

## INTERNATIONAL CHILDREN'S EMERGENCY FUND

## MISSION TO THE FAR EAST

## REPORT ON BURMA

The Mission arrived in Burma on the morning of June 15 and left on June 18.

Immediately after arrival a conference was held in the Ministry of Education, Social Services, and Rehabilitation. The conference was attended by the Chief of Protocol of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry, two of the assistant directors of health and the chairman of the Women's and Children's Welfare Board (Mrs. Aung San, widow of the late Premier). At the conference the mission discussed its "Terms of Reference" and the statistical data which was desired as supporting any application the country might make.

A call was paid also to the Minister of the Department, who was not concerned about the technical details regarding the mission. As a result of the conference, it was agreed that an application would be prepared and given to the mission prior to its departure.

The mission called upon the Prime Minister, (Thakin Nu) who expressed intense interest in the problem of mothers and children, and had high hopes for the success of the work of the maternal and child health and welfare committee, which had been given an appropriation of RS. 1,000,000.

The mission was received also by the Foreign Minister (U Tin Tut), who also expressed great interest in the purposes of the mission. Visits were made to the Central Hospital, where a conference was held also with the Acting Dean of the Medical School, to the Venereal disease and other clinics attached thereto, to the Dufferin Maternity Hospital, to a newly established governmental central maternity and child health center, to 3 orphanages, to the Harcourt-Butler Institute.

As a result of the conference and visits, the mission was impressed by the lack of all types of health and medical personnel. The Burmese have not welcomed the continued services of British medical officers or of Indian medical officers. These two groups together represented a large proportion of the medical forces of the country. Pre-War, for example, only about 30 students were admitted annually to the one medical school.

General Observations.

Burma is a country with a large surplus of food (rice) which represents its major exportable product. Because of disorders over large areas of the country, amounting to insurrection, movements of rice are impeded, and currently many paddies are not being planted because of the hazards to the workers in the fields from the armed groups of outlaws.

It was obvious to the mission that the newly organized government, preoccupied with security problems and in many instances staffed by untrained or at least inexperienced personnel, had not as yet been able to organize comprehensive services for children. As an example, the Secretary of the Ministry concerned was unwilling to discuss, even on a professional basis, the scope and content of the proposals which might be approved by his Ministry and submitted to the Minister of Foreign Affairs for forwarding to the ICEF. This was a most discouraging experience, but the mission was told by foreign representatives in Rangoon that it was not at all an unusual experience.

The mission had an opportunity to discuss this experience with a number of high officials in an informal way. They expressed also great disappointment and promised to finalize the program promptly and send it to ICEF Headquarters in Paris.

The health needs of the children in Burma are very great. The infant mortality rate was reported to approximate 300 per thousand live births. One half of the pregnant women in the maternity hospital

reported to have syphilis. Medical supplies, drugs, and equipment of all types are in short supply.

After considering both the great needs of this country and the limited medical forces available to supervize any program for child care, the mission believes an amount not exceeding \$150,000 might be set aside for allocation to this country when, as, and if a well-documented program of aid is submitted.

(Signed) Thomas Parren

C.K. Lakshmanan

30 June 1948