in UNICEF's experience in innovating projects particularly regarding the elements relating to participation and local training. In some cases UNICEF would be responsible for certain characteristic contributions in fields under its mandate whereas the World Bank, through its loans and technical cooperation, would make its own far greater contributions. These include such fields as social aspects of peri-urban development, rural water supply and sanitation, primary health care and family planning, informal approaches to basic education, and certain aspects of area development.

Both between Washington and New York, and then in many of the countries, continuous and fruitful exchanges took place over many years. This allowed the World Bank to draw upon UNICEF's experiences, to learn from the criteria that we had developed and experimented with. It found its way in enriching the loan agreements the World Bank negotiated with governments, and this certainly has been a development of which UNICEF can be proud of. Our relationship over the years developed considerably. UNICEF in certain areas was invited to the Consortium sessions of the World Bank with selected developing countries and important donors. World Bank Missions with advantages contacted UNICEF missions in the field.

Bureau of Social Affairs

Charnow: You know it's very interesting that in this excellent analysis, that you have not really mentioned the Bureau of Social Affairs, and I think, perhaps that gives point to a question I am about to ask. The agencies on a whole were not very happy about the creation of a separate children's agency which would cut across their lines but they learned to accept this. The Bureau of Social Affairs, was, as

I recall, on the whole quite sympathetic to us. In some ways it was in advance of us in thinking about community involvement, about the whole child, about a unified social and economic approach. The question I have is why then, where theoretically we should have joined together and been allies generally the feeling in UNICEF was that they weren't all that important to us?

Egger: The answer lies probably in the fact that the Bureau of Social Affairs from the beginning was never conceived as a specialized agency type with operational tasks and capabilities. It drew its budget from the UN, it did not have much of a field organization. It was for them quite a difficult task to follow what was happening at the field level, they had also limited resources.

It may also be that we underrated the need and advantage to draw on the experience of the Bureau in fields where they had competence and simply focussed on changes of a policy nature.

Charnow: Did it not have, at one point, quite a number of social welfare advisors financed under technical assistance, in part, sometimes by us, and so on?

Egger: That is true, however the social welfare advisors represented concepts in social welfare that derived or took their pace from ideas and options more adapted to conditions in the industrial world, or in more advanced developing countries. Often there was relatively little relationship with conditions, outlook and thinking characteristic of the poorer countries.

Increasingly they were hampered by lack of resources as the consensus that developed in formulating the UNDP country programme favoured other priorities in technical assistance and we gave relatively low priority to technical assistance in the field of social welfare.

To a certain extent, it had also to do with the staff of the Bureau of Social Affairs and their type of techniques, social welfare advisors dealing with marginal or minority issues.

There were of course fine exceptions, if you think of Julia Henderson, Aida Gindy and others such as Kurt Jansen, adviser on handicapped persons and others. In the field of the development of social services, in community development, our own staff in the field and their national partners had more experience and developed more adapted types of concepts to meet the social needs and demands of the communities.

UNICEF was engaged in a vast enterprise on many fronts where we were moving ahead, and tried to work out some of the problems with the aid of resources and experiences available in many countries. We embraced each other heartily at inter-Secretariat meetings but often

went our own way when it came to the actual field work. It doesn't mean that we were always on the right path, or always received the proper type of advice.

For instance in community development or working with communities, UNICEF began to develop its own approach, not only encouraging consultation with communities, but encouraging governments to grant communities a responsible part in the preparation of projects in social development. We had to make sure that this was in line with government policy and that we took account of national sensitivities, so we often followed a more pragmatic approach of consultation, of determining their eventual participation and find the appropriate form for it, often suggesting to experiment, to actually demonstrate what we meant and allow certain experiences to do far more convincing than high level advice and theoretical concepts. This often went over the capability of understanding of those those concerned in the UN Department of Social Affairs. A later head of the Bureau Helva Sipila was far more concerned with the first women's conference in Mexico and had far less understanding and realization of the type of work at the country level.

So it is true that in the history of UNICEF this has been a somewhat difficult relationship. Many staff members felt that the Bureau of Social Affairs was not making an effective contribution at the country level. It doesn't mean to say that weren't some people in the Bureau that moved ahead and that it was a pleasure to work with, but the Bureau itself and later the Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs was a somewhat slow moving bureaucratic machine.

Charnow: In discussing this issue with Julia Henderson, one of the things that seemed to emerge was that certainly in some countries they had their impact along their lines and we had our impact along our lines. And these two influences came together, at the country level rather than at the international level.

Egger: I think this is true in some cases, but I would say these were rather the exceptions to the rule.

Charnow: However they got into questions like legislative standards, special problems and so on, questions which we now seem to be moving toward.

Relations with bilateral aid

Let me ask you about our influence with bilateral aid agencies.

Egger: This was a very interesting evolution where we increasingly came to realize that while it was, of course, important to make the best possible use of our own necessarily limited resources there was a need in trying to mobilize far greater support from many donor

countries, not only in terms of resources but also to enlist their help in support of policies but benefit children, to also encourage the translation of these policies into programmes where they could utilize their often greater resources in addition to our own.

We began to develop a policy to discuss first with bilateral agencies concepts, broad objectives, and our own experiences in order to see where there was a consensus and in which countries and fields this could be applied. We began to initiate with some of the larger bilateral agencies a mutual exchange of experience, of learning from both achievements and failures, to analyse the relationship with governments.

There was a system with USAID, where programmes that came to HQ at a preparatory stage, were automatically sent over to USAID in Washington for vetting and review. I was quite adamant that this was not a correct practice, that we had to try to formulate our own views as to the type and content of programmes we were going to submit to the members of the Executive Board. We were quite prepared to discuss them once we'd reached a stage where we had agreed to the outline, general orientation, criteria for aid, level of resources, etc. But we had to be ready to discuss our proposals not with the US but with other interested countries. So we tried to establish regular contacts with agencies like SIDA in Sweden, with the German bilateral aid -the Ministry of Economic and Technical Cooperation - with the Swiss and Dutch bilateral aid. With the French bilateral aid it was more slow to develop, but gradually opened up.

We also initiated the first contact with EEC through exchanges, with their development fund that was at that time concerned largely or concerned with EEC aid to the previously dependent territories and colonies in Africa, the Caribbean and some in Asia. We took the line not only to obtain more support for UNICEF but to encourage governments, through their bilateral aid, to take a greater interest in general in support of fields related to growth and development of the young child, mothers, etcetera, that is to say the critical aspect of the development of children.

After pursuing contacts at the working level we increasingly tried to influence these bilateral agencies at the top level. This was on the whole much appreciated although we probably did not go far enough in terms of not only discussing policies but to develop forms of cooperation to translate these policies in concrete programmes. We should have invited representatives of bilateral sources to take part in the process of preparation and formulation of programmes. We should from the beginning have advocated joint programmes and allowed bilateral agencies to provide a technical assistance element of their own. I understand UNICEF is moving now in this direction, though perhaps not yet sufficiently.

Noted projects represent the end of process of joint planning and funding and not just a platform of advocacy and fundraising. We could work more effectively with receiving government and bilateral aid, where there is a willingness and readiness to engage in such a process. This is, of course, not possible everywhere, but it is essential for bilateral aid agencies to become partners, to give them also recognition and look upon them as important members that are making an essential contribution not only in financial terms but also with regard to to substance, to quality, to the general orientation of a programme.

Charnow: Are you saying, if I hear you correctly, that while we have made contacts, somewhat parallel to the lines we have made with the specialized agencies, that we haven't done it systematically enough and regularly enough as perhaps we should?

Egger: Yes, I would make this observation at least during the period that I was in charge of programme development. This may have been corrected and improved since. There's still room for improvement to develop the kind of full partnership with bilateral aid. We must really work out a system collaboration that involves them at the beginning of a process and not at the end.

Charnow: This would be the responsibility, would you say, primarily of the Deputy Executive Director in charge of programmes?

Egger: Yes, but it will, of course, require a close contact collaboration between the respective Deputy Executive Directors of Programmes and External Relations. It should involve Programme Division and the Programme Funding Unit to work very closely together both for raising the level of resources and establishing a closer involvement of bilateral donors, once a certain interest has been declared by a bilateral agency in a given field of activity of concern to both.

Planning

Charnow: Well, Charles, there are other aspects of your role as Deputy Executive Director, would you like to go into some of them?

Egger: The concept of planning used for many years to be vested in the post of the Assistant Executive Director in charge of Planning. It then gradually absorbed and made part of programme and planning. This was an important step forward, in that it assured that the planning concept was to become part and parcel of the whole process of development of programmes. It concerned both Headquarters in terms of developing jointly concept and approaches, incorporating corrections based on field experiences, in working out guidelines for the field. It was equally if not more appropriate at the regional and in particular at the country levels as part of a joint exercise with governments in programme planning.

The policy emerged that there should be a planning officer in each region. At least one programme officer that had some experience and some understanding in the field of planning should equally be stationed in each of the larger countries. I certainly don't think we reached the ultimate level in terms of the effectiveness and comprehensiveness of the approach, but it did lay down the principle that planning and programming review was part and parcel of the same process that each stage had to be seen together. Methods were beginning to be developed and refined. We certainly learned a great deal and adhered to the principle of great mutual penetration and cross-fertilization between planning and programming. The methodology of proper programme preparation, with the help of our planning colleagues became increasingly more refined.

Reviews & evaluations

We made first attempts to come to grips with the concept of systematic reviews and evaluations, which will remain in the difficult field of social development. The Board expressed itself on it, on numerous occasions, probably not always with the required understanding of the nature of review and evaluation, probably also not giving due attention to what was being presented to them. We may not always have made a sufficiently good case for what we had done in advancing the principle of systematic reviews and in particular how it had been developed in the field and made use of proper programme preparation and influenced the orientation of successive plans of operations.

Knowledge networks/centres

Another positive element was the creation of the idea of knowledge centres and networks. In essence it embodied the realisation that all the wisdom and knowledge could not necessarily always come from Headquarters, that you had to involve members of the organization in the field at different levels. It also had to go beyond the organization. For certain broader themes there was need to develop a more systematic approach, to get people together that had real professional experience in a given field, to encourage the exchange of ideas and field experiences, to work together on reviews of broad programme approaches, and try to develop recommendations for how such developments were to be conceived in the future. Positive contributions have come from the systematic reviews of certain major fields of activities undertaken in collaboration with some of the specialized agencies and outside consultants. This has been touched upon earlier.

UNICEF specialized expertise

Another more specialized aspect was the need to develop the technical competencies existing at Headquarters at other levels. This took place in the field of Rural Water Supplies and Sanitation

both at Headquarters and in the regions and through the strengthening of technical groups and a large number of field personnel in individual projects. Expertise was established in applied food and general technology.

Urban activities

In terms of the social aspects of periurban and slum. The experience in collaborating with the Centre for Urban Development at UN Headquarters taught us that we should not look towards an outside Centre but establish our own competence within UNICEF. Through people like Tony Kennedy, and then John Donahue, UNICEF developed increasingly a competence and understanding of how to meet the difficult problems of children and mothers in peri-urban and slum areas. This was one of the most interesting and positive aspects that developed out of this and concerned with urban development and through trial and errors we learned a great deal that could be applied at a later stage.

Women's activities

With regard to women's programmes, we had to rely at the beginning largely on the Bureau of Social Affairs. There was an obvious need to have capable and experienced women both at Headquarters as well as in the regions concerned with advocacy for the enhancement of the role of women in development, in preparing the ground for it in the countries and bring this component more into our regular programmes with MCH and family planning, with aspects of women's work relating to their role as producer, and members of communities that can exercise influence in social concepts.

During Mr. Labouisse's tenure UNICEF started to make far greater use of women's advisers with experience in developing countries both at Headquarters and at the Field. Here is a tribute I wish to make to Titi Memet, who has been the pathfinder in this somewhat not sufficiently explored field for UNICEF. Since we have been able to obtain the cooperation of competent women in almost every region we also advocated the idea that every office must have at least one woman programme officer not limited to women's activities but to bring to bear her experience and outlook to our general programming. People like Marta Mauras in Latin America, Duttode Bedran in the Middle East, Maire Torre N. Gour in West Africa, Mis Abrahams, Rahmannau in India, etc. have all been pioneers in their respective fields.

Statistic advisers

Statistical advisers were also assigned to the regions without clearcut terms of reference. As our policy became more refined some of them developed in a very positive way and have helped to create a greater understanding for the collection, interpretation and use of

social and economic data so necessary for establishing a base for programming. It was obviously not sufficient. Inspector M. Bertrand in his report on programme development had a lot to say about it but the elements were all there and needed to be refined and brought more closely into the orbit of country programming.

Specialists & generalists

During my time already there were a number of focal points of real technical competencies with which we worked rather closely and brought into the general framework of programming and planning. It may not always have been sufficiently structured. We did not always have in all fields the best people. We had to develop a language of understanding between specialists and general programmes. We had to learn the knowledge of technical resources all over the world, but we certainly moved ahead, made these advisers available to country offices.

We also utilized the special advisers that were in New York as liaison officers of the various agencies -- WHO, FAO, UNESCO and ILO -- to utilize them in their respective fields of competence. Each of them represented a knowledge source, not only to liase with their respective agencies but also to bring their own experience and understanding to our discussions on programmes at HQ as well as encourage their active participation in programme planning meetings in the field under our more decentralized approach.

Weakness in Programme Division

We can ask what were the weaknesses and failings in this planning and programming approach? One major element was that the structure of Programme Division did not keep pace with the enlargement of its role, the greater comprehensiveness of its task, with the whole process of decentralization of authority etc. At the level of the heads of the geographic sections, as well as amongst my more immediate collaborators, we did not always have the people with the quality, experience and personality that could take part in a responsible way in participating in the field activities, in the feedback and retrieval system that was so essential.

I certainly did not give enough attention to the need of building up a capable Programme Division in terms of budget, personnel, that was capable of coping with its enlarged tasks. There was need to give more attention to the proper coordination between programming, planning, the various technical services at HQ, the participation in discussions with the agencies, the give and take with all the other divisions, Supply, Administration, Information, at Headquarters, who often felt neglected. There was simply too much to be dealt with with the staff that I had, and the way it was organized.

I also spent too much time myself on visits to the field and it became almost an obsession to be personally present on many occasions at Regional meetings, programme reviews etc. The Division should have been given more time and more attention to essential household matters. I must say that I did not realize that sufficiently and did not fight enough for it.

Charnow: Wasn't it during your period that we did bring in the policy of rotation so that the people at the Programme Desk had some field experience whereas before then we had people who had never been out to the field?

Egger: I was not the only one to bring this into effect, but certainly we tried to do that as the field work grew to become harder, more demanding, life was also not always secure, there were the problems of education for the children. A system of more regular rotation had to be introduced in the Programme Division certainly, in other units and at HQ as well, and become accepted and a regular pattern developed.

With the tremendous enlargement of the scope of activities of Programme Division, with the ongoing process of decentralization, the manifold relationship with the specialized agencies etc., we may have insufficiently concentrated on selecting major themes and develop them as a major policy in collaboration with the colleagues of Headquarters.

Often Programme Division was far ahead in developing ideas of its own and discussed them with the field before it was given a real and thorough examination at HQ and an opportunity for others to participate.

There was a growing feeling, and some of my colleagues certainly shared this, that Programme Division did not allow other Divisions to play their role. This was certainly was the case of Supply Division, and to some extent Information, Administration and Personnel.

This should have been taken up earlier on a more comprehensive basis to allow a greater sharing of experiences to encourage analysis from different points of view of the other units so as to develop at HQ a coordinated approach on which the Executive Director could take a final decision.

This also related to visits to the field, and at one time I was in danger to become the main travelling representative from HQ, with absences of five to six months per year. This was certainly too much for one man. The proper feedback and exploitation of these visits did suffer. Only later the regular briefing for people that went out to the field were organized and visits of our field colleagues made profitable for HQ as a whole.

I realise now that it was unhealthy that Programme Division was often so far ahead of the others and did not take the time to encourage a process of participation and sharing. I also admit that far greater attention to the necessary improvement of organization and management style would have made the task more manageable and probably easier. For this proper budget preparations and the need to reserve time and willpower to fight through the battles for the building up of the accessory resources that only much later were made available on an unprecedented scale., the briefing at Headquarters to bring in also more regularly people from the field.
