

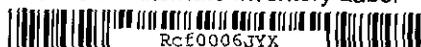
Chron Ref: CF/NYH/OSEB/HST/1995-101
File Sub: CF/HST/INT/MEA-001/M

Interview with Mr. Tony Meager

Conducted by
Don Allen
February 1, 1983



UNICEF Alternate Inventory Label



Ref0006JYX

Item # **CF/RAD/USAA/DB01/2001-00142**

ExR/Code: **CF/HST/INT/MEA-001/M**

Interview Tony Meager by Donald Allen: Pre-UNICEF Work; R
Date Label Printed 4/25/2001

Cover + 28 pp + Øb

Chron Ref: CF/NYH/0SEB/3995-101

File Sub: CF/HST/INT/MEA-001/M

0421Q ... 3 May 1984

Interview with Mr. Tony Meager*
Conducted by Don Allen in Nairobi, Kenya
February 1, 1983

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<u>Page</u>
Pre-UNICEF experience	1
Recruitment into UNICEF	1
UNICEF assignments	3
Headquarters	3
New Delhi, Bangkok	4
Guatemala	5
Bangkok	5
Phillipines	5
East Africa/Uganda	5
Internal audit; relation to evaluation	8
Supply logistics	9
Yaws	10
TB	11
Malaria	11
Trachoma	12
Drugs	13
Transport	14
P.R. & success stories	14
Sam Keeny, early Asia operation	15
The supply emphasis	16
Regional country office relationships: SIAR	17
Travel in the field	17
Use of JPO's & volunteers	19
NGO's	19
Pate, Heyward	20
Satisfactions of field representatives	21
Effect on family life	22
Philippines science education	22
Unused equipment	23
Caliber of UNICEF staff	23
PHC	25
Importance	25
Rural/urban differences	26

*Tony Meager began working with UNICEF in September 1949 as an Assistant Programme Officer on the Asia Desk at New York Headquarters. In February 1951 he was transferred to New Delhi and from there to the Asia Regional Office in Bangkok in September of that year. He remained as Programme Officer until May 1958 when he was transferred to the Area office for the Middle East in Beirut. In the spring of 1961 he assumed responsibility as Deputy Area Officer in Guatemala for Central America and Panama and remained there until August 1963 when he returned to Bangkok as Deputy Regional Director for a period of four years and then was appointed Representative to the Philippines and Pacific Island Territories. In June 1972 he was transferred to the East Africa Regional Office in Uganda as Deputy Regional Director and was retired in February 1974. For the next nine years he served as a consultant, primarily for the Internal Audit Service, carrying out various short term assignments and reviews in many countries. Before joining UNICEF he had worked with the Quakers (Society of Friends) in England, Germany, China, India and the USA.

100-20-206

0421Q ... 3 May 1984

Interview with Mr. Tony Meager
Conducted by Don Allen in Nairobi, Kenya
February 1, 1983

Pre-UNICEF experience

Allen: Following is a list of questions. Here I would just ask you to give your date and place of birth.

Meager: The date is January 2, 1914 and the place is North London, England.

Allen: And then you followed your education to what level.

Meager: I left at high school level in order to support my family on the death of my father.

Allen: And that was in England?

Meager: Yes that was in England-1932.

Allen: And then you went into what line of work?

Meager: I worked with a firm of accountants in the City of London.

Allen: And how did this lead you in the direction of an international career?

Meager: Well, I had for sometime been very interested in religion and philosophy and I was introduced by a very good friend who was concerned about the problems of peace and war and strife and violence to a book by Aldous Huxley which is now no longer in print. It was called "Ends and Means". When the war came, I registered as a conscientious objector and worked for 3 1/2 years in Southern England as an agricultural labourer. When it was possible, I joined the Friends Ambulance Unit - what made it possible was that the Unit became in a position of being able to pay some kind of an allowance to dependents, and my mother was dependent on me. I spent about a year as a cook in a big London hospital in the east end of London during the bombing of the area. Then I went to Germany in 1945 just before Christmas for four or five months. I went with the Friends Ambulance Unit and came back to England briefly, then out to China where I spent from middle of 1946 to the middle of 1948 working in China with an agency called the Honan International Relief Committee. And it was there that I met a Canadian who has now been with UNICEF for many many years. His name is Newton Rowell Bowles. I then went to the US and worked in Philadelphia with the American Friends Service Committee and met my wife.

Recruitment into UNICEF

It was on my honeymoon in 1949 when I had a call from Newton who suggested that I should stop by on my way to Philadelphia and look

him up at the United Nations where he had just joined a fairly new organisation called UNICEF.

Allen: That was in what year?

Meager: That was in 1949.

Allen: Were you and your family Quakers?

Meager: No, but we both had attended meetings in various parts of the world and we had many Quaker friends.

Allen: It seems that there are a quite a few Quakers in UNICEF starting with Maurice Pate.

Meager: I am not sure that he was a Quaker, he was much motivated by Herbert Hoover, who was a Quaker. They worked together in the First World War.

Allen: Newton Bowles is a Quaker?

Meager: No.

Allen: He was just working for the Friends?

Meager: He was not working for the Friends. When we met in China, he was working for UNRRA. Another person who had worked with UNICEF and whose place I took in September in 1949 and who did work for the Friends was John Saunders. John Saunders was the assistant to Newton Bowles in 1949 on the Asia desk, and before that had worked with the Friends and I knew him in China when he was working with UNRRA. I think John Saunders became best known to UNICEF people in his role as UNICEF Representative in Kampuchea.

Allen: So your path to UNICEF came in a way through an attitude to war and violence which led you into a conscientious objection and then found opportunities for a career through that channel of the Friends which brought you to Germany and eventually to China.

Meager: Yes.

Allen: Where you made friends such as Newton Bowles, Brian Jones also.

Meager: Yes. Alan McBain also.

Allen: Also Ken Grant, and through that connection you were invited to look into UNICEF by Newton Bowles in 1949 by which time UNICEF had been going for three years.

Meager: Yes.

Allen: Were you immediately offered a job?

Meager: Yes, and I went back to Philadelphia and finished up my work there where I was responsible for Quaker assistance in India and

Pakistan. More seriously, I took my wife away from the Friends work. She was the officer responsible for Hungary, Italy and Austria.

Allen: There were no husband and wife team in UNICEF headquarters.

UNICEF assignments

Meager: No. There was a husband and wife team at the American Friends Service Committee. When I left they indicated they did not mind my going but they were not so happy about my marrying one of their most competent officers and then taking her away. So she stayed with the Friends and worked with the Quaker House at 52nd Street down by the river, and so continued her association with Friends. This continued after we had left Headquarters, which I joined in September 1949. We spent about 15 months at UNICEF Headquarters and went to India in early 1951.

Allen: What was your title when you were hired?

Headquarters

Meager: I was an Assistant Programme Officer I think, the desk officer with Newton Bowles and the desk at that time covered Asia which included both the Regional office in Bangkok and what was then the Country Office in India.

Allen: So by late 1949, UNICEF had progressed from Europe and established an office in Bangkok and India, and somewhere in the history of this project the dates of opening of those offices would probably emerge. We seem to find some confusion just when and where UNICEF made its moves into the Third World.

Meager: I think you have got them fairly well defined. Of course my recent responsibility has been drafting the history of UNICEF in East Africa.

Allen: Anyway you were hired because of your experience in China which was principally distribution of relief food, drugs and things.

Meager: Yes. Distribution and administration of relief work on a provincial basis in Central China.

Allen: Was your chartered accountant work useful in this?

Meager: No.

Allen: Your chartered accountant work has not assisted you in any way over the years?

Meager: No. Neither, in a sense, did my work with the rather misnamed Friends Ambulance Unit, as I never drove an ambulance either. But, the experience of working in an overseas situation as we had in Central China stood me in good stead at least in appreciating how one part of the world lived.

Allen: Was it logistics, was it moving things?

Meager: Yes, mainly moving and also I started off in Shanghai clearing supplies at the Port of Shanghai for going up country. The experience at Headquarters was of an administrative kind enabling me in that 15 months to understand what UNICEF was all about.

Allen: What was your rank at that time?

Meager: I think it was Assistant Programme Officer.

Allen: In those days?

New Delhi, Bangkok

Meager: Yes both at Headquarters and then in India. In fact I was interviewed first in 1950 by Mr. Sam Keeny, the Regional Director at that time in Bangkok, who asked me if I would like to work at the Regional Office in the role of Programme Officer. I jumped at the opportunity of going to work closer to the scene of operations. En route we stopped off in New Delhi for what was to be two days and then found, while I was filling in the form at the airport regarding how long I would be in India, that I should put "indefinite". I was told I was being transferred to India. By this time our effects were on the way to Bangkok. We had about six months in India and got to Bangkok just about the time they were ready to transfer our effects back to Calcutta and New Delhi. We caught up with them after living twenty months out of suitcases. We had seven and one-half years in the Regional Office in Thailand, which then covered all of Asia from Pakistan in the west to Korea in the east.

Allen: Just to get the chronology straight again. In 1949, you were how old then, when you joined UNICEF?

Meager: 35 years.

Allen: So you joined UNICEF at 35 in Headquarters and Headquarters then were in the Secretariat Building?

Meager: It was in the building at the UN site on 42nd Street, which is now the Library. It was then Port of New York Authority Building and we moved in when they moved out, so that UNICEF was there, on the site, when the Secretariat Building was being constructed in 1949-1950.

Allen: Then you were what rank, a P-2 or what?

Meager: I know when I went to Bangkok in 1951 I was a P-3 and stayed at that grade for a long time.

Allen: After how many months in New York did you go to India?

Meager: 15 months.

Allen: 15 months in New York and then to India.

Meager: In February 1951 for six months and then to Bangkok for seven and a half years.

Allen: And you stayed in Bangkok from ...?

Meager: End of 1951 to end of 1958 or early 1959 at which time I was transferred to Lebanon to what was an Area Office in Beirut and stayed there for two years and left simply because it was decided to close that office.

Allen: You left in 1961?

Guatemala

Meager: Yes, in 1961 and went to Guatemala and I was there two and a half years. I was Deputy to the Area Director, Alice Shaffer and we covered the seven countries of Central America which were Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, Costa Rica, Panama, Nicaragua and British Honduras (Belize). I travelled frequently because we did not have any liaison officers at that time. There was no representation in those countries.

Allen: So that takes us up to 1964, or 1965, you were Deputy to the Area Representative then, and then what?

Bangkok

Meager: I was then transferred back to Bangkok at the request of the Regional Director, who was then Brian Jones. Mr. Keeny had retired and started a new career with the Population Council in Taiwan. I went back to Bangkok as the Deputy Regional Director to Brian Jones and stayed there for another four years, so we were there in all eleven and a half years.

Phillipines

In mid 1967, I went to the Philippines and stayed five years as UNICEF Representative, which was a P-5 grade and covered not only the Philippines, which was a fascinating job. But all the South Sea Islands including Samoa, Tonga, the Solomon Islands, Papua New Guinea, New Caledonia, Gilbert Islands, Fiji and others were very fascinating areas of the South Seas which I did not get to visit more than twice in the five years because it was regarded as extremely expensive and I think in those years people did not travel nearly as much as they do now.

I found the Philippines a very pleasant place and the people extremely simpatico, particularly in the countryside.

East Africa/Uganda

Then in 1972 Brian Jones, who had been transferred to Uganda as a Regional Director for East Africa asked me if I would join him as Deputy Regional Director for this region where we are sitting now. I managed to arrive just at the most inopportune moment in June

1972. Inopportune in the sense, that very shortly thereafter, President Idi Amin decided that all of the Asians should leave Uganda . That undermined the UNICEF Regional Office since senior local staff were Asians not by choice but because we were at that point unable to find really competent non Asians in Uganda and if one was found they were not available for one reason or the other. I arrived as I said in June 1972. In November 1972 I moved personally to Kenya. As Deputy Regional Director I covered not only that job but also acted as Programme Officer for Uganda and Kenya and I proposed that I move myself to Kenya and establish the Regional Office there. We did so without telling the Government because we knew that they would not like it. We outposted various programme officers to me from Uganda and the Regional Director maintained his office in Uganda based on the fiction that wherever the Regional Director was that was where the regional office was although in point of fact he was almost constantly on travel in the region.

Allen: Did the Ugandan Government at anytime make any pointed enquiries?

Meager: Not really, I think that the Government of Uganda at that time had small credibility in the international world and nobody took it too seriously. They did object to the transfer of two or three regional programmes supported by FAO and UNESCO which covered several countries in East Africa notably they community of Tanzania, Uganda and Kenya. Moving the Regional UNICEF office for security reasons and lack of competent staff from Uganda to another part of the East African Community was taken rather badly by the Ugandan Government and interpreted as a lack of confidence in the Government, which was true.

Allen: Did Idi Amin himself ever get involved in this?

Meager: No. I don't think so, the protest went through the Ugandan Foreign Ministry and representation at UN Headquarters.

Allen: Did Amin have any particular attitude toward the United Nations, do you recall?

Meager: Yes. I had an interesting encounter with Robert Gardner, Executive Director of the ECA. He was from Ghana, and a very impressive man. He stayed with Brian Jones in an apartment in Kampala and he had an assignment from the UN Secretary General to meet quietly with President Amin and tell him that the Secretary General was very disturbed by the rumour that Amin's Government intended to take Asians -- that those Asians who remained after November 1972 would be taken to isolated places in the country, in fact to health centres which were not in operation because the Government did not have any money for equipment and personnel, and there they would be forced to live off the soil. As most of them were shopkeepers and small entrepreneurs it would be considerable hardship. Robert Gardner played his role very coolly and with a low profile, he did not even attempt to approach President Amin on the grounds that Amin knew he was in Kampala. He got a call from the President's office that Amin would like to see him after two or three days.

Amin lectured him about the failings of the UN and the Economic Commission in a rather irrational way, Gardner thought, and then presented him with a letter to the Secretary General which was sealed and Gardner took this to the ECA headquarters in Addis Abba and sent it to the Secretary General. It contained a tirade about the Israelis saying in one part that Hitler was the best thing that ever happen to the Jews and it was a pity he wasn't more successful. So in that sense Gardner was somewhat duped and a messenger for a totally irrational and very unpleasant letter to the Secretary General. The letter was widely published. I don't know if that throws any light on your question, regarding our contacts with President Amin!

Allen: You were in Nairobi at that time and in fact our Regional Office was getting established there?

Meager: Yes and it was established by my move in early November at the tail end of the exodus of the Asians.

Allen: Was this made formal at some point, vis-a-vis the Ugandan Government?

Meager: It was formalized in January 1973 when the Regional Director himself moved to the newly established office. At that time the regional office had under its surveillance some 17 or 18 countries and in fact it would have made good sense for the regional office to have been in Nairobi in the first place since in order to get to two thirds of the countries from Uganda you had to come to Nairobi to catch a plane from there. The reason it was not established in Nairobi initially was that in 1962 Uganda was an independent country. This was about a year before Kenya so that it was established in Uganda for that reason.

Allen: At that time I believe that Uganda had a high reputation for its university, its public health, its schools, so it may have been some strength to have it located in Kampala at one time. Uganda I think was the intellectual capital of the East African community.

Meager. Yes it was the hub and then there were associated universities in Nairobi and Dar-es-Salaam but it is true that it was regarded as the sort of mother hen.

Allen: So it must have been somewhat uncomfortable for the Regional Director to be out on a limb while the activities were centered in Nairobi. How did he manage that, did he travel a lot?

Meager: Yes. He felt it was wise to travel in the region and there was always a lot for him to do and I sort of carried the burden of the region as Deputy when he was travelling. Then I stayed on until January or February 1974 when I retired, a few weeks after my sixtieth birthday and went off to live and forget about UNICEF in Spain.

Allen: Here we are in 1983 and far from forgetting UNICEF. I imagine this may go on for quite a while. You have been great help to this office.

Internal Audit; relation to evaluation

Meager: I would like to add a little bit about my role since I left UNICEF. One thing I found of the greatest interest and greatest stimulant and satisfaction about my work with UNICEF was to be in the field and unfortunately and in retrospect I really did not do a lot of that when I was in Asia. In the first place the Regional Director, Sam Keeny, did all the travelling even to the exclusion of his Deputy, Brian Jones. When Brian Jones in turn became Regional Director he tended to take over 90 percent of the travelling and I stayed home and took care of the store.

When I retired from Nairobi I was asked to join the Internal Audit Service because in 1974 this service was given the additional responsibility of auditing not only the finances of the Organization at the various offices but told to take a look at where most of our money had gone. This was not in administration and finance, of course, but in programmes. They did not have anybody on the staff of the internal audit service with the programming experience to do this, so I was asked if I would like to take a shot at it, and to take with me a regular auditor so that we could work together. I did that and the first assignment was in India. We reviewed a science education programme which had been assisted for twelve years and had taken a very large amount of money. It was a very interesting experience and the person who accompanied me was a new auditor, Johanna Strieck. She always referred to it as one of the most exciting experiences she had in UNICEF, the important thing was to go to the end of the line and visit the teacher training institutions, and the various schools. I think we saw about three quarters of the programme. A lot of travelling. In fact I went back twice in order to follow up on the recommendations which I had made and to see they were carried out by the government. I am happy to say they were.

Allen: This was all in India?

Meager: Yes in India.

Allen: What is the difference between and internal audit and what we call evaluation?

Meager: I think it is a matter of semantics, I think we were advised by Mr. Heyward that what the Internal Audit Section should be doing was making a review of the programme and the review was carried out perhaps on a simplistic basis. I am sure that professional planners and evaluators would say that was the case. What we did was to take the plan of operations and the plans of action and just go through the targets and follow it, mainly at the point of delivery of assistance to see what had happened.

Allen: What sort of evolution took place in the project after the review was all over?

Meager: I would say ideally, that changes should take place after the second or third year. By June the project should have taken root. In the case of the science education programme it had been going a

very long time, it was a very extensive project operated in all the states of India and a review had not taken place soon enough.

Allen: Was there no regularised systematic evaluation built into programming? So this had to be done by an internal audit team?

Meager: There was, I would say it was implemented rather from a desk rather than from going to the end of the line and seeing exactly what was happening.

Allen: Was this done selectively or was it done for all programmes, the internal auditing?

Meager: It was done selectively.

Allen: You might say that this was Mr. Heyward's way of checking up on the office evaluation?

Meager: Yes, I think that is one way of putting it.

Allen: Perhaps I shouldn't say Mr. Heyward's way, but I think that Mr. Heyward was such a towering figure in that area that perhaps you think he instituted this procedure?

Meager: Yes. I think he certainly did. It was at the request of the Board, but I think the initiative came from Mr. Heyward.

Allen: Now that we hear so much about monitoring and evaluation, do you think that we can get along without having the internal audit responsible or is this always a useful check on any operation?

Meager: I think it supplements on what is being done as a normal programme routine. I am hesitant on being too emphatic about this but still have a strong feeling that the situation that obtained in the past and I am talking about when I was doing this kind of internal audit on the programming side, that insufficient time was spent by the programme officers in the field because of other demands on their time.

Allen: Insufficient time on evaluation?

Supply logistics

Meager: Yes on evaluation and monitoring on simply seeing that supplies and funds were getting to the right place. I went to one office where the man responsible for the supply officers, the man responsible for seeing supplies released, and properly distributed had never been to the port warehouses. In fact he couldn't find them very easily. The office had been open for twenty-five years and he had been there for the major part of that time. He simply moved papers from one tray to another and followed up with the government until he got the out turn documentation which Headquarters wanted. When we sat down to discuss this and I asked him to explain to me step by step what happened from the point of the ship arriving to supplies reaching the village, he was basically unable to do so

except from a theoretical point of view. So we went to the port and followed up step by step by step. Whether you call that monitoring or evaluation, I don't know but it could certainly be called a review of the implementation of the programme from the supply side.

Allen: But then the responsibility for the delivery that takes place from your end to the government and the government getting the supplies to a village or teachers training institute in the province is not in UNICEF's hands but the Government's.

Meager: No, but the UNICEF programme officer or country representative has a responsibility to see that the supplies that were provided get to the point to which they were supposed to go.

Allen: In your experience would you not agree that it often takes a hell of a long time for something that is identified as a need to be ordered in Copenhagen or wherever delivered to Calcutta, turned over to a ministry and then finally shipped from the ministry to the ultimate place where the supplies are to be installed. That sometimes takes years, doesn't it?

Meager: I think that it depends on the type of supply. This is one reason why the Copenhagen warehouse was developed. We can now take things off the shelf instead of having to buy them individually. I would say that nine months is a reasonable time.

Allen: To the ultimate user, the person?

Yaws

Meager: Yes. I think nine to twelve months is reasonable. Once in a massive yaws Campaign in Indonesia we established a supply line which had the longest time lapse I ever knew. We would raise a callforward of say, a million vials of pencillin on a staggered basic of every two months, eighteen months ahead of time. That meant it had to be shipped from the point of procurement which was then Europe, to various ports in Indonesia and from there it went by truck to the town and from the town to the village where it met up with the yaws control teams and to my knowledge we had a very good oversight of that programme. The supply line was never broken.

Allen: Did UNICEF have control over the trucking operations, for example?

Meager: No, but the Indonesians were extremely well organised down to the village level, and they had an outstanding Indonesian director of the programme, Dr. Kodijat, I think his name was. It was a very successful programme in the sense that yaws was eliminated from Indonesia as it was from Thailand. Danny Kaye came to Thailand on a UNICEF mission and had his photograph taken with a little boy with these very unpleasant lesions on his body. These are treated by pencillin and can be cured very simply. Six years later Danny Kaye came back and they tried to find a case of yaws for him to be photographed with and they couldn't find one.

Allen: What year was that?

Meager: I think it must have been 1965.

Allen: Then yaws was eliminated in a period of how many years?

Meager: About five or six years.

Allen: Terrific.

Meager: It was a success story in Indonesia and in Thailand.

Allen: What was the magnitude of the problem when you started?

Meager: It was so bad that everybody was given treatment. They did not attempt to identify cases, everybody was injected with pencillin, 100 percent of the population and it was so well organized in Indonesia that when the village chief said that everybody was to be available tomorrow when the yaws team came they were there, including sick people who were carried out of their huts and laid out on the village square to get their injections. I travelled with one of the teams in the North of Thailand, and what struck me at the time was the enthusiasm of the people. The nurses who were young men were easily trained.

It was not complicated, the only complicated thing was the supply of penicillin, keeping the vehicles in operation and making sure that the nurses got their pay at the right time. The pay of the medical assistants, who were mainly in their late teens or early twenties was a dollar a day and they lived in the temples in the villages where they also carried out the injections.

Allen: There are diseases today that one might think within the reaches of that kind of thing, glaucoma in certain areas, polio in certain areas, perhaps leprosy. The big push that was made in the yaws campaign or in the smallpox campaign had very satisfying and long lasting results. Why do you think we don't gang up on problems like that in the same way as before.

TB

Meager: Well, there are different answers to different problems. We were not successful in BCG vaccination and tuberculosis is still a very serious threat in the developing world and the developed world. Even in the States there is a recurrence of tuberculosis.

Malaria

I think that these campaigns, for example malaria and yaws, depends mainly on the administration. In the case of malaria you have got to have the sprayers, the DDT or Dieldrin or whatever you are using and vehicles and the spray teams and the back up of spare parts for the vehicles all there at the right time. A constant flow which is not easily achieved in a developing country, especially if the communications are bad and you have the added complication, of course, that people go for months unpaid and they drop out of the organization altogether. So I think that largely it is an

administration problem. A further complication in the case of malaria was that certain types of mosquitoes became resistant to the insecticide being used.

Allen: When you were in Beirut were you involved in the Jordan Valley malaria eradication programme?

Meager: No, that was before my time.

Allen: That was quite successful in wiping malaria out of the Jordan River Valley. There seems to be no malaria in Jordan and Israel now.

Meager: When I was in Central America all of the countries were being assisted by WHO and UNICEF in their anti-malarial or what they called malaria eradication campaigns which had to be changed back to their original wording of malaria control programmes. There was almost success in some places. I remember in Costa Rica and in Honduras to a lesser degree the foci has been reduced to relatively small areas of the country but because it was not eradicated it has spread again.

Allen: The same thing happened in Iran, they got it down to a very small area and then they couldn't hold it. The Romans drained the Pontine marshes and malaria has been controlled over the ages, they will get it licked one of these days. You mentioned that the yaws thing is a success story were there any other success stories that stand out in your mind.

Meager: You would really have to define success.

Allen: Where a disease broke out and eradicated.

Meager: That is clearly a success story. It is not nearly as easy to talk about success in, say, assistance to a health infrastructure in the country.

Allen: So choose at a random.

Trachoma

Meager: I can think of another fairly successful story. That was eradication of trachoma in Taiwan, where it was treated in the schools which was wise because there are far more schools than health centres and you get many more people going there.

Allan: Was this particularly UNICEF's success?

Meager: No, frankly it was the success of the government. Of course what could be successful in Taiwan would not be so easy in Pakistan or a very large country. There was a very good school system to begin with. Communications by road and trail are excellent in Taiwan, and all villages have electric power, for example, so it is a very advanced kind of situation. The UNICEF input was almost entire in the shape of the antibiotic ointment. WHO was one of training and advising on supervision. Apparently it requires very little

training to be able to invert the eyelid and apply the ointment. And then the programme took off on its own and it was the responsibility of the Minister of Health, Division of Communicable Diseases or whatever in Taiwan. Our contribution was barely minimal.

Drugs

Allan: Well success is one thing. What was some of the more dismal reminiscences you have on things that didn't work? Let's say, like Sam Keeny, "tell me your worst".

Meager: There have been problems in the provision of supplies, particularly drugs. Medicines for health centers, which are easily portable, and can easily get stopped at the wrong level when they are intended for the rural health centre or whatever it is called in the field, and don't get there because they have to pass through too many channels and they are obviously needed not only at the village level but at the small town level at the referral hospital and at the city hospital and a quantity tend to get siphoned off en route. There have been problems with distribution of drugs, certainly.

Transport

I think that we've had a non-satisfactory experience in the provision of transport and I think it is time that UNICEF decided they've made their contribution in the international assistance field with the provision of vehicles and confine their assistance in transport in the future only to certain types of programmes, such as water supply vehicles for the movement of well drilling rigs and tubing and so forth in the case of that type of programme, or to provide vehicles for institutions such as hospitals and training institutions where there is a budget to maintain the vehicle and a clear understanding that it is a one-time provision only and will not be replaced so that they take good care of the transport when they get it. I've seen vehicles on the one hand in Pakistan run into the ground in the health infrastructure at the rural health centre level in the matter of two years and vehicles in the same country operational after fourteen years where they'd been working in training institutions or hospitals that kept them going. It was in their interest to do so because they knew they would not be replaced.

Allan: The ingenuity of the people of the third world in keeping vehicles going is remarkable. I remember an incident you had in Malawi, do you remember that, when the fellow had to drive in reverse up the mountain road.

Meager: I could reminisce about the Philippines. When I first went to Manila, I went down south to Cebu. There are seven health regions in the Philippines and I went to the south, I went to them all, of course, in time, but that was the first, it was the largest and the Regional Health Director brought in his heads of programmes, the directors of tuberculosis, leprosy, maternal and child health,

nurses training, environmental sanitation and the rest and very soon the meeting centered on one subject - transport. The Regional Director said that he was sure that I would appreciate that the conditions of maintaining transport were very dire indeed, that the drivers and mechanics were indifferent and untrained, the roads lacked maintenance and there was difficulty with spare parts. Therefore the UNICEF vehicles could not be expected to last more than two years and I ought to be ready to meet requests for replacements after that period. He said I know that you are new to the Philippines and are not likely to appreciate the problems we have here with regard to transport. I said yes, that I agreed that I was new to the Philippines but I wasn't new to the kind of problem he was talking about and I was interested to observe that when I looked out of my office window in Manila, I saw passing by all these Jeepnys, many of which were inherited from the second World War, left behind by the Americans. These are still being used as public transport. Some of them were 10, 12, 13 years old and they are still going strong. The difference in care between those jeeps and the UNICEF jeeps provided for the health services in the main was one of motivation. The owner of the commercial jeepny was motivated to keep it running as long as possible and as effectively as possible because it was his means of livelihood.

The government driver of a UNICEF vehicle is motivated to run it in to the ground in the expectation that it would be replaced by a more up-to-date model. This little bit of philosophy went down very poorly with the Regional Health Director and his colleagues but it was perfectly true. If we can find the motivation and work with that, we might do a little better. But we have tried awfully hard and we provided thousands upon thousands of vehicles. At one point 5,000 were transferred in India alone to the government. In the case of most of them it was not known where they were or what condition they were in.

P.R. & success stories

If I might make a diversion, when a government can make a success of a programme it is time for UNICEF to pull out and give our assistance to a less well organized country.

Allan: Then perhaps the public relations approach of seeking out success stories which is something very tempting to people who are engaged in fundraising and dealing with the public is somewhat of an illusion. Because, as you say, absolute success is not likely to be found in the on-going work in developing countries where very complex problems present themselves.

Meager: I think that's true. I think we have to regard our role as being quite clearly twofold. One in public relations we need to tell about the things which have gone well, we certainly don't want to publicize our problems too much, although I think it is healthy to talk about our problems and what we have been able to do or not able to do, to overcome them.

But, from the programming side I think we have to take quite a different look as to what we are doing and I think in that term, in that connection, success takes on a different light.

Sam Keeny: Early Asia operation

I referred to Mr. Keeny before in Asia in years gone by and whenever he turned up in a country, he said to the country representatives: "show me the worst", and they did. I think this is a healthy approach, but it is not a PR approach. He was not interested in what was going well, he was interested in what was going badly and what we needed to do to make it more successful.

Allan: I have a feeling that his name is going to crop up quite often in this history. Which raises the point Carlyle and others have discussed of whether it's men who shape history or the reverse. I mean, is it the Churchill who comes along or the Sam Keeny who comes along, the great personality who makes a big effect on events? Have there been great personalities you have encountered in UNICEF who by their own force of character have altered events? changed the policy of the organization?

Meager: Well, I merely believe that Sam Keeny made a bigger contribution than any other single person in UNICEF, including Maurice Pate who started the organization. Everybody has to make a contribution on their own level. His level was a pragmatic and operational, and his main concern was the programmes, how they were doing. He left fundraising and public relations and so on to others, but in a sense I was very largely conditioned by his attitude and I feel very strongly that if, and I said so to Jim Grant, that if we are not successful in the field and in terms of what it is we are raising money to do than the whole of the operation is really not justified. I mean successful in terms of the plan that we draw up with the government. It is not expected to be one hundred percent successful but if it is a poor unsightly thing than we should know and try to remedy it remembering, of course, that a number of the problems are not within our scope to remedy at all. Poor administration, difficult communications, lack of organization, and a host of other difficulties have to be contended with.

Allan: Why do you single Keeny out as being number one in your experience?

Meager: Well, because I think that he built up a successful regional operation, and it was the largest region in Asia at that time. We were constantly told this by Headquarters staff and visitors and we didn't believe it. It was said we were shoulders above any other region from the point of view of effective programmes. It wasn't until I left Asia in 1956 and went to the Middle East that I realized that it was perfectly true.

Allan: How can you provide administrative oversight to a region that includes virtually all of Asia with the exception of China? I often wonder how one can operate in India with any success, let alone all of the others. How can you run a region that went from Korea to Pakistan?

Meager: Well, you have to look at it in the context of how UNICEF operates - we had offices in Pakistan in Karachi and Dhaka which was then in East Pakistan, in New Delhi and in the Philippines, also in Thailand, Burma, Korea and one or two other countries.

What I am saying is that we were more successful, I think, in developing programmes with the government and seeing that they were implemented and knowing in detail what was going on than in the other regions. In fact I am now convinced, though I wasn't convinced while I was there because, of course, we all thought we were doing a rather indifferent job because our Regional Director kept pushing us to do better. But when I left, I realized that this was true, that we did have a more successful UNICEF operation in those countries than elsewhere.

The supply emphasis

Allan: Now the idea of UNICEF being a supply agency which came to me as a surprise somehow, that is we were just a giant Sears and Roebuck moving things around. Did you think of yourself as a sort of Supply Officer in those days? The outside image of UNICEF is one of people doing a lot of things for children. The inside image is often very much of an outfit of shipping supplies around. The two are not incompatible, but they are very different.

Meager: In the early days when I was in Asia UNICEF occupied a very special niche in the affections of governments. I think they still do. The reason for this was that the other agencies tended to give advice, UNICEF tended to give hardware, supplies, equipment, transport and money for training and was a bit low on advice. We've become more advisory in the more recent years. We had no inhibitions about feeling that we were a supply agency very largely at the beginning because we were, and I think at one time 80% of UNICEF's expenditures went on supplies, largely in the health field. We were not only a supply agency but we also, particularly in Asia, in my experience, helped the governments to see that the supplies were effectively received at the port and distributed to the end-user. Even though we were thin on the ground we got the out-turn reports promptly, we saw that we received routine reports on supplies in the warehouse to make sure they were moving and communicated with the government when we felt it was necessary to ask why the 1,000 bicycles received last year were still in the warehouse. Not last year but maybe last quarter. And by village inspection and visits we saw that the supplies had actually got into the health centre or the pre-school or the community centre. So, again I am emphasizing at that time we were very much pre-occupied with the delivery of assistance. I think it is less so now because the pressures are more complicated and the programmes are more complicated and the pressures tend to be elsewhere.

Allan: Now were you aware of any nationality quota system in the personnel field? Was there any national character to the UNICEF team in those days? Most of the people you mentioned, Sam Keeny, Brian Jones, the others have all been, what I would call, Anglos one way or another.

Meager: I think there was much less attention paid to that aspect from the personnel side. When I think back to the fifties we had Indian UNICEF Representatives in Indonesia and Burma, and Representatives in Pakistan, the Philippines and Korea who were Anglos and the Regional Director and his senior staff at the Regional office were Anglos. The Representative in Thailand was Dutch and that was about it as far as I can remember off the top of my head.

Regional/country office relationships: SIAR

Allan: By the late '60s or early 70's there'd been some perception that the relationship between regional offices and country offices should change and the SIAR study then brought about a decentralization and gave more authority to country offices and more direct access of country representatives to Headquarters, bypassing the Regional hierarchal chain of command. What was the problem that brought about this change from the type of regional organization we are talking about to the one that we have now, although, I think, maybe it's moving back a bit to the regional system.

Meager: I don't know what the impetus was. I think the SIAR review actually took place in 1973. It was just the time I was retiring from UNICEF. Maybe early '74. I don't know why it was considered necessary to make this review. I felt that if you had an effective Regional Director then the Regional Office had a good supportive role to play and I think that in this Region, East Africa, under the current Regional Director we have seen a sort of renaissance of the role of the Regional Office as a supporting advisory group at the regional level i.e. a link between field and Headquarters. I think this is working very effectively here after three years with the Regional Director.

Allan: Karl Eric Knutsson in the East African Region.

Meager: Yes.

Travel in the field

Allan: As we look at the way in which UNICEF approaches things today and the great emphasis on community-based health care, and community activities in general, do you think that we spent too long in the beginning neglecting this aspect of the field. You say the field is what counts. I sometimes wondered what really is the field because most of UNICEF's offices are in rather comfortable capitals, whether it's Bangkok or Nairobi I would say we are a good deal more comfortable here than people are in New York in many respects. We don't see many people volunteering to leave the field to go to Headquarters.

Meager: And visa versa.

Allan: So, I wonder if when we talk about the field we are not somewhat making it sound as though we are closer to the ground than we really are.

Meager: We are geographically closer to the field. By the field, I mean the village level, the village schools, the village health centres, the rural hospital, the community. We are centering and focussing more and more on basic education programmes and basic health services and primary health care in the delivery of assistance at what is really the field level. The point of consumption, if you like.

Allan: What is your experience in regard to the process of making and negotiating an agreement with a government, agreeing on materials UNICEF will supply, getting them shipped to the country and handing them over to the government. It hasn't changed by all that much, has it? I mean, it still goes to the Ministry of Health and from that point onward you hope for the best. Whether it is trachoma ointment or whether it is training materials for community health workers.

Meager: I don't know whether this answers your question, but what has changed from the earlier days is, I think, the basic operational in that in the earlier days we were much more involved in mass campaigns. Whether it was malaria, leprosy, yaws or trachoma. Mass campaigns are much easier to control, not to speak of mass transport. Mass campaigns, where you have a fleet operation, are much easier to oversee and to be able to evaluate. Either you vaccinate people with viable vaccine or you don't. You either reach them with spraying against malaria or you don't. Such programmes are more easily evaluated than the more amorphous, if you like, programmes of assisting through the rural health structure of a country where everything is spread out terribly thin on the ground.

This does involve an enormous amount of field travel if you are to get to see what is going on even if it is 20 percent of the programme. I think the problems are greater now and I think we need more concentration more attention on observing what is happening at the village level where we are supposed to be delivering our assistance.

Allan: In the past UNICEF was a much smaller organization. You had to do work in a very large region of Asia let's say, with much smaller staff than is available today. How were you able to do that and still get down to the field level? It's hard enough now when you have more people, it must have been more difficult then.

Meager: Well it was. I can only respond to that by saying that the emphasis for travel within the country was very very firm from the regional level. The Regional Director made it clear to the representative that that was where his job was.

Allan: He should be out one-third of the time.

Meager: One-third of the time in the field at the village level.

Allan: Did he really do that?

Meager: Yes, by and large.

Allan: One hundred days a year out in the village level? It certainly doesn't happen anywhere I know today.

Meager: That was the target. I would say probably a quarter of the time was spent travelling.

Allan: It seems to me, from visiting country offices that people are obliged to attend many meetings with the Ministries, undertake a great deal of reporting and other paperwork, and it all seems to take a great deal of time in the office. It seems to me that people can't make very many field trips if they have these other obligations. Do you think that has changed over the years?

Meager: No, I don't think it has and if anything I think it has become a little more difficult in the sense that, if I may refer again to my old Regional Director, Sam Keeny, we don't have Regional Directors who put so much emphasis on getting out into the villages. Keeny expected at least one-third of the Representatives' time to be spent in the village. And the kind of reports that were written at that time always detailed field visits and they were certainly constantly reviewed at the regional level to see how much time was spent in the field. I think that with the growing involvement in the kind of things you described at the country office level, not to speak of international conferences and being called to Headquarters frequently, (which didn't happen nearly so much in the past), for consultation and for staff responsibilities of one kind or another, it has become increasingly necessary to meet this need of getting to the village.

Use of JPOs and volunteers

One way has been the employment of Junior Professional Officers supported by their national governments and by the use of volunteers, either UN or secondments from other agencies such as the U.S. Peace Corps. Incidentally this has proven, in my experience, to be a very fruitful source for recruitment of core personnel. It provides the opportunity of observing quite young people working in a situation in the developing countries in association with UNICEF as volunteers it is possible to determine whether or not they would make good long-term career professional staff. Some of the best people we have now have come, I could name names, from that source. So, I think while a Programme Officer may have to be tied somewhat to his desk, he can have ears and eyes in the field by the use of volunteers and JPOs.

NGOs

And this I think is a very plus development of recent years, UNICEF is working more and more with NGOs and particularly I am thinking of agencies that do operate in the field like: CARE, and OXFAM and Save the Children Fund and other agencies like that where we have been able to strengthen government programmes by incorporating them as partners into the programme activities. Last year I had the opportunity to work, through the Regional Office here, in Somalia in the development of a primary health care programme which I found

very exciting and very full of potential. In the next few years I think it may become a very successful health programme involving the total community in the Northwest. We now have an office in Hargeisa, to support this programme and we are now involved very much with some of the non-governmental organizations such as OXFAM and Save the Children Fund.

Pate, Heyward

Allan: Well now what about the personalities of people like Mr. Pate, the founder and first Executive Director of UNICEF? Did you have any contact with him?

Meager: Oh yes. He died in 1966 and I joined in 1949 so I saw him on many occasions.

Allan: What sort of a leader was he compared to let's say Mr. Labouisse? Or perhaps we shouldn't compare them. What type of a man was he? I never heard anything but good things about him.

Meager: Yes, I would just say that in a crowd, he stood out not only because of his appearance and physique. He was tall, with a great mass of silver hair and a very red face and he spoke rather slowly and emphatically.

Allan: Did he stammer?

Meager: No. He did speak very deliberately and very slowly, and maybe it was to avoid a stammer. I think he was a man of enormous integrity. He had a very, very, good reputation and during the period I knew him, he was a Republican and at that time it was a democratic administration and he had enormous prestige in Washington. He was a gentle person.

He was also absent-minded, and there are anecdotes about him. For example, about walking down a corridor at Headquarters with one of the secretaries and opening the door to the ladies toilet and ushering her in and saying after you my dear until she turned around and said, "Excuse me Mr. Pate this is the ladies toilet".

He was very good at meeting Heads of State and I think he was an ideal man to have started this organization. He did carry an enormous prestige and was very much liked. I think he was very much loved by the staff.

Allan: Did he give a philosophical direction to the kind of work we were doing as Mr. Heyward has done?

Meager: Yes, I think he did. I think that Mr. Heyward has been more the man of action and implementation and Maurice Pate was more the policy-maker and philosopher of the organization within the scope of the Executive Board, of course.

Allan: Just to diverge a little bit, is it true that Mr. Heyward came on as a D-1 at about the age of twenty-something or before he was thirty?

Meager: Well, when I joined in 1949 he was occupying the same deputy position as he occupied when he retired in 1982.

Allan: That's rather incredible isn't it?

Meager: Yes, some people thought it might have been a good idea if he would have gone to the field and have, say, been Regional Director in India. His contribution to UNICEF, of course, was enormous.

Satisfactions of field representatives

Allan: How did the relations between the field and Headquarters appear to you then and now? It seems to me a great deal of time today is spent battling back and forth.

Meager: Well, I think there is always going to be different emphases between the field and Headquarters.

Allan: Have you ever served in Headquarters since 1949?

Meager: Since 1951, I left in 1951. No, to be frank, I always felt that if the organization wanted to get rid of me they could have transferred me to Headquarters and I would have looked for some job elsewhere. I felt that the satisfaction of the job was in the field and the closer you got to where it really mattered. For example the liaison office in Burundi, which I visited last year. I really felt after spending a few days there with the young lady incumbent, a very enthusiastic and energetic person that this is where it happens. She has her frustrations, she blows her top but this is where you can make things happen and the further you get away from that level the more you find yourself pushing papers. Of course she pushes a lot of paper too, far too much.

Allan: Maybe the best job in UNICEF is to be the country representative in a country like the Philippines?

Meager: Yes, and that is why Maurice Pate used to say, "When I retire as Executive Director I wish somebody would offer me a job in UNICEF as a country representative because that is where the satisfaction is".

Allan: You were pretty lucky to have a great country, just about the right size, plenty of difficult problems, did you feel that was the best point of your career?

Meager: I think so. Because as a deputy, whether to a Representative or Regional Director, you don't have quite the same decision-making position and there are many more problems.

Allan: You were free to pick where you wanted to place your emphasis and where did you place it?

Meager: No, you're not really free because of course you have inherited a lot of programmes and commitments and it takes at least, I think, two years to be able to change direction a little and develop some

new programmes. I think the ideal time in a country is probably five years, two years is certainly too short. Four years to five years is probably just right. In some cases I've seen Representatives over identify themselves with the country, rather than being a conduit between UNICEF and the country.

Effect on family life

Allan: It's a kind of a difficult life that requires a lot of dedication and I have seen a number of marriages suffer as a result of this. What is your experience of that over the years?

Meager: I feel I must have had a very understanding wife. She once said to me after I retired, "The children and I have always felt that you put your responsibility to aid the world's children above the responsibility of your own, so I had to make up for you". It was a sobering thought since, such a view had never been expressed at the time when it would really have prompted me to act differently.

This total absorption is especially true when you are a country representative. I would say it is a twenty-four hour a day job. People would call at all times. You would have evening affairs that you cannot cut back but there is a minimum that you must go to and retain contact. With other UN colleagues and particularly with government officials.

Allan: Did you ever notice that there was a lot, not in your own marriage necessarily, but in other marriages, of strain because of UNICEF people being workaholic types?

Meager: Yes, a few stood out as being, as you say, workaholics. I don't know whether more in the UN than in business because I am not sufficiently acquainted with business, but I would think that some marriages have suffered.

Also, don't forget the strains and stresses of the family who move from one location to another, where the man simply moves his office and continues what he is doing and the wife has to quite often cope with a new language to do her shopping and to be able to talk to a maid if you decide to have a maid. Children have to change and go to a new school, make new friends, adapt to new curricula. It's not a particularly tranquil life. It's rather disruptive from one time-to-time.

Allan: I've seen that, in the case of children, where they have to make new friends. Some people say it is good for them and it probably is but I know it is a painful time too.

Phillipines science education

Meager: Well in the Philippines, I felt we did develop a quite successful programme in science education, together with a whole conglomerate of people and the Ford Foundation, UNESCO, a university group, CARE was involved and a local non-Government organization in the Philippines played a very effective role.

Allan: Wouldn't today that kind of programme be considered somewhat of a luxury compared to the basic needs.

Meager: Yes it would.

Allan: In fact hasn't the science programme been written off.

Meager: Yes.

Unused equipment

Allan: Why? Did you ever go into a place, as I have, and see all those globes and microscopes carefully locked up in cuboards so that they couldn't be damaged or lost or stolen?

Meager: Yes, because of, I think, the colonial system that was inherited by a good many governments where the teacher was responsible for the equipment and had to replace it out of her own pocket and therefore she kept it locked up. But even more serious, when I was reviewing the science education programme in India I discovered one State where we had provided some expensive science education equipment for 93 senior teacher training institutions all of which had been closed for two years because it had a surfeit of teachers and they weren't planning to produce any more for the foreseeable future. That was something they did not know about in the UNICEF Regional Office or even in the Zone Office which was closer to the scene of operations because nobody had been there. They had received the outturn reports from the ports, the receipts from the state level of the Ministry of Education, and there they sat, unused. A state of affairs discovered only by a visit.

Allan: What sort of things do you believe might be lost if this history project weren't available. What kind of things are we trying to resurrect or save from extinction by this interview?

Meager: Well basically, I think, what would be lost are the personal remembrances of individuals of life in UNICEF which are not on paper. There is a great deal on paper probably a great deal too much some people think, but what is now being captured in this sort of an interview and many others of the same kind are personal memories and anecdotes and so on. Whether that is what the history project really wants and how they are ultimately to use item I am not sure and perhaps they're not sure until they see what material they have.

Calibre of UNICEF staff

Allan: What do you think makes a UNICEF man? Is there a type, or certain qualities that are required?

Meager: A UNICEF person, perhaps you should say. Certainly a Jack or June of all trades who has to wear a great variety of hats. From being a quasi-diplomat, to selling greeting cards and learning something about health, education and nutrition and social development and planning. Not to speak of motor transport and tuberculosis! It's

the kind of technique, if you like, or professionalism (giving it a fancy word perhaps) that takes some time in learning, I would say.

What type it takes, well, when I look back to what we could call the early days, the early '50s as you brought out earlier in the interview, there were a number of people who came from Quaker backgrounds and who had been volunteers, working in China, India and elsewhere, who had been earning, certainly with the Friends about \$7.50 a month. There was a strong missionary feeling, a dedication that I think is not to be so easily found now but has stayed with some people throughout their career. It is very difficult to sustain a missionary fervour as the organization becomes more and more ossified or rigid with bureaucratic procedures. But, I think, there is a leveling of people in UNICEF that has been, and still is, of this type.

That has been very good for the organization, and I think it is true that you continue to find them. I found them at a fairly low grade level working in the field and many of them had come into UNICEF from the Peace Corps, UN volunteers, or from NGO's. I think it is a very good introduction to UNICEF and a very good thing for the organization to use this channel for recruiting people on a career basis. I think it proved to be successful in a number of cases.

Allan: Another background that is common to a number of people who have retired recently or are retiring is the emergency aspect. Now you came out of the East but many were recruited to work in Europe in the early days of UNICEF. They started out as fire fighters, so to speak. They were people working in an emergency having to get things done fast to be effective. This attracted people like Martin Sandberg and Gordon Carter. Sam Keeny, I believe, also began in Europe at the Regional office in Paris.

Meager: It is a truism to say that being in an emergency situation brings out the best in people. I mean you are not clock watching in an emergency. I think some people were sufficiently imbued with this feeling to continue believing that the emergency is a perennial thing and that it continues to be with us as far as the children in the third world are concerned and we need to be a little better than nine-to-five people. I think most UNICEF employees are. In the early days the urgency was more apparent. The work based on the emergency situation for which people were specifically recruited in Europe. And again, it's true where UNICEF has become involved in emergencies in the third world we have had to recruit on the spot and in this kind of situation we have found people who have been very valuable to UNICEF and eventually joined the organization. They have come out of a background of say, OXFAM or Save the Children Fund and they have, I think, on the whole, been very valuable staff members and continue to be.

Allan: There is a tendency now towards professionalism and this may alter a bit that kind of emergency. Even though Mr. Grant characterises the situation as a silent emergency, it's a continuing emergency all over the place in the lives of children in the third world. We

are still emergency workers wherever we are but on the other hand there is this emphasis now on very professional, precise skills. So perhaps it is not so much the Jack of all trades business as before. Is that a trend you see?

Meager: Oh yes, I think so. And I think it is necessary but I just hope there will be not too much lessening of what in China, with the Quakers we called the 'Gada' attitude. This stood for go anywhere, do anything. And that was the tradition of the Friends. You didn't query it.

I can remember years ago being told at very short notice that we were being transferred from here to there. I had a wife and two little children and we didn't question it, we got up and went and made the most of it and that was that. I am not exactly favoring that way, of moving people around as if they were pawns on a chessboard but sometimes I think it goes too far in the other direction.

PHC

Importance

Allan: You wanted to make reference to the primary health care emphasis that has come into UNICEF since Alma Ata.

Meager: Yes, I have been writing this history of UNICEF in East Africa during the last week or two, and noting how things have developed in the 19 countries which are now involved in the Regional mandate, as it were. I feel that, possibly, UNICEF's most successful emphasis may be identified with the maternal and child health programmes in the early days when we did what other people basically were not doing. It was a kind of Cinderella area which needed attention in the way of training and provision of supplies, equipment, drugs, medicine, transport, and so on. UNICEF made a significant impact there in regard to the health needs of women and children which was not being done by anybody else and I saw it in several countries in Asia particularly, where the maternal and child health division or section of the Ministry of Health had been maintained. The UNICEF input certainly had a considerable significance and was built by the governments into something really important. And after that, I think, as a natural development had the primary health care approach. I have seen quite a lot of primary health care work at the grassroots level which is where it has to be. I've seen it working well in the Sudan. I was involved in helping to develop a programme on paper, which we took to the villages in North West Somalia. Of course it is in one shape or another in operation in different stages of development and effectiveness in most of the countries UNICEF is helping. I think, again, like MCH, it is one of the most significant impacts that UNICEF is making in the third world. I really feel very optimistic about it. The people in the villages are ready for assistance. They have been neglected long enough. As we all know, the medical services have been confined in most cases to the towns, to capitals and to the large villages. Now they are starting at the bottom, and they are planning what the people want.

Rural/urban differences

And the exciting thing to me is that whereas in the capital city one can run into a lot of inertia at government levels, the closer you get to the scene of operations the more the enthusiasm is generated because they are the people who are going to benefit. Therefore, they are the people who are prepared both at the provincial and district levels to put something into the programme in order to get international aid. This is particularly at the village level where the villagers are encouraged to come together and build the small hut for the primary health care centre and the worker. In many cases I've seen, too, where they fund or make payment in kind for the primary health worker. It is their programme and above all it is their worker because they have chosen the person from their community. I think from the bottom up we can talk about integration. We can talk about a real enthusiasm from the people for the kind of thing UNICEF is trying to do.

Allan: It sometimes seems, when you analyze where the money is going in a programme, that when you get out to the furthest end of it, when the service has finally arrived or when the person is trained, or the centre is equipped, that about half of the money has been spent before this final thing takes place. I was thinking of Hargeisa in N.W. Somalia. We have a few people up there almost living without furniture, sitting on boxes, I mean very little to work with, but the further back you get from there, the more of everything there is. The more cars, the more typewriters, the more people. The more air conditioners. Finally, when it gets out to the tail end there, where the villager is, even that villager is supposed to pay something for the health services he receives. That is considered to be virtuous. They should pay the community health worker vegetables, money or whatever they have. Meanwhile, back in the capital, any poor person can walk into the general hospital's outpatient clinic and get free services. It seems that the poorest people and the most needy people are expected to contribute even a little. Whereas people in the capital and elsewhere always get a better deal. I don't know why that is. They expect you to pay for water even up there in rural Somalia, whereas they get free water in town.

Meager: Quite frankly that is a point I have never had put to me before. It is interesting though that I found that in my experience that there is a willingness on the part of the people in the village. They don't expect something for nothing and I think it is part of the UNICEF philosophy that it is not good to provide something for nothing, it decreases the value of what you are receiving.

Allan: But in fact they do get something for nothing in the city.

Meager: Yes, that's true but of course that's true in the developed countries too. There are more services in the capital than there are in the periphery, the villages.

Allan: Well, is this a good note to come to an end on? I don't know.

Meager: Maybe I could reiterate what I said earlier that if I had to do it all over again, that would be my choice. I think it has been a very satisfying life. I like to feel I made some kind of contribution to some child's health in some remote village in Guatamala or Burma or wherever and I think to feel that is a great satisfaction.

Allan: The greatest. Thank you very much.

Meager: Thank you.
