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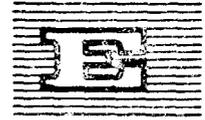
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Basic services for children of the urban poor
in developing countries*

A report prepared by Mary Racelis Hollnsteiner,
UNICEF Consultant

* This paper was prepared in connexion with the Board request for a further consideration on the ways in which a broader approach might be taken to reach the children of the urban poor. A note by the Executive Director including recommendations for future UNICEF assistance reaching the children of the urban poor is contained in E/ICEF/L.1372.

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I. Introduction

1. The days when most children grow up in a rural setting are rapidly drawing to a close. Already many regions of the developing world have a majority of their population located in cities and towns. Among them are millions of poor children living under dehumanizing conditions of poverty, squalor and insecurity. As preparations for the International Year of the Child (IYC) get under way, concerned groups need to turn their attention to poor urban children in order to address the particular problems this neglected group faces.

2. Drawing on the extensive literature covering slum and squatter areas in developing countries, and on personal observations in various cities of the world, the writer attempts to provide the broad background of understanding necessary for devising effective remedies to the problems of poor urban children. The report starts by reviewing the particular situations of deprivation experienced by these children. It then seeks some explanations for their continuing poverty. Government policies related to urban children's welfare and the constraints affecting related programmes are likewise considered. Recapitulating UNICEF's basic services strategy in light of the distinctive features of urban settings and the basic needs concept, the report concludes by recommending concrete means of implementing this strategy for the benefit of poor urban children.

3. The urgency of taking immediate and positive steps to change their degrading life circumstances is clear. If our children are to experience the life of quality due them, decisive action must be taken now.

II. The situation of children in low-income urban areas of developing countries

Population estimates

4. The number of children below 15 years of age living in poor urban areas of the developing world is estimated at 15,000,000. Children under five years of age make up 60,000,000 of this total. Substantial though these figures are, they may prove conservative in assuming that only one-half of urban children in the developing world fall into the poorer sector of their society. In some highly urbanized countries of Latin America, at least 40 per cent of the large city populations live in slum and squatter areas. Even in countries with urbanization levels of only 20 to 25 per cent, the absolute number of people moving to or already living in cities staggers the imagination. South Asian urban residents, for example, make up only 23 per cent of the region's total population, yet this figure represents 287 million people, of whom at least 60 million are poor children under the age of 15.

5. Nor is the difficult lot of poor children likely to be alleviated in the near future, if one is to judge by projections for the urban populations of developing countries. As of 1975, the developing regions had 27 per cent of their populations located in urban areas; by the year 2000, the comparable figure will have reached 41 per cent. Cities will by then be absorbing 70 per cent of all population increase, twice the projected growth rate of rural areas. In absolute numerical terms, this signifies a shift from 775 million to over 2 billion urban people in developing countries, yielding a turn-of-the-century total of over 700 million urban children. At least 350 million of the latter will come from poor families, with 124 million under five years. Latin American city and town dwellers, who already numbered 60 per cent of the region's total population in 1975, will make up 75 per cent by the year 2000. Africa, Asia, and Oceania will still be predominantly rural but none the less concentrate slightly over one third of their over-all populations, or 1.7 billion persons, in urban areas. Although the rates of annual urban increase will have declined from their 1975 peaks, they will still range from 3.2 in Asia to 4.3 for Africa and parts of Oceania. Moreover, the deprived sector of the urban populace will be growing more rapidly than the total urban population as poor migrants from rural areas and sheer natural increase make their mark. 2/

1/ A growing number of serial indicators, such as low poverty thresholds reveal as much as 60 per cent to 70 per cent of the populace subsisting below minimum nutritional standards based on total caloric intake norms.

2/ The forecast of urban growth used here is based on the United Nations medium-tempo, medium-variant (medium tempo of urbanization, medium variant of levels of fertility and mortality) population projections. While these figures present a much more urbanized future than now exists in the developing world, they should be understood as forecasts that can be assessed differently. World Bank Staff Working Paper No. 204, "The Task Ahead for the Cities of the Developing Countries", concludes that the United Nations forecasts are not unreasonable and if there was a systematic error, it most likely was on the side of underestimating urban

6. Although the acceleration and magnitude of urban versus rural growth becomes clear in reviewing these figures, the internal dynamics of where growth happens in a given urban area also warrants serious consideration. Current estimates suggest that as a consequence of both birth and migration, low-income residents clustered in slums and shanty towns are multiplying annually at 10 to 12 per cent. This marks at least twice the rate of total city growth. Nor is the large metropolis alone bearing the brunt of this increase; middle-sized cities and towns have likewise begun experiencing similar pressures. Translating these percentages into the absolute numbers they represent, and recognizing the limited resources available to the poor, one can predict critical times ahead for children living in low-income areas of cities and towns as the new century begins.

The world of the child in poor urban areas

The negative side of urban poverty

7. Deprivation. The child born into a slum or shanty town, or transferred there from a rural area by migrant parents, starts his young life with multiple disadvantages. Death hovers over him constantly, especially during his infancy; as a group, he and his urban playmates cannot expect to live as long as their more affluent urban counterparts. The urban child is sick more days of the year than his better-off peers, felled by illnesses generated largely by malnutrition and unsanitary environmental conditions. Even when "well" he is easily exhausted and sometimes hungry to the point of lethargy. To be sure, urban poor children often fare somewhat better in this regard than do rural children, for urban amenities are available to substantial numbers. Yet the marked contrast between the life of affluence so evident in cities but limited to a privileged minority, and the bare subsistence that is the lot of the majority, casts the deprivation of the poor in sharper focus. While objectively the urban child may appear slightly better off than his rural brothers and sisters, subjectively his poverty looms more acutely in the context of the unrealized potential inherent in the city's broader resource base. Relatively speaking, then, the poor urban child experiences more deprivation than the poor rural child. For many, of course, the disadvantage is an absolute one as well.

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populations. This is because the method used takes into account: the increasing importance of urban natural increase; that even with very rapid rural income growth the mostly rural economies would still have very poor rural sectors; and the existence of a bias to decelerate urbanization rates too quickly in some cases.

On the other hand, Lester Brown states in The Twenty-Ninth Day, Accommodating Human Needs and Numbers to the Earth's Resources that it is not probable that the world will be able to support the urban population forecast by the United Nations. A world that is half urban would need a vast and unprecedented increase in rural food surpluses, in the supply of cheap energy, and in capital investments for urban job creation - situations that Brown feels will not exist.

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8. Crowded households. Part of the urban child's difficulties stem from his having to divide those limited resources that do trickle down to the family level with many persons. An average of five to six members per household is not uncommon in developing-nation cities, compared to two or three for developed-society cities. In reality, the child in low-income neighbourhoods is more often sharing food, clothing, shelter and other requirements with 8, 10, 12 or more persons. Some of these are his brothers and sisters, who together with himself reflect the higher fertility rates characteristic of low-income groups vis-à-vis their better-off urban counterparts. The younger siblings are often the most deprived. They weigh less than their older siblings at equivalent ages, have fewer years of schooling, and must assist in the family enterprise at earlier ages. Other household dwellers like extended or ritual kin, members of the same clan, persons with co-village origins, or simply friends of the family, also draw on the household's meagre resources. This is in keeping with traditional rights and obligations of mutual assistance. Given the scarcity of jobs, these "extra" household members may have to rely much longer than anticipated on the one or two earning residents. The hardships entailed affect everyone, children and adults alike. Of course, once the job-seekers begin earning, they too will help support the household. This contribution will none the less remain small since remittances must be sent to still poorer relatives in the village and because the incomes of unskilled, poorly educated workers are low to begin with.

9. Absent working mothers. The urban child is deprived in other ways. Because of the low-earning status of the acknowledged breadwinner, usually the father or senior male, or his inability to find a paying job at all, mothers also seek supplementary or even primary sources of income. Sometimes this means undertaking handicraft work in her home. More often than not, it requires her to spend substantial portions of her time away from home as a laundress, seamstress, vendor/hawker, rag-picker, milk collector or in some other minimally-earning occupation. Most seriously affected by this schedule is the infant. His mother's extended absences means that regular breastfeeding becomes impossible, necessitating early weaning. This frequently leads to malnourishment from unsatisfactory substitutes just at the critical period when brain development is occurring fastest. The deprived child's potential learning ability and physical growth may therefore be seriously impaired, factors which could subsequently affect his personality, intelligence and over-all productivity.

10. Children alone. While the older children can more easily tolerate a mother's absence, they too face difficulties, especially if no other adult supervises their daily activities or attends to their needs. Irregular meals, accidents, infected cuts, untended colds that turn into pneumonia and even arrests for delinquent behaviour represent a few of the consequences. Some mothers try to overcome these dangers by taking one or two of their children to work with them, an unsatisfactory solution at best.

11. Because adults in these striving low-income urban neighbourhoods are busy working, looking for work, or out trying to raise money, independence necessarily comes early to the child. Almost as soon as he can walk, he ventures outside the confines of his house, initially with his older siblings or cousins but soon enough on his own. This intensive exposure to the neighbourhood environment has both a

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positive and negative side to it - learning early to respond to community life, on the one hand, and suffering the effects of a deteriorated physical environment, on the other.

12. Deteriorated housing and physical environments. The slum child has to thread his way around the stagnant open sewers that meander through the neighbourhood. Piles of garbage attract the same flies that swarm around his food and alight on his open sores. Dogs, pigs, goats, chickens and other animals root about in the household refuse strewn in open spaces and further add to the disarray. Although the child quickly learns to manoeuvre along the steeply sloping terrain or slatted wooden walkways spanning perpetually flooded marshland, he does incur an occasional accident as steady rains turn dirt pathways into slippery mud trails or a rotted board gives way under his running feet. In a broader sense, this same environment can threaten many more people, adults included, when sudden torrential rains cause entire clusters of shanties clinging precariously to hillsides to slide into the valley below, or when seashore settlements are swept away by high storm winds and turbulent waters. For children crowded into the once palatial residences of ancient inner-city areas, now partitioned and fallen into decay, the equivalent dangers come from sagging ceilings and rotted beams that collapse on them.

13. Even under normal daily circumstances, the house in which the child resides offers substandard accommodations. Although homes that start as shacks usually improve over time with a rise in the family's fortunes, in the interim period the child must suffer leaking roofs, severe crowding, and dark stifling interiors. In wintry climates, he is susceptible to frequent colds, his resistance lowered by thin clothing, inadequate heating and drafty dwellings; in tropical zones, the extreme heat is intensified by his being cramped with many others into a room as small as four by five metres. For unrelated families sharing a space, a piece of cloth hanging between them provides only symbolic privacy. Space for storage is a perennial problem as stacked boxes and trunks, and bundles hanging from the ceilings attest. Sometimes the residents of a 20-square meter shack have to take turns sleeping. Oil or kerosene lamps dimly light the scene, while wood, charcoal, dung or kerosene keep cooking stoves going. These open flames pose a serious fire hazard in dense, confined neighbourhoods lacking fire hydrants and impervious to fire engines. Many a settlement has gone up in smoke in a matter of minutes from an overturned lamp or a flying spark. The resulting homeless families who must start life anew find themselves in circumstances worse than when they began.

14. Tense emotional environment. The child is also engulfed by a tense emotional environment. Multiple insecurities - economic, social, and psychological - affect his family. For adults, joblessness, the availability of only irregular and part-time employment, the need to work 12 to 16 hours a day to come closer to meeting income needs, or the low pay that never catches up with rising prices all lead to constant stress. The need for cash income in the city means that the jobless individual must frequently borrow money from relatives, ritual kin, clansmen or friends. While this personalized social security system brings relief, it also breeds anxieties in enforcing conformity to group norms.

15. Understandably the corresponding psychological insecurity generated takes its toll on parents and by extension, their children. Many a tired, desperate father expresses his frustrations through drinking and gambling. The fears and tensions engendered in the child by repeated quarrelling or actual violence between parents can have effects ranging anywhere from a neurotic personality to his running away from home. Unhappy adolescent boys hanging around the neighbourhood are attracted to delinquent gangs or simply get arrested for vagrancy; dissatisfied adolescent girls become waitresses, massage parlor attendants or sauna bath operators, occupations which can become disguised forms of prostitution. The wife or mother-in-law who berates the male breadwinner once too often for not bringing in enough income or for wasting meagre family resources on alcohol, gambling, or other women may find him gone one day, defeated by his unsuccessful attempt at fulfilling customary roles. Abandonment for some offers one way of resolving the contradictions inherent in a social system that imposes responsibilities on him but does not furnish him the means for carrying them out satisfactorily.

16. Insecure land tenure. Another source of strain on the family and, correspondingly, the children, stems from insecurity of land tenure. The poor, especially the squatters, who are by definition illegal occupants of their dwelling place, face the ever-present threat of eviction. A government planning team may decide to turn the land they are occupying into some other use - a harbour facility, a multistorey housing unit, a football stadium, or a bus depot. Alternatively, the premises may be condemned as hazardous for human habitation, a move agencies can also use to justify forced relocation. Soon after can come the formal notification of eviction, or court orders to vacate, or even, in the face of tenant resistance, bulldozers to demolish the shanties or old buildings and drive their occupants off the premises. While this process may take days, months, and even years to accomplish (in some cases strong resistance on the part of residents eventually forces the authorities to reconsider their stand), anxiety levels in the affected families remain high.

17. Household discussions dwell interminably on where the members should go in the event of actual dispossession. If they accept the offer or order of transfer to a site on the periphery of the city, the earners will have to commute long distances to work. Transportation costs may make this impossible on a daily basis, requiring the households to make a further choice. This involves accepting the prospect of the earner's boarding in the city and visiting his resettlement site family only once a week or month; or the entire family's moving as a unit to some other low-income site in the city in hopes that another eviction will not follow too quickly. Another option is advocated for migrant families, namely, to return to their rural village or town of origin. For most migrants, however, this last choice proves least desirable or even totally unacceptable considering that prospects for improvement appear even worse at the rural end. For those accepting relocation, apprehensions about schools, water, transportation, safety, sources of primary and supplementary family income and the continuing viability of mutual assistance networks cause great concern. Wrenching a poor family from a site to which members have adapted and in which they have achieved some predictability over their lives, and forcibly transferring them to a new site often thrusts the family into an even more precarious state than before. With tenure rights uncertain and the power to manipulate them outside the family's control, the peace of mind that accompanies predictability cannot prevail.

18. Powerlessness. This virtual helplessness to counter threatening decisions generated from outside underlines another type of insecurity to which the urban poor are subject, namely, powerlessness. Urban residents who have not evolved organizational strategies for communicating their views convincingly or forcefully to powerful groups feel helpless. Buffeted by outside forces that seem beyond their control, they easily lose their self-esteem and sense of worth, and drift into apathy. Limited in funds, technical know-how, managerial ability, and facility of communication, they simply resign themselves to official negligence over the provision of water, drainage pipes, or electricity. Even if schools are provided, the low quality of their education hardly equips pupils for a bright occupational future. At times, householders see much-coveted lots allocated to outside political figures close to the ruling party, who go into the business of renting out rooms. Despite local protest over an impending road through the neighbourhood's only recreational space, the road goes through anyway. Children put in jail with their parents for pushing scavenger carts through out-of-bounds tourist areas remain incarcerated for days or weeks, bereft of legal assistance while awaiting arraignment. The law itself frequently discriminates against the poor in declaring illegal their residential tenure and key occupations, like street hawking or rag-picking. Public agencies allow more affluent or better connected individuals ready access to health clinic services or vending licences while the rest wait for hours or learn they are ineligible for the certification they seek. Powerlessness and dependency breed injustice, and the urban poor experience more than their share of it.

The positive side of urban poverty

19. A sense of security. Despite the stresses and strains that engulf the children of the urban poor, there are at the same time decidedly positive elements to life in a low-income setting. First, the close ties that characterize neighbourhood relationships give the child and his family a sense of belonging and security. Deprived though they may be in material terms, they experience a wealth of support in the kin, friends and neighbours who invariably come to their aid when needed or whose sheer presence makes day-to-day life more meaningful. Traditional rituals based on common understandings reinforce a sense of solidarity. The security and predictability of these reassuring networks also figure in the struggle for social mobility. The newcomer receives an initial stake from his ever-expanding network when they invite him into their household, lend him money, teach him a skill, help him locate income-raising opportunities, or simply acquaint him with the mechanics of urban living. The last includes a wide variety of learning experiences, like using public transportation, obtaining a health certificate for work, bribing the policeman on the block to allow continued use of pavement space for hawking, and locating the cheapest places for buying second-hand shoes and clothing. Assured survival and the hope of mobility through appropriate handling of the city's resources and formal institutions, then, reach the striving poor via the close human ties fostered in many low-income environments. Even in older inner-city tenement slums, where the sense of community may be less pervasive than in the newer squatter settlements, personal linkages flourish, nurtured by high-density dwelling and an active street milieu that fosters contact.

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20. Informal sector economics. Low-income area residents demonstrate creativity and flexibility in the diverse work activities generated through the informal economic sector. Poorly educated and low-skilled though the average resident may be, both men and women virtually generate their own jobs and sources of income. Offering only minimal skills, physical strength and perseverance, many hire themselves out in a wide range of services - load carriers, ice cream vendors, scrap metal sorters, mat weavers, bottle washers, button sewers, horsecart drivers, wooden toy makers and a host of other small-scale occupations. More enterprising ones borrow a modest amount of money to serve as capital for a small food-and-drink stand, a shoe repair shop, a dressmaking/tailoring venture, or a roving fruit and vegetable enterprise. The size of the area's population establishes an enormous clientele for cheap goods and services, with the formal modern-sector members also relying to a significant degree on the products and services of their poor neighbours. Because the mini-manufacturing and tertiary-oriented activities operate in a somewhat marginal manner vis-à-vis the modern market sector (although at a more basic level they exist because they are a functional part of this skewed economy), their participants are also much freer of the standards, codes, permits, credentials, and other legal-bureaucratic measures that would restrict their spontaneity and performance. While this may have a somewhat detrimental effect on quality control over goods and services, it none the less allows significant experimentation, recycling processes, and large-scale labour absorption. Informal sector activities take up the enormous slack left by a formal sector unable to furnish anywhere near the number of jobs needed by the expanding populace. Concentrated as they are in low-income neighbourhoods, they afford residents training, a place in the city's economy and a potential for achievement beyond sheer survival.

21. Self-help housing. In the same manner, the relative lack of interest shown by many Governments in urban low-income areas has an important effect on housing construction. Residents build and renovate their own dwellings, often in collaboration with helpful neighbours, at a pace and level commensurate with their own capacities to generate the needed materials and labour. Virtually freed by default from having to subscribe to housing standards applicable only to the wealthier urban populace, they institute a gradual upgrading process appropriate to their own standards. The unenforceability of outside zoning controls allows a householder to devote one corner to a workshop for sanding wooden chair parts or to a hat-making business. Adding on an extra room permits the family to augment its income through rent collections. Even tenement or row-apartment buildings allow space reorganization for a combination of uses - residential, manufacturing and service generation. The multiple functions to which building structures can be put in low-income areas thus gives their occupants a much-needed economic boost. Moreover, their rent-free or minimal-rent accommodations allow them to divert limited funds away from housing to other higher-priority investments.

22. Hope. A sense of security, a creative informal sector, and self-help housing arrangements generate hope and aspirations for a better future despite the trials and tribulations of the present. Materially poor though most are, they perceive the good life to be more attainable in the city than in the countryside. Most migrants would not voluntarily return to rural life, while most city-born slum

dwellers assume their sole avenue to success lies right where they are. With hard work, perseverance and a measure of luck, substantial numbers of people believe that if not their lives, at least their children's will improve. Despite staggering difficulties, the optimism and quiet striving of the urban poor are strengthened in important ways by the supportive character of low-income residential settings.

Causes of urban poverty

23. For the millions of urban children who have never known anything but deprivation, it is incumbent upon those in positions of responsibility to determine why poverty exists and persists. Assessments of the factors underlying massive urban poverty differ, of course, according to the assumptions and levels of analysis employed. Whatever solutions are developed, however, they will certainly be derived from the manner in which poverty and its causes have been conceptualized. Hence, five commonly presented explanations for poverty are reviewed here.

Material deprivation

24. Perhaps a majority of people see poverty simply as material deprivation, that is, the sheer lack of certain basic items - food, clothing, shelter, and furnishings. Problem-solving approaches advocated are equally simplistic: if the situation involves material deprivation, then give the poor the missing items. Clearly, this "charity" outlook is both naive and short-sighted in failing to go deeper into the reasons for absolute poverty. Moreover, it is redundant in suggesting that poverty occurs because people are poor!

Faulty development policy

25. A second causal explanation for poverty focuses on development policies implemented by Governments of developing countries from the 1950s to the present. This argument suggests that Governments committed to the standard mode of economic development measured through rising GNP, have actually accelerated both rural and urban poverty, to the detriment of social equity. Given the investment focus on the modern industrial sector where urban elites hold favoured positions, the promised trickle-down effect to the mass populace has not occurred. Instead, the urban rich have become richer and further consolidated their power positions, while the urban and rural poor have become poorer and less able to exert control over their lives.

26. The original assumption of development economists that the higher rates of savings and investment generated, plus the growth of modern manufacturing would readily absorb the excess labour coming out of the rural and traditional urban sectors has simply not been borne out. Instead, many small farmers and rural workers were displaced by agricultural policies favouring commercial crops designated for export or for the urban consumer market. The subsequent addition of rural capital-intensive agri-business ventures to make the agricultural sector more productive further undermined these near-subsistence groups. Falling incomes and deteriorating rural conditions sent streams of migrants to the primate city

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and to regional urban centres in the vain hope that more and better jobs in factories and large commercial enterprises would be available there. Continued high birth rates added further to the strain. At the same time, despite subsidized credit, over-valued exchange rates for capital-goods imports, and high degrees of protection through limiting competition, the modern industrial sector was not expanding anywhere near fast enough to absorb the burgeoning labour surplus.

27. Even the urban-born low-income groups who had for decades relied on traditional small-scale manufacturing and service ventures for their livelihood found themselves marginalized by the emphasis given the modern formal sector even as their own investment needs were ignored. Trade unions devoted their energies to consolidating gains for their members and showed little interest in the unorganized labour sector. Their growing militance and political influence further encouraged employers to opt for capital-intensive rather than labour-intensive strategies whenever possible. Thus, the small elite groups prospered while the traditional sector of the urban economy absorbed the surplus labour as best it could. This it did through the flexible informal economy, but it paid a high price in the squalid living conditions afforded informal sector workers and their dependants.

28. A number of neo-classical economists still believe that faulty though their theory has proven to be, it can still be remedied. One strategy favours greater central government responsibility for social and material development. Success would be reflected in the eradication of unemployment, underemployment and poverty by making the poor more productive. This in turn will lead to a higher level of GNP growth especially in the agricultural sector. Simultaneously, stronger population control measures, and structural reforms through prudent use of monetary and fiscal policies need to be undertaken. Critics abound, however. In any event, most Governments are now engaged in serious re-examinations and revisions of development policies in order to make them more responsive to equity priorities and social services delivery.

Unjust socio-economic structures

29. A third explanation for urban poverty looks deeper into its causes by centring on the socio-economic structure of developing societies. Proponents point to the overriding inequity in the society's distribution of resources and power. This is reflected in the concentration of wealth and power among small controlling elites, with only minimal amounts left for the majority of the mass populace. Major institutions like the legal system, the financial system, education, health, and the rest follow suit in serving overwhelmingly the interests of the more affluent while virtually denying access to the rest. Many of those who see the distortions as systemic remain skeptical whether without significant pressure, elites will voluntarily redistribute their wealth on a scale massive enough to eliminate absolute poverty. Only drastic measures can solve drastic problems, they argue. Accordingly, some advocate organized mass movements of politicized and conscientized grass-roots people to pressure reluctant elites into restructuring society. The specific tactics used may range from passive resistance to active confrontation. Others argue for more direct structural

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changes in a relatively short period of time involving dramatic shifts in systems of ownership, productivity, income levels, resource distribution, effective demand, training, technology control, and access to decision-making. The debate centres around evolutionary reforms, often militant in character, to revolutionary overthrow of existing Governments and systems.

Under-utilized resources in the profit-oriented market system

30. A fourth explanation for massive urban poverty dwells on the short-comings of the profit-oriented, consumer economy of market systems. Urban slums and squatter areas, it is said, are most evident in countries organized around the free enterprise concept. In developing nations, these market systems allegedly create at both the national and international levels stratified arrangements that sustain power and privilege among a few and foster a weak position of dependency among the many. The profit-oriented market system at the national level, for example, allows a large proportion of existing resources like land, housing, or health services to lie idle or remain under-used largely because this type of economy requires a margin of untapped resources to maintain its flexibility. At the same time substantial numbers of the populace suffer from lack of access to these needed resources.

31. To resolve the contradictions believed inherent in the system, it has been advocated that resources vital to human welfare be taken out of this free market and shifted to government control; some further advocate that they should then be turned over to people's groups for administration after effective mechanisms for public management have been devised. Also observed as an element in free market economy operations is the high degree of interdependence among active participants; hence, if parts of the system go awry, a large sector of the populace is severely displaced. The poor in particular, are most seriously affected by fluctuations in a market beyond their control; their margin of risk is low. The result is further impoverishment and dependence. Responding to this observation, some believe that providing options for staying out of the modern market economy and relying on controllable appropriate technology for achieving one's wants will significantly decelerate the poverty trend. Others would reserve certain sectors of the economy for exclusive public control. Still others advocate an ideological position that stamps out the free market economy altogether and substitutes a state-controlled one that gives primacy to equitable redistribution and collective production.

The distorted international economic order

32. Yet, even if national leaders seek to minimize the conflict between human welfare and a free market economy at the domestic level, there are those who maintain that giving priority to equitable resource distribution cannot be accomplished by developing countries so long as the present international economic order persists. If developing nations remain subject to consistently unfavourable terms of trade and to economic decisions by wealthy nations, domestic equity attempts will be reduced to the redistribution of poverty. Greater self-reliance and more equitable participation, then, in setting the rules of economic relations and the division of their fruits - the crux of a proposed New International Economic Order - will go far toward the reduction of global poverty.

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33. Clearly, explanations for the existence of poverty remain controversial. Any or all of the causes listed apply in varying degree and combinations. One theme does seem generally applicable, however, namely, that the continued existence of urban slums and squatter settlements forms part of a complex process at the household, community, regional, national and international levels that needs far better understanding if appropriate solutions are to be found.

III. Government policies related to the welfare of poor urban children

Explicit and implied policies

34. More and more Governments are coming to realize that the plight of urban children in low-income areas requires quick and effective action. A late 1977 survey of UNICEF representatives responsible for assistance in 65 countries across the developing world shows that 43 of these countries now have policies to improve the situation of the urban poor. In 28 countries, these policies represent a change since 1970 indicating that, at least at the policy level, there have been important changes in attitudes and awareness. However, Governments have not for the most part transformed this awareness or even these policies into concrete interventions that ultimately reach and improve the condition of most of the urban poor. None the less, the cases of countries with explicit policies as well as those with implied policies derived by analysing government actions in both the urban and rural contexts can be examined to identify what is being done in the developing world.

Rural development and reduction of migration

35. Acutely aware that the rural to urban exodus has created large poverty pockets in the cities, some nations now give greater emphasis to rural development as an antidote. This strategy aims partly at keeping people voluntarily in the countryside by offering them better opportunities there. It remains to be seen whether this strategy will slow down the rates of rural-to-urban migration, or whether, instead, it will increase them by raising the consciousness, capacities and aspirations of rural folk to seek the kinds of fulfilment they perceive urban life as offering. A foregone conclusion in any case is that migration cannot be totally halted short of exercising outright force. Even where such stringent measures have been tried, people's belief in their right to move has made enforcement difficult. Consequently, most Governments focus on diminishing or redirecting migration flows rather than stopping them altogether.

Regional growth poles

36. Another approach to migration control attempts to deflect the direction of flow from the already overcrowded metropolitan areas to middle-sized cities. Some of these are designated regional growth centres in line with decentralization and regionalization strategies calculated to improve other parts of the country and to take the population pressures off the metropolitan centres. However, the growth-pole and satellite city approaches appear still to be more a matter of plans rather than proven accomplishments. As for the rural development solution, even when effective, it is necessarily a slow process. For people impatient to achieve a better life here and now, urban migration appears to offer the fastest means of getting there, even if it necessitates tolerating an environment of squalor for some time.

Slum and squatter strategies

37. The absence of a stated national urban policy on the part of many Governments,

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or for that matter one addressed specifically to the urban poor, does not mean that administrators take no action as regards slum and squatter populations. A whole series of moves has been made in various parts of the world which represent an unstated or implied policy for particular periods of time. To illustrate, by the middle of the twentieth century political leaders were already noticing the growing enclaves of poor residents in cities, not only because their crowded living accommodations made their presence all too obvious, but also because they represented clusters of voters and therefore potential party supporters. Toleration of their presence was the initial stance. Residents for their part made few demands on local administrators or political figures beyond asking them to delay or stop eviction if it were threatened, enlisting their help in locating a job, and occasionally appealing for personal favours.

38. As the number of poor settlements expanded and, as in the case of Latin American settlements, organized squatter invasions of both public and private land occurred in defiance of property and other laws, Governments could no longer ignore the existence of these enclaves. Moreover, since modern developers sought to use the land for other purposes, mass evictions and outright demolitions ensued. Squatter residents were either ordered to vacate the premises or be bulldozed out if they resisted. Initially, these displaced people had to fend for themselves as regards alternate locations; later, other sites were offered as refuge, usually of a temporary nature, sometimes with administrators even providing transportation there for the family and its possessions. In the Latin American case, some authorities became more tolerant of organized squatter invasions, apparently seeing them as one way of Government's justifying to the private sector the need to revise drastically prevailing conceptions of land use and tenure, and, further, a means of encouraging self-help efforts with a minimum of inputs from the Government. Other options were also offered the soon-to-be-displaced, like the fare to sustain them on a return trip to their rural origins or enrolment in a government rural resettlement scheme of a pioneering, homestead variety.

"Low-cost" housing

39. The more humane approach of offering an alternate choice, even if in many cases it was not a viable one for the relocatee, saw further evolution in the next major approach - that of building ready-made, low-cost housing for the poor. This usually consisted of either multistorey apartment buildings or low density dwellings ranging from single detached houses to duplexes, quadruplexes, and the like. While these appeared to offer an initial solution to the problem, two basic flaws emerged early on: (a) the majority of poor urban residents could not afford ready-made housing; and (b) "low-cost" housing presented physical shelter improvements but rarely the social, economic and locational solutions that poor families needed most.

40. This realization, coupled with the increasing awareness that the settlements created by the poor themselves seemed more appropriate to their needs, led to a shift in bureaucratic thinking. The outcome became the most recent improvement strategy - upgrading already existing slums or site-and-service development for new ones. The outcries of organized community groups, the actions of some Governments, the writings of social scientists and human rights advocates on this subject, and

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the efforts of international agencies like the World Bank further encouraged this more pragmatic perspective. None the less, new problems arise when a total approach to community upgrading is attempted. Innovations rely heavily on formal economy mechanisms incompatible with the labour intensive features of informal slum economies. The end result is the displacement of many families from the now "improved" setting.

Site-and-services development

41. The site-and-service approach emphasized infrastructure amenities and services without the provision of ready-built housing. That was left to the residents to undertake on a self-help basis, sometimes assisted by a supply of cheap construction materials and simple technical assistance. It had long been noted that people could in fact produce their own dwellings, which they would substantially improve over time, but that they were far less effective in establishing a satisfactory broader physical environment. Accordingly, the most feasible approach called for enabling people to do what they already knew and could handle themselves, and letting government support take other forms. Together, Government and community would undertake slum upgrading and site-and-service projects. The range of infrastructure improvements and service delivery components supplied by Governments varies widely, with some opting for costly investments in water, electricity, drainage, sanitation, schools, clinics, and job generation elements while others settle simply for water and drainage. Most recognize that security of tenure, that is, a legitimization of residential status is essential for a permanent solution.

Summary of approaches

42. To summarize, despite the newness and, in still many countries, the absence of formal urban policies, four approaches to slums and squatter settlements and their people can be identified: (a) toleration and a consequent neglect; (b) eviction with or without sponsored relocation; (c) "low-cost" high density mass housing; and (d) slum upgrading, where the residents remain on site, and site-and-service projects involving self-help housing, with security of tenure guaranteed to both. Different countries have tried different approaches in different sequences. Some attempt now one, now another as political administrations change. These efforts are important, yet they have hardly begun to scratch the surface, considering the massive number of people to be served. The approaches used in many cases have tended to be ad hoc responses to pressures of the moment rather than carefully thought out steps in a total planning process encompassing both rural and urban components. Furthermore, since the causes of urban poverty stem from forces extrinsic to the community, it is questionable whether upgrading programmes that do not change the operation of these forces can serve as effective interventions.

Beautification and infrastructure

43. Certain tacit urban policies not directly related to the problems of slum and squatter settlements appear in the approaches Governments take toward their cities and towns. A number focus on beautifying the major metropolitan areas that are symbolic of the nation and that represent it to the world. Here, heavy investments

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go into six-lane thoroughfares, national monuments and impressive public buildings, five-star hotels, and the restoration of local historical sites - all signs of progress and modernity. Other Governments give highest priority to installing mass transit systems so as to relieve severe traffic congestion in the central business district and to cut down the long journeys to work. Modern piped water systems and sewer construction projects monopolize the concerns of still others. For the smaller cities, however, such measures are unlikely prospects even on a modified scale, owing largely to limited funding and administrative capacities. Ironically, in some cases large-scale infrastructure improvements benefit not only a small proportion of the needy clientele, but actually increase the hardships of the poor. This occurs when infrastructure measures physically displace families to make way for technical "improvements", or where the poor cannot afford to pay for the new services produced, or when unsightly squatter settlements marring modern urban vistas, are blotted from public view by high fences. The impact on the sense of self-worth and dignity of people treated in this way is not difficult to imagine. Among a militant few anger and indignation may ensue, but for the majority, only apathy and resignation. These are hardly the attitudes from which self-help prospers.

Social services and consumer concerns

44. In addition to the concern over the physical environment, most Governments have reacted to the needs of urban communities by making an effort to provide traditional sectoral social services. These include social services connected with primary and secondary schooling, maternal and child health centres, clinics, hospitals, orphanages, day-care centres, community and family welfare centres, migrant reception agencies, and the like. In most cases, delivery lags far behind the demand and is often inappropriately rendered. Another kind of service appears in measures designed to benefit the urban consumer in particular, like price controls over basic commodities, wholesale market distribution centres to cut down on middlemen, and even the granting of food subsidies. At the same time, it is the affluent and middle class families that benefit more than the poor. The urban bias also creates a disincentive for increased rural food production.

45. Although it has not been possible to establish the value of services Governments render to urban areas, it would be safe to assume much more is spent on the general social services delivered in most cases through traditional institutions and in traditional ways than is spent on programmes specifically aimed at the low-income populace. Although substantial government resources are allocated to social services, just how much of this actually reaches the urban poor has proven impossible to estimate outside of arriving at an understanding that in most cases, apparently very little does.

IV. Constraints in the development of programmes
to benefit poor urban children

46. Although Governments in varying degrees are recognizing the need to respond to the problems of the urban poor, and indeed trying out different approaches, there are a number of constraints that hamper progress. These can be grouped in three major clusters. The cluster most frequently identified in the UNICEF representatives' survey is related to limitations in social programme personnel, management capacity and organization infrastructure. The second most frequently mentioned cluster is that related to the lack of urban social policy and planning. The third centred around grassroots-level community-government participation.

Administrative constraints

47. In the first case, problems of personnel, management and organizational infrastructure offer severe constraints on programmes serving the interests of poor urban children. A weak administrative structure that fails to define who is responsible for what or that lodges decision-making powers in a very limited number of positions represents a significant hindrance to effective service delivery. The complexity of the governmental system owing to the distribution of political power and financial resources among local, provincial and national levels creates a special situation that handicaps the programme development and implementation process. Integrating the work of several agencies for necessarily multipronged approaches creates an arena of infighting and intrigue, with each agency striving to co-ordinate the others and correspondingly resisting being co-ordinated. The inefficient procedures common to bureaucracies the world over are heightened by the effects of unstable Governments. One administration is voted out or overthrown before any of its developmental policies have had the opportunity to take hold. Even if they have done so, chances are they will be overhauled or rejected outright by the new incumbent as unrepresentative of his own vision. Cognizant of this sequence of events, the bureaucrat is lured into the safe path of adhering to tried and true routines and not initiating any activity that may make him a target of suspicion and subsequent dismissal. Inadequate funding, low salaries not paid on time, favouritism in appointments and promotion, and a lack of communication within the organizational set-up all lead to a decline in morale that frequently encourages corruption and inefficiency. Even where bureaucracies do initiate energetic programmes of assistance, the lack of trained personnel for the challenging and complex tasks at hand renders the targeted levels of performance hard to achieve. A failure to grasp the intricacies of urban social problems and to understand the reasons for their emergence, much less formulate appropriate solutions, also characterizes many a bureaucrat. Busy attending to the minute details of daily practice, they have no time to expand their theoretical horizons or study the relevant data emerging from their own country and from others that call for significant changes in policy. This counter-intellectual stance they sometimes justify under the guise of being practical administrators interested in action not abstract theories. Accordingly, innovation comes only when the evidence of failure is so great that it can no longer be conveniently ignored. An underlying factor relevant to all of these problems is the scarcity of trained and motivated personnel.

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Dearth of urban social policy and planning measures

48. The second most frequently identified set of constraints focuses on the lack of an urban policy, specifically of an urban social policy, and the virtual absence of social programme planning. This situation is linked, however, in a number of cases to the dearth of a broader development policy at the national level. Hence, effective planning and institutional development of any kind are hindered. Where there is a clearly articulated national development policy, it usually favours those strategies fostering investments in the modern urban-industrial sector, and only recently rural development. Planning for the traditional urban poor sector rarely comes into the picture as yet. Moreover, national budget allocations still give social services short shrift, considering the increasingly recognized right of people to have at least their basic needs fulfilled. The "productive" sector is still seen to be the manufacturing and modern enterprise, whereas social service delivery is treated as a consumption expenditure and therefore "nonproductive". The level of allocation accorded social services, then, remains far too meagre to accommodate even the minimum needs of the nation's poor. Accordingly, when distribution priorities between the urban and rural poor are set, they favour the latter group as the majority of the population; the urban poor are largely ignored.

49. In some parts of the developing world, the rural poor do not carry the stigma of their urban counterparts vis-à-vis the land they occupy. The legitimacy of the former has been established by traditional occupancy or legal title. Not so their urban counterparts, especially the more recent squatter occupants, who are by definition, illegal. To render any form of service to them becomes tantamount to recognizing the validity of their presence there, and appears to condone law-violating behaviour. Beyond that lies the apprehension that any kind of assistance will reinforce the desire of this unsightly group to remain and, thereby, wreck any chances for the city's carrying out the aesthetic and land use components of its hallowed master plan. Besides, argue some administrators, if the urban masses come to expect concrete assistance and even demand it when it is not forthcoming, the group may well become a dangerous, unstable force. The results may produce demonstrations and riots, radical political groups, and urban guerrilla or terrorist groups. Even if the situation does not reach such extremes - and history has shown that it seldom does - improving the situation of the urban poor is likely to attract still more migrants to the city. Even the most socially oriented administration cannot cope with a continued influx of migrants swelling the numbers of people already there.

Community organization and government reactions to citizen participation

50. The third cluster of constraints operates at the community level through government and community relations. The state of poverty itself generates passivity among the majority, and cut-throat competition for limited benefits among the relatively few aggressive residents. These attitudes serve to deflect the attention of community members away from the need to organize themselves into a solitary group and make demands on the bureaucracy and the powerholders. Where the resident population moves frequently, in many cases to be nearer new income sources, the potential for local collective action is weakened. In some countries, young men

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and women return to their villages twice a year or more often to help in the family harvest and participate in valued traditional rituals. At the same time, new residents are constantly moving in to try their luck in the city or in a particular neighbourhood. Such a fluctuating clientele poses difficulties for administrators trying to foster programmes requiring certain levels of membership continuity.

51. Other constraints revolve around the community and its history of attempted participation with Government in improvement programmes. Citizens participation with Government in planning and executing programmes is neither accepted nor understood by many officials. Owing to past disappointments, the urban poor lack confidence in the sincerity of the Government's interest in their situation or their opinions. In many cases, they do not have the collective action skills necessary to improve their lot beyond a certain point and to change their powerless situation effectively. Further, many poverty-stricken families do not share the Government's "development" goals for themselves. Their interests lie elsewhere. While administrators see slum dwelling as a problem, for the people it can be a solution.

V. Adapting the basic services strategies
to the needs of the urban poor

52. Although in principle, the basic services strategy relates to any group of poor people, its actual evolution has occurred in the context of rural situations. Hence, applying the strategy to urban areas calls for a formulation that takes into account those particular characteristics of city and town life impinging on the lives of the poor.

Distinctiveness of the urban environment

53. Certain features of urban life will reshape the basic services into a strategy appropriate to that setting. A review of these features yields the following elements.

High density residence

54. The tight concentrations of poor people into limited spaces can facilitate the delivery of services and uncover the need for special approaches, e.g., immunization from communicable diseases, installation of water supply.

Heterogeneous population

55. The mixture of residents from various ethnic and occupational groups results in a relative openness to change that facilitates innovations. Even where neighbourhoods are composed of migrants from the same home town, their exposure to new experiences as migrants fosters change.

Relative class homogeneity

56. Residents generally fall into the city's lower class population. While a fairly wide range of poverty is evident - from the destitute to the better-off poor - the relatively homogeneous life-style is a lower class one. This allows programme focus and a concrete set of basic services responses.

Exposure to mass media

57. The presence of radios, occasional television sets, newspapers and magazines, together with a word-of-mouth communication system possible in crowded areas, results in a population that is often politicized, aware of changing events, more likely to be open, interested and critical. The availability of urban mass media to communicate appropriate messages provides a valuable tool in the basic service strategy.

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Striving, self-help-prone, organizable residents

58. The urban poor of developing cities have proven themselves a hard-working group avidly seeking to improve its livelihood and the future of its children. This coupled with sheer numbers and spatial proximity, makes the urban poor easy to organize as a community along self-help as well as militant lines.

Strong kin and neighbour ties

59. Traditional reciprocal helping behaviour enables poor residents to survive under difficult circumstances. These positive linkages can be utilized in improvement programmes.

Flexible informal economic sector

60. Given a well-established labour-intensive occupational force, the basic services approach can stimulate aspects of their productive system to enable more of the unemployed and under-employed to claim a better stake in it.

Cash-based economy

61. Unlike rural areas, which allow survival partially through the presence in the vicinity of food and other natural resources, the urban dweller must obtain cash to buy his food, fuel and other daily requirements. In the city, the need for a cash income, preferably of a regular and sufficient character, provides strong motivation for household members to seek earning opportunities. The lack of skills and credit to cope with urban forms of work can be fruitfully addressed by the basic services strategy.

Women as income earners

62. While in rural areas, women often serve as housewives or unpaid family labour with the husband as breadwinner, urban low-income women often feel compelled by economic necessity to look for work. With a husband frequently unemployed or under-employed, she either has to take on a supplementary or even primary earner role. Income is often low and sporadic, however, given her low skills. Child care also poses a special problem to the working woman.

Out-of-school youth

63. Family farm work involvements open to rural youth have virtually no counterpart in poor urban areas. While some urban youth engage in petty income-raising schemes, many of the young men find themselves idling in the streets and frequently in trouble with the law. Young women face a similar situation of idle time spent largely in the limited household environment. Further schooling is not available, either because they cannot afford it or fail to qualify. Yet early marriage is not

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feasible, especially for the males as they cannot yet support a family. Out-of-school urban youth thus constitute an important target group for basic services.

Resource availability

64. Institutionally-based resources like credit, health facilities, skills training programmes and the like are generally present in urban areas more than in rural ones. The problem lies in difficulties the urban poor experience in gaining access to these resources.

The basic services strategy

65. The general strategy of basic services as outlined in the UNICEF Executive Director's 1976 report (Basic services for children in developing countries, E/ICEF/L.1342) suggests that the essential needs of children and mothers can be met most effectively through multiple approaches. These include the rapid enlargement of basic services in the interrelated fields of maternal and child care, family planning, production and consumption of more and better quality foods, nutritional rehabilitation of the most vulnerable, safe water supply and waste disposal, measures to meet the basic educational needs of the community and the introduction of simple technologies to lighten the daily tasks of women and girls, along with special educational and social programmes designed to create greater opportunities and their participation in community affairs.

66. In outlining the characteristics of the basic services strategy, emphasis is given to the following: (a) active community participation; (b) the use of suitably-trained local persons, part- or full-time, chosen by the community to work there; (c) the use of a substantially higher number of auxiliary staff with enlarged responsibilities who, in combination with the local persons mentioned above, will contribute to the release of professionally-qualified personnel from routine tasks for more productive roles as trainers, supervisors and programme directors; (d) the application of technology appropriate to the local social, cultural and economic conditions; and (e) contributions from the community to help finance basic services in cash, kind, labour, and other services.

Comprehensive guidelines for the application of a basic services strategy in low-income urban areas

67. The distinctive urban characteristics outlined above suggest a number of applications for the basic services strategy in urban areas. Although treated separately here, these components are interrelated in a single integrated approach. Their thrust aims at relieving basic insecurities experienced by poor urban dwellers. This is best accomplished by restoring predictability in their lives through maximizing control over the circumstances that impinge upon them.

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(1) Strengthen the community's capacity to plan and carry out its own development

68. Although the rationale for a strong participating community has been extensively discussed in UNICEF literature and in other sources, a review of some key elements may prove useful. From a practical point of view, a well-organized and participating community that autonomously mobilizes goods and services for its use is performing a needed activity. Its members are therefore transformed into productive human resources. This multiplication of energy can be enormous when large masses of people engage in it. Having accomplished this activity themselves, the participants are more likely to value its results and hence maintain them with a minimum of outside urging or assistance. Further, it has been observed that when people select their course of action from among several options, their choices generally adapt best to the situation at hand. The alternatives they select embody elements that people can control by themselves without becoming unduly dependent on outside props. Involvement of this kind also becomes part of a self-learning and discovery process that inculcates an important measure of self-confidence and self-worth in the practitioner. As a result, he or she is more likely to trust the neighbours, join them in collective action, and make justified demands on the institutional and power centres of society.

69. The basis for a community's capacity to get itself organized frequently lies in the informal networks of personalized ties that abound in poor urban neighbourhoods. Given sufficient motivation and training, these groups can emerge as formal associations with legal personalities and the power to get programmes of their own under way, all without undermining their original spontaneity. Poor populations have proven their ability to organize themselves, especially when faced with a collective threat to their security. Others have been assisted by concerned private social action groups coming out of religious, university, civic or political settings. Still others have been set up by government authorities interested in extending the administration hierarchy down to the neighbourhood level. The degree of cohesiveness and the effectiveness of the community groupings may change over time as issues blossom and fade, as efficacy in reshaping their future grows or declines, and as the authorities encourage or discourage the active participation of community groups according to a definition of them as desirable rather than dangerous.

70. If community participation is to constitute a genuine component of the basic services approach, it needs to be understood better. A discussion of community development and community organization techniques is thus appropriate.

71. Co-operation and conflict in community organization. Two distinctive modes characterize people's organization, one of harmonious co-operation regarding projects following community development lines, and the other of conflict-confrontation-negotiation on issues between people and power figures. In both cases the principle of self-help is enshrined. However, the community development approach stresses requests to authorities for supportive services on a project encouraged by the latter. The more militant approach mobilizes the populace, which then demands the goods or services due them from the appropriate authorities. Through collective pressure tactics, the people's group then proceeds to negotiate as peers with the authorities in charge. The issues can range from the installation of a water supply system in

the community to a reclassification of residential land tenure from squatter to permanent lessee or owner.

72. In the community development mode, concrete project results are indicators of success. The militant community organization approach, highlights the process of enabling ordinary people to experience the gratifications of equality and a sense of power. Indicators of success include the number of people who join a confrontation group, the growing number who articulate their ideas from one meeting to the next, and the number of "victories" attained in negotiations with power figures. Forcing a formerly recalcitrant official to receive a delegation, or getting him to sign that he is acceding to all or some of their demands are examples of victories. By contrast, the actual installation of the water supply system becomes an anticlimax since the real issue was already resolved earlier in the mobilization efforts. Tactics range from water-seeking women, with children in tow, invading the water authority premises to do their laundry there, to presenting petitions to the manager.

73. Understandably, persons in authority find the harmony-oriented community development approach more compatible with their own orientations. Where they are genuinely people-oriented, the concrete project results they support can significantly raise levels of living. However, critics of this approach cite its system-maintenance functions, in particular, the perpetuation of the dependency relationship of people vis-à-vis authority. The conflict-confrontation approach, on the other hand, frequently angers officials not accustomed to strong pressures or demands from lower-class groups. Many conclude that these militant groups are being manipulated by outside agitators. In extreme cases, the group or their leaders are jailed on charges ranging from disturbing the peace to subversion. Under the strong authoritarian rules existing in many developing countries, this may mean a long incarceration. Where to draw the line between legitimate citizen protest over an anomalous local situation and subversion is a bone of contention between the authorities and people's groups.

74. None the less, defenders of organizing people for power maintain that unless poor people internalize a sense of self-worth, dignity, and personal efficacy through group strength, they cannot be enlightened citizens liberated from the stultifying effects of dependency and poverty. Supporters further argue that organized grass-roots movements seek not to overthrow the system but to participate in it more equitably. Their tactics therefore aim at creating a dialogue, indeed forcing one where necessary, between groups that ordinarily do not engage in dialogue, especially not as equals. This principle does not differ from the labour union-management collective-bargaining model, by now accepted in most countries. In this sense, it is a non-violent approach to reorganizing heretofore distorted power arrangements in favour of greater equity. From their perspective, this is the essence of true development - a self-reliant citizenry conscious of its rights as human beings and willing to initiate the steps needed to pursue them actively.

75. Community decision-making modes. A key issue of controversy involving well-organized citizens' groups and government administrators is that of power-sharing

and decision-making. Six of the more common modes are outlined here. The first has a group of professional or better educated residents of the community acting as representatives of the area and its citizenry, either by force of tradition or because outside entities single them out on the basis of their highly visible status. These local elites usually have a good deal of influence and can command a following in the community. They organize voluntary associations which while effective in service delivery terms, leave decision-making in the hands of the leaders. The members merely follow. The second mode identifies locally based bureaucrats as representatives of the community. Since they have connexions with powerful people higher up in the official and private hierarchies, community residents are usually willing to have them speak for the group since some patronage benefits may come out of it. Again, active decision-making on the part of community members is virtually nil; their function is to be present during welcoming ceremonies for visiting dignitaries and to participate in cleanliness drives and the like launched by these bureaucrat-leaders.

76. The other four modes entail greater participation of the community, and far more information and communication on developments in its relations with outside entities controlling coveted resources. Mode three finds outside officials, bureaucrats or private agency personnel getting people's reactions beforehand to a scheme of service delivery they are planning for the community. This may take the form of a credit co-operative, new child centre, or the installation of artesian wells. People's opinions are listened to and, where feasible, some shifts in the original implementation schemes may indeed occur. None the less, the people's participation is more token than real. Contrast this to the fourth mode, where the outside resource controllers ask the community and its representatives to meet with them and help develop a programme from its inception to its conclusion. The last two modes institutionalize the decision-making status of the community by having, in the fifth mode, one or two representatives of the community sit on a legally constituted formal board, and in the sixth mode, the community representatives sit as the majority group on the board. Whichever mode is in operation in any particular place and time, the controlling group has to recognize that any claim to legitimacy ultimately rests on its accountability to the people. Citizen participation can be a tricky concept holding different meanings for local residents versus administrators. A clearer understanding of its variations will enable action planners to work out programmes more realistically.

(2) Help the urban poor to generate income and increase productivity

77. Since urban dwellers depend heavily on a cash income for the satisfaction of their needs, employment or other sources of income necessarily assume high priority in a programme to enhance low levels of living. In this context, three major measures should be considered - skills up-grading, credit, and legislative arrangements.

78. Upgrade skills for men, women, and youth. Whether the urban poor resident seeks employment or a business for himself, his level of skills probably needs upgrading. Hence, wherever possible, skills training programmes need to be established. Their location in the community if possible would have the important effect of attracting trainees who cannot afford the transportation fare elsewhere.

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Moreover, their very presence there serves as a constant reminder and invitation to others who might profit from its offerings. A necessary prerequisite to establishing training programmes, however, is a broad feasibility study of the types-of skills needed in the city's economy. Nothing is more disastrous to a skills training programme than having its graduates still visibly unable to use their newly acquired skills. This is why concomittant job placement programmes are also desirable. In the same manner, where the skills taught encourage a self-employed activity, some attempt should be made to link the graduate into a marketing and supply system that guarantees as steady an income as possible. It is understood, of course, that a new training centre need not be built if already existing facilities can accommodate this function as well.

79. The skill itself is only part of the training programme; linkages with the environment and organization of work must also be firmly forged. Personal experience in filling out application forms, responding to an interview, riding an elevator, telling time, or following written directions likewise form part of the training repertoire. A staff member or volunteers accompanying an applicant to his first interview can also help the new job-seeker overcome the fears or apprehensions that might make him shy away from even entering the site that first day.

80. For the future entrepreneurs, an understanding of business management is necessary if the enterprise is not to lose money and collapse. Shifting from a small family-run enterprise of two to four people whose labour is not quantified in the profit equation, to a larger one of 10 to 12 mostly non-relatives with skills to be recompensed marks a significant qualitative leap. Accounting skills, budgeting, participation in the social security system, and quality control in a mini-industry can make the difference between success and failure.

81. These principles apply to both men and women in the community, and to the out-of-school youth as well. Since most households need more than one earner, all able-bodies members try to work, even children. Certain considerations must be given to the women, however, because of their continuing homemaker-child-care roles. Providing a variety of options is important if a woman is to have the flexibility to integrate home and work. Cultural prescriptions in different countries also have a bearing on what women are expected to do and on how much leeway they have for changing the more rigid constraints upon them.

82. Hence, she may seek piecework in cottage industry-type ventures or work in a home-based family enterprise. Her sister may try to raise money by peddling small items from house-to-house around the neighbourhood, like fish and vegetables in portable quantities. Or, she may have an actual space in the local market for selling her wares, everyday or on special market days. Here her self-employed status gives her some flexibility in dividing her time between house and work. Or, she may find regular employment, a development that population specialists encourage since they notice fertility declines when women are employed, especially in a location other than the home. The point is, at various periods of her life, the low-income urban woman may have different preferences owing to shifts in her concurrent home and family concerns. Any employment and skills training programme involving her should adapt to her fluctuating needs.

83. Child-care requirements will also differ at various times in a woman's life. Since there are households which do not have a grandmother, aunt, or cousin available for child supervision in the absence of the mother, alternate arrangements are necessary. Child-care centres that are open all day from early morning to late at night may prove popular in some communities. However, many a mother feels uneasy about leaving her children in these formal settings. On the other hand, if she is equally uncomfortable about regularly asking the neighbours to watch her children, neighbourhood creches formed and managed by local mothers themselves may prove appealing. Instead of building one large community creche, women in individual neighbourhoods may select one dwelling, usually a larger and stronger material one, to serve as an ad hoc child-care centre. Mothers and grandmothers in the vicinity, and occasionally even fathers and grandfathers, are mobilized either to take turns caring for the children a few days a week or regularly to assist that household in the supervisory tasks. Nutrition programmes may be brought in. The approach here is to provide a systematic creche scheme that remains informal by relying heavily on community inputs of physical resources and labour. Since these creches would cater to only a few children at a time, perhaps 5 to 10 beyond the household nucleus, they retain their small, manageable scale. Because of the potential size of the clientele, the small-creche strategy is counterbalanced by generating a large number of such mini-creches about the community.

84. As for working youth and children, one has to recognize the necessity of their need to generate income, too. Acknowledging this fact and finding ways to cut down their work periods to only a part-time involvement will allow the other part of the day to be spent in school. This can be done by enhancing the productivity of those older adolescents who seek this so that they earn more and need not spend as many hours on the streets. For the younger children engaged in peddling, scavenging, bottle-washing or mini-manufacturing, the thrust has to be towards increasing their parents' productivity and income so that the children can be released for longer periods of time to go to school or simply to play.

85. Provide credit. Because low-income neighbourhood income opportunities rely so heavily on self-employment, the need for low-interest capital to invest in a small business is widespread. Normally people borrow from relatives, village mates or close friends, as they are not eligible for bank or financing company loans, having no collateral. They do so because interest rates are lower than at the traditional money lender's and because non-payment or late payment of the loan is condoned by their benefactors. Neither collateral nor long application forms are required. Although this informal system of credit is obviously effective, judging from the many flourishing small businesses, it is also clearly insufficient to meet the needs of the community. Hence, more formal systems are needed to operate side by side with the informal network schemes, and at the same time, replace the money lenders and their exploitative control over the economic life of the poor. Care must be taken, however, that these formal mechanisms do not unduly displace effective traditional ones, and thereby rob the community of the flexibility it needs.

86. Building on existing practices of a positive nature will help. Thus, credit should be available through mini-enterprises right in the neighbourhood in small

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and medium-sized amounts; regular banks and other formal financial institutions outside the area can handle the larger sums. The exact figures can be determined by reviewing actual loan sizes and frequencies in particular communities, and assessing additional credit and capital needs. Local associations can form credit co-operatives to harness meager savings and enhance productivity. Ease in borrowing is critical, since long application forms intimidate illiterate or barely literate people. Where some record of a simpler variety is necessary, a local resident can be trained to fill it out for the applicant in a kind of interview process. Simulating successful traditional schemes will also require frequent collection periods, depending on the size of the loan, so that it can be repaid in very small manageable installments. Moreover, a neighbourhood-based bonded collector can take on the task of soliciting payments each day if necessary. The problem of overhead costs exceeding the loan amounts, or at least the interest payments, can be handled in part by commissions to the collector for actual amounts received. Further, a passbook scheme where transactions are duly recorded and signed by the collector makes expensive numbered receipts dispensable.

87. Facilitate supportive legislative and legal arrangements. Clearly, these practices will require the relaxation and reformulation of laws and public regulations that heretofore have placed credit in the context of banks or similarly formal institutions catering almost exclusively to the more affluent sectors of society. Another needed reformulation stems from the recognition that in many societies, women form the bulk of the small self-employed entrepreneurs. It is important, therefore, that they have direct access to credit without having to channel it through or get legal permission from their husbands, fathers, or brothers. It has been observed in even the most conservative cultures for women that where she can earn some income by undertaking ventures for the family's financial benefit, the men become more tolerant and even supportive of the concomitant role changes. Thus, direct credit to women will have the triple effect of improving family and community levels of living and at the same time enhancing the status of its women.

88. The great variety and flexibility required of programmes to increase the productivity of the urban poor requires an intimate knowledge and understanding of the community, and the situation and characteristics of the particular people in it. Meaningful responses are impossible without these insights. This explains why the active participation of the residents is necessary in the formulation and implementation of projects and programmes. All the measures suggested for improving productivity and income can best be assessed by local people, with the assistance of outside professionals where called for.

(3) Foster the upgrading and maintenance of the physical environment by the community itself

89. Since the living and play environment of children is positively affected by continuously improved dwellings and physical surroundings, it is important that the residents' upgrading and maintenance efforts be encouraged and assisted. This entails making available to the people tools that they could not normally afford to purchase or would not need to purchase owing to limited personal use. A

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community tool-and-small-equipment loan or rental programme could be initiated, lodged in a centrally located shed. Also important is the provision of a variety of low-cost construction materials - first-, second-, and even third-hand at varying price ranges - that people could purchase piece by piece as they needed it. Outright materials subsidy is of course possible for those Governments that can afford to offer it. The availability of an architect and engineer on site, sympathetic to people's self-help efforts and financial limitations, to serve as advisors to construction or renovation is likewise essential. Low-income residents appreciate and trust the expertise of professionals when they believe that the latter are acting in the people's interests. This usually happens when the residents are in control of decision-making and can invite a professional in on their terms. The same principle applies in training: people will be eager to acquire technical knowledge if they believe the trainer accepts them on their own terms and can offer information or skills relevant to people-defined needs. In a Bangkok case, for example, a low-income neighbourhood group that had identified the need for its own efficient fire-fighting system as important for its welfare participated, women included, in a training and equipment acquisition programme for auxiliary fire fighters. This was arranged with the assistance of professionals at a technical college nearby and the active co-operation of the city fire department. The "graduation ceremonies" they designed saw them quickly, methodically and with great enthusiasm putting out a conflagration prepared for the occasion - to the delight of an admiring crowd.

90. Specific and direct forms of assistance at the community level promote the self-help process by giving people the experience of working together and developing relations of trust and camaraderie when tackling some common physical or infrastructure problem. At the same time, a careful line should be drawn between expectations in terms of the residents' inputs versus the outside entity's or Government's contributions. The community does have a legitimate argument when it inquires as to why other better-off neighbourhoods elsewhere in the city get their waterworks systems installed or roads repaired by government-paid workers without the residents' having to participate in the work process, in contrast to their own situation. Open lines of communication between Government and people and a local forum for discussing such issues can be the starting point for productive collaboration in the future. They can also reinforce the initiatives taken at policy levels to eliminate or modify building codes, zoning regulations and similar restrictions inappropriate to low-income neighbourhood physical solutions.

(4) Minimize the strains in family life and help the family cope with them in a community context

91. Responding to the needs of poor families goes beyond economic and physical considerations to the more social and psychological ones, as well. Since in most cultures the family constitutes the basic unit of society, and since in poor urban areas it becomes the social institution most responsible for the welfare of its members, it needs to be strengthened, given the severe pressures on it. Family life programmes designed by the community with the help of professional consultants can go far in reducing the tensions that build up among

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people cramped so tightly together and facing multiple problems involving sheer existence, the management of personal relationships and their future. Regular sessions where people can discuss these problems with the guidance of trained persons, some of whom can be local para-professionals, might well emerge out of community programming. Family planning and responsible parenthood could be called for when the community feels ready for it. Improved child care through desirable nurturance techniques, nutrition projects, health and immunization schemes can all come as topics of concern into these group gatherings. When people begin thinking through with others some of the things that bother them, their increased consciousness of the problem will likely lead to a course of action directed at solutions. Opportunities for families and other types of groups to be together in enjoyable circumstances beyond the daily routine of life enhance the social advantages residents experience in the neighbourhood. Similar programmes tailored for the youth and the elderly that give them specific and favoured roles to play also make for a mentally healthy community.

92. This essentially preventive approach to family and community stress will also have to be supplemented by a curative one. Counselling services that help individuals face marital problems, financial worries, difficulties with their children or their parents, alcoholism, drugs and the like should be offered in the immediate area, since the poor will more likely use facilities within easy reach of them. Similarly, the periodic emergencies that afflict the area - floods, storms, and fires - require prior organization in the community so that individuals and groups can take immediate action when a calamity strikes. Local residents are in a much better position than outsiders bearing relief goods in this state of chaos to know which families are the worst hit and need the most aid.

(5) Encourage local personnel to respond to common community needs, using appropriate technology

93. The heterogeneity of the city compared to the rural settlement includes the greater prevalence of educational opportunities and mass media forms of communication in the urban environment. They help fashion a group of residents highly capable of responding to new sets of activities. Depressed though slum or squatter communities are, many individuals may be singled out as particularly responsive to the most common problems on hand - like health care, nutritional deficiencies, communication within and outside the community, dwelling design and actual construction with limited materials. Local residents know which of their neighbours possess a natural talent and temperament for healing, designing and building things, and teaching others important skills like feeding their children properly, or writing and speaking in ways that, if elaborated, could become the basis of a community journalism and information project. These are the persons the community would likely nominate for higher-level training in the company of professionals.

94. Because these naturally endowed students are already respected in the community for their natural expertise, and since they possess a personality that allows its effective dissemination, people are very likely to value their more specialized knowledge. Having received higher level training, they will also have

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gained in influence because of the formal mutually supportive linkages that the training programme has presumably forged between them and outside full-fledged professionals; the latter should in turn feel a personal commitment to the well-being of this community. Once the neighbourhood has its own community workers, it is more likely to support them through small payments for services rendered. It will also want to ensure their continued efficient service by seeing to it that they get the space for utilizing appropriate types of technology that are reasonable in cost and compatible with their socio-economic situation. The possibility of these trained community workers forming an association both for camaraderie and for pooling their thoughts and efforts toward local improvement should also be encouraged.

(6) Draw on the extensive outside resources present in urban areas

95. Formal organizations and bureaucracies. The urban milieu is also notable for its highly developed institutions and resource base compared to the rural hinterlands. Low-income urban residents can capitalize on this rich storehouse. Effective community organization coupled with concerned and efficient leadership in the political and bureaucratic realms can redirect the output of government service agencies toward those who most need them. The para-professionals will have gotten some instruction on how to link up with some of these agencies, but much can also be accomplished by directly contacting the many voluntary non-governmental organizations that abound in cities and large towns. These range from extensive private bureaucracies dedicated to service delivery, like the Red Cross or the Rotary Club, to smaller clubs connected with religions, educational or civic organizations. The efforts of these formal groups can best be co-ordinated and utilized if their representatives are well known at the grass-roots level and if they can resist their natural tendency to dominate or lead the poor rather than strengthen the latter's ability to handle matters on their own. The communication factor is important too in the sense that community groups should know what kinds of resources various groups offer and can help redistribute. A handbook of all such groups and their services would prove useful if it were prepared in a readable way, kept up-to-date and disseminated among the community groups that could tap them. There is no substitute, however, for personal contacts in the matter of service utilization. The same principle applies to international organizations like the World Bank and United Nations agencies. Here, however, part of their role is to stimulate further the efforts of domestic agencies in a technical, financial and general advisory capacity. Their focus on the poor and on issues like people's participation may also serve to legitimize controversial but positive ideas that have not yet been accepted by the host Government.

96. University researchers, professors, and students. Another major type of urban resource that can prove useful are university research centres and their personnel. These professionals can undertake significant research related to local neighbourhood problems, at one extreme, or to bureaucratic procedures that hinder access to services, at the other. They can also help establish in a scientific manner the social and other indicators that tell whether improvement is occurring in key areas of community life over time. General monitoring and evaluation programmes represent another type of expertise which can be harnessed

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for the benefit of the poor. The latter themselves might also want to set up their own information search and retrieval projects and seek help from university personnel for doing so. Furthermore, social researchers can often provide insights to administrators that show the efforts of the poor to be the rational responses that they usually are. They therefore legitimize what formerly may have been deemed unacceptable or reprehensible by the authorities. They can also suggest ways in which existing and future programmes can be improved in the light of the empirical situation. But research is not the only service that universities can render. Their student population can join those of high schools and colleges in carrying out volunteer teaching or work projects in the community at the request of the local people and under their supervision. Imaginative community and voluntary outside groups can tap all these resources in creative ways to help accomplish their common aims.

(7) Develop urban policies and programmes responsive to the needs and problems of the urban poor

97. Certain aspects of successful urban development rest not so much at the community or agency level but at the policy-making realm. Any attempts to respond meaningfully to the urban poor can work only if they are accompanied by a constant review of policies, or if these have not been explicitly stated, procedures pursued by Governments in relation to the poor. Among the key issues that need reinterpretation as urban trends shift and new problems arise are those of urban land policy and the tenure rights of the poor. Another complex area with often punitive effects on the disadvantaged sectors is the bureaucratic domain with its increasingly obsolete rules and regulations. Thus, vendors of all kinds with any size of capital are expected to get a licence and spend a few days in the administrative maelstrom pursuing it instead of devoting their time to customers. Insisting that community health workers cannot engage in simple medical activities, like taking blood pressure because they do not have at least a nursing degree, would be an example of the kinds of destructive credentialism that penalize the poor. The total banning of vendors or hawkers from the city streets again represents this sort of indiscriminate, anti-poor thinking.

98. The tendency of modern business to veer into capital-intensive technology despite stated government policies favouring labour-intensive processes also warrants attention. Nor are labour unions free of bias against the poor when they erect formidable barriers to membership that exclude the majority of urban workers from the support of organized labour in favour of retaining special privileges for their members only. Periodic assessment of how much is going into informal sector investments as compared to modern market investments and the effects of this on the urban poor may also help evolve a firm and more positive urban policy in this regard. A re-evaluation of mass transportation networks, road building plans, and traffic regulations to see whether they give significantly higher priority to the interests of the lower income sectors rather than to the relatively few private car users would also be appropriate for policy review. The personnel structure and activities of the administrative bureaucracy probably need overhauling if they are to be more responsive to community level mechanisms involving the distribution of power and resources within a city and across all the urban places of the nation.

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A rural-urban policy would provide important guidelines for action. Beyond this is the constant requirement of assessing world-wide and national urbanization and related trends that may have a bearing on the perpetuation or even expansion of urban poverty.

99. It should be reiterated, however, that action to attack urban poverty need not be delayed while awaiting the full evolution of an urban social policy, desirable as the latter may be. Much can be done without such a clear specification. If administrators and political leaders have a better understanding of the issues involved, much progress can be made, policy or no policy.

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VI. Concluding note

100. The seven strategies outlined above represent generalizations derived from observations of the situations apparent in low-income urban areas all around the world. This report has presented a composite picture of the urban child lodged in poor neighbourhood settings that affect his life and personality both positively and negatively. He and his family are poor for many reasons, some of these clearly evident in material terms and others in relational or more abstract theoretical ways. Government policies in many cases do not reflect a specific orientation to the problems of the poor even though many urban children have been served in the context of national programmes. The basic services strategy offers a means of improving their situation in a systematic and integrated way.

101. The specific strategies enumerated above must of course be viewed as general guidelines rather than as strict prescriptions. Every country and indeed every community is different. Thus, every programme responding to specific needs must be reviewed carefully in the light of the empirical characteristics at hand. The issue raised by some observers as to whether assistance to urban poor children can be justified considering the massive proportions of rural poverty in developing countries, is really a spurious one. Rural or urban, poor children are poor wherever they are and must therefore be served.

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IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES

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