CF/RAD/USAA/DB01/1997-03321

Expanded Number   **CF/RAD/USAA/DB01/1997-03321**

External ID   **E/ICEF/1986/L.0003**

Title

Children in especially difficult circumstances

Date Created / From Date   *Date Registered*   *Date Closed / To Date*

Primary Contact

Home Location   **Off of Secy, ExecBoard, UNICEF NYHQ = 3024**

FI2: Status Certain?   **No**

2/27/1986   **1/1/1997**

Contained Records

Owner Location   **Off of Secy, ExecBoard, UNICEF NYHQ = 3024**

Current Location/Assignee   **Record & Archive Manage Related Functions=80669443 since 3/19/2001 at 1:55 Pl**

Record Type   **A04 DOC ITEM: E/ICEF 1946 TO 1997 EX BD**

FI3: Record Copy?   **No**

d01: In, Out, Internal Rec or Rec Copy

Container

Date Published   *Fd3: Doc Type - Format*   *Da1:Date First Published*   *Priority*

Document Details   **Record has no document attached.**

Notes

,
Document Format Series/Year/SubSeries/Number/Rev: E/ICEF/1986/L.0003;   Doc
Series/SubSeries/Year/Number/Rev: E/ICEF/L/1986/3
Doc Series: E/ICEF/L; Series Valid date on import: 01-Jan-1950; Doc Year: 1986 ; Doc Number: 0003 ; Doc Numb
Short: 3 ; Doc Revision #:
English , L.Avail: A,C,E,F,R,S.. ; L.Orig: E-?
Document Alternate Media Store [AMS]: 002; Type AMS: MF
Note PDF or TIF: Chk_PDF: No; Chk_PDF_Prob: No; Comment: ; Chk_TIF: No; Chk_TIF_prob: No; TIF ID# Start

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UNITED NATIONS CHILDREN'S FUND
Executive Board
1986 session

POLICY REVIEW

CHILDREN IN ESPECIALLY DIFFICULT CIRCUMSTANCES

At its 1984 session, the Executive Board requested that "a policy review paper on the subject of children in especially difficult circumstances - including children in situations of war and conflict, street children and working children and children affected by natural calamities - be prepared for the 1986 regular session".

Part I of the paper is a digest, because there was no other way to cover, in the allowable document length, the distinct though related fields included in the Executive Board request. Policies and interventions to improve the situation involve many organizations within countries and a number of international organizations. Part II of this paper presents a very few general principles that would provide a coherent frame of action for these many partners, into which the UNICEF contribution should also fit. Draft recommendations to guide UNICEF are given in part III in the degree of detail that is normally required for Executive Board consideration.

This paper is supported by an overview (E/ICEF/1986/L.6) and three annexes: "Children in situations of armed conflict" (E/ICEF/1986/CRP.2); "Exploitation of working children and street children" (E/ICEF/1986/CRP.3); and "Child abuse and neglect in a global perspective" (E/ICEF/1986/CRP.4).

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CONTENTS

SUMMARY

Some 20 per cent of children up to age 15 in developing countries are in "especially difficult circumstances". This paper reviews the situation of children endangered by:

(a) Armed conflict and disasters triggered by natural phenomena;

(b) Exploitation - working children and street children;

(c) Abuse and neglect.

Other groups not reviewed here include children who are abandoned, institutionalized, disabled, from groups suffering serious discrimination and some from migrant or nomad families.

The majority of these children are from low-income families in the third world, but there are also many in industrialized countries. Most do not have adequate family protection, due to separation from the family or to conditions that incapacitate the family. They need not only protection from bodily and mental harm, but also the assurance of an opportunity for normal physical, psychological and social development.

The frequency of armed violence, especially in the form of internal conflict, is increasing, virtually all in third world countries. Currently some 40 countries in which UNICEF co-operates in programmes have armed conflicts within their borders. As many as 20 million persons have been killed in 150 armed conflicts since 1945. Civilian losses as a proportion of total losses are climbing sharply - from 5 per cent in the First World War, to 50 per cent in the Second World War, to 80 to 90 per cent in recent years. Most of these casualties are women and children. Armed violence is also the main reason for the current total of about 25 to 30 million refugees and persons displaced within their countries, again predominantly women and children.

Disasters triggered by natural phenomena, particularly droughts and floods, currently affect even larger numbers of persons, and these are predominantly low-income persons who do not have the reserves to cope with the calamity. The number of disasters and their impact are increasing, not because geologic or climatic events are becoming more frequent, but because of the actions of people forced by poverty, inequality and rapid population growth to engage in destructive resource management, changing the environment. Hence most disaster problems in the third world are unsolved development problems.

It is largely through work, usually in a family context, that children become socialized and learn adult skills and responsibilities. But child work becomes exploitative if it threatens his physical, mental, emotional or social development. Most child work is rural and unpaid. Those who work outside the family, largely in the non-formal sector. are substantially unprotected and powerless. Most children working in the street have kept some family connections, but a smaller group, described as being of the street, are alone,

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without family support. Some forms of child work are intolerable - the drug
trade, bonded labour, military service, pornography and prostitution.

Child abuse or neglect usually comes from persons close to the child; the
maltreatment is not approved by society and is preventable. Child abuse is
active, neglect is passive. The abuse may be physical, emotional or sexual.
Less is known about world-wide patterns than in the case of disasters or
exploitation, but professional concern is increasing and some definitions are
emerging across cultural patterns.

Despite this grim picture, preventive and remedial interventions do exist;
the need is to extend them, adapting them to the circumstances of each new
zone of application. One category of intervention is to ensure that the
country's basic services actually reach children in especially difficult
circumstances and that its pertinent legislation is applied, which frequently
does not happen at present, not only in the case of armed conflict. In that
special case, the concept of children as a "zone of peace" enables services to
be extended to all sides of a conflict. A second category is to establish
special services tailored to meet the special requirements of working or
street children or abused children, e.g., street or family counsellors.
Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) are often the best implementors of such
services.

UNICEF can co-operate with countries in such interventions through its
existing field organization and procedures, but with increased attention to
this area. There are also some useful actions it could take at the
international level. Recommendations are submitted for the approval of the
Board in part III, paragraphs 40-70.

I. BACKGROUND

A. Children in circumstances of armed conflict and other disasters

1. Whether they involve armed violence or natural phenomena, disasters are growing both in number and in severity of their impact. They are occurring more frequently, over wider areas with larger populations and in ways that place children and their families at greater risk. They may now directly threaten the lives, health or development of millions of children in any given year. An increasingly important cause of calamities is man's own misguided actions, such as proliferation of armed conflict and mismanagement of resources that results in environmental degradation.

2. Experience with disasters indicates that UNICEF should target rehabilitation assistance, whenever possible, to long-term development activities that will reduce or prevent recurrences. Special emphasis should be placed on protecting the normal development of children who are subjected to these traumas, and the most effective way to do this involves empowering affected families and communities to fulfil their proper roles in caring for their own children.

3. Working with governmental organizations and NGOs that reach communities, UNICEF can do much in disaster situations to promote adequate health care, day care, schooling, cultural and recreational activities, etc., that maintain some of the continuity and normality necessary to protect child development.

Children in situations of armed conflict

4. The frequency of armed violence, especially in the form of civil conflict, is increasing. Virtually all these conflicts occur in third world countries. Currently, nearly 40 countries in which UNICEF co-operates in services or programmes have armed conflicts within their borders. Civilian losses as a percentage of total losses are climbing sharply. In the First World War only about 5 per cent of casualties were civilians; in the Second World War the figure rose to 50 per cent; and in recent years civilians have comprised about 80 to 90 per cent of total casualties. Of the estimated 20 million persons killed in about 150 armed conflicts since 1945, the majority have been women and children, and the injured are thought to number at least three times those killed.

5. Currently, there are about 25 million to 30 million refugees and internally displaced persons, most of whom have been uprooted by violence. Women and children constitute the overwhelming majority. Armed conflicts also adversely affect the moral fabric of society and are associated with increases in crime, alcoholism, prostitution and the weakening of social structures. The changing nature of conflicts, which increasingly enmesh the populace as camouflage for combatants and as victims of "total war" military concepts, has much to do with these escalating effects of armed violence on civilians.

6. There are heavy indirect costs of armed conflict. Every minute, military expenditures amount to over $1.9 million, and during that minute 30 children die from lack of food, vaccines or other life-saving necessities. Yet today, 75 per cent of the world trade in arms is directed to developing countries. In

1984, a year of serious drought and famine, Africa spent more to import arms
than to import food. A UNICEF review of defence and health expenditures found
that, as a group, the countries with proportionally the greatest defence
expenditure also had the highest infant mortality rate.

7. In situations of armed conflict, many children lose the protection afforded
by family and community, and interruptions in basic social services can have
long-term negative effects on their health and education. Many suffer
psychological trauma, and their rights are routinely violated as they become
victims of murder, torture, conscription, sexual abuse, etc.

8. Children most at risk in circumstances of armed conflict include those of
displaced populations, unaccompanied children, those with severe health and
nutrition problems, children of single parents, children of incarcerated or
mistreated parents, children who have suffered abuse and those who are
combatants or prisoners of war.

9. In general, international conventions and other legal instruments
adequately cover the rights of children and civilian populations during armed
hostilities. However, the official responsibility for implementation of these
conventions lies with each sovereign signatory State. Moreover, even sovereign
States do not, or cannot, always control acts by combatants within their
borders, especially those of opposition forces. Thus, the basic international
requirements for the protection of children in armed conflicts are in many
cases not observed. Services to children and families displaced by armed
conflict are difficult to maintain and co-ordinate. Particular difficulties
are encountered in reaching victims of internal strife, increasingly the most
common type of conflict.

10. In some situations of armed conflict, UNICEF has been able to join with
other organizations in arranging with both sides for actions offering
protection for children. Recently, in one country, combatants agreed to cease
hostilities on three different days to facilitate vaccination of the country's
children.

11. In 1985, two other countries agreed with UNICEF and the International
Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) to serve children on both sides of armed
conflicts. Such actions suggest practical ways to implement the concept of
"children as a zone of peace". UNICEF can play an important role in
advocating the protection of children in conflict and in discovering and
disseminating workable means for assuring this protection.

12. In its activities, UNICEF should focus its advocacy and programme support
on meeting the basic unmet needs of child victims in armed conflicts and on
interlinked relief and long-term development measures required at the
community, national and international levels. The following should receive
priority attention: compliance with international humanitarian laws;
maintenance of basic service programmes with equal access to children on all
sides of the conflict; prompt restoration of family and community life for
children; and co-ordination of relief efforts with long-term development
programmes. Attention should also be paid to strengthening inter-agency
co-ordination and systematic monitoring of programme operations and impact.

Children in disasters triggered by natural phenomena

13. Disasters precipitated by natural phenomena currently account for about two thirds of all disasters and for over three quarters of all victims. The numbers of both disasters and victims are increasing. Most calamities and their victims are in poor developing countries, where loss of life is gr' 'er than in other parts of the world. Although historically Asia has been t.. continent with the largest affected populations, recent events in Africa suggest that it may now be the largest and fastest growing locus of disasters triggered by natural phenomena. There is little indication that geologic or climatic events are becoming more severe or more frequent. Disasters, however, are becoming more severe largely because of the actions of man in changing his own environment. The prevalence of poverty, environmental degradation from poor land use and rapid population growth are three interlinked causes which, in developing countries, give disasters an overwhelmingly environmental character. Far and away the most widespread type of disaster is drought, and the fastest growing is flood. Both are largely ecological disasters, and they now account for around 90 per cent of the victims of disasters triggered by natural events.

14. Because of the pronounced ecological component in disasters triggered by natural phenomena, many people are now convinced of the need to view disaster response in a longer-range context which emphasizes prevention and aim: to reduce the vulnerability of those most at risk. In many areas, it is possible to determine which areas and populations are most at risk and to plan viable preventive interventions. There is a growing technological reservoir which can be tapped to reduce vulnerability of families and communities to droughts, storms, floods and other such natural events. Linking disaster prevention to long-term development objectives can make such interventions effective and efficient. There are opportunities for UNICEF to promote preventive, long-term measures within its current policies, with the purpose of strengthening the capacity of families and communities to resist natural disasters and to protect the lives and development of their children.

B. Children in circumstances of exploitation: working children and street children

15. Child work is defined as the involvement of children in work for the purpose of earning a livelihood for themselves or for their families. This includes:

(a) Work within the family: farm work; handicrafts; micro-industries; household work; and child-minding. The last two types of work are carried out primarily by girls, releasing other members of the family to work outside the home;

(b) Work with the family outside the home: domestic work; farm labour; trash collection and recycling; begging, etc.;

(c) Work outside the family:

    (i) Employed by others - domestic work; carpet-making; industrial work; and illegal work such as stealing, pornography, prostitution, begging and drug running;

(ii) Self-employed – as is the case of children who work primarily in the street and in public places. Their activities range from jobs in the "informal sector" – parking, carrying packages or other loads in markets and shoeshining – to other forms of work such as begging and various illegal activities.

16. It is largely through work, usually in a family context, that children become socialized and learn adult skills and responsibilities. But child work becomes exploitative if it threatens the physical, mental, emotional or social development of the child. The point at which the conditions of work become exploitative varies depending on local circumstances. The use of the term "exploitation" does not imply that it is necessarily intentional. In most cases, the causes are structural. When a family is caught in the net of poverty, child work may be a matter not of choice, but of necessity.

17. Child exploitation exists in industrialized nations as well as in the third world. It persists because of poverty and underdevelopment and because in many countries child workers are unprotected and powerless. It persists because consumers in industrialized and developing countries and many third world producers benefit from inexpensive child labour.

18. Some types of child work are by their very nature highly exploitative because they endanger directly the survival, as well as the physical, emotional and social health and development, of children. The involvement of children in prostitution and pornography, the drug trade, bonded labour, any form of slavery and military service are examples of child work which are intolerable and must be abolished.

19. In less extreme cases, exploitation is more difficult to define because of the many forms it can take. Certainly, street children are neglected, if not exploited, by society in that they have to work, live, learn, and play in the streets. Child work is exploitative when it reduces a child's options and possibilities for full growth and development. Clearly, a prosperous, industrialized country with adequate provisions for schooling of children, offering the full range of social services, plus a minimum working age and a minimum wage, will view exploitation of children differently from a primarily agrarian country with large numbers of young rural workers and slum and shanty dwellers. Each society must examine its own labour laws and practices, as well as children's working and living conditions, in order to arrive at standards that are relevant and realistic for that culture and society.

20. Most child work is rural and unpaid. Even at an early age, girls assume the double burden of working at home and in the fields, a burden they bear throughout their lives. However, with increasing numbers of households in poverty and the growing rate of urbanization, more and more children in urban slums and shanty towns have to work for their own and their family's survival. Many of these children become street children.

21. Estimates of how many children work vary widely, from 52 million (International Labour Organisation) to 100 million (Anti-Slavery Society) to 145 million (United Nations Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities). One cause of such extreme variations in estimates is the extent to which child workers in the informal sector, or at home, are included. If all forms of child work are included, the estimate would run into the hundreds of millions.

22. The problems of child workers include:

(a) Health problems: retarded growth, disease and malnutrition; accidents; environmental hazards (e.g., pollution, noise, lead poisoning, poor water and sanitation); and sexually-transmitted diseases;

(b) Other problems: increasing separation from families; restricted psycho-social development; restricted access to education; restricted access to opportunities and services; low self-esteem; and economic, social, physical and emotional exploitation.

23. The UNICEF basic services strategy and the child survival and development strategy are particularly appropriate for tackling the problems of these children by extending existing programmes to them. The basic services strategy involves linking community actions with government service systems for referral, support and delivery. The link between community volunteers and government professionals and specialists is provided by paraprofessional workers. The child survival and development strategy consists of a number of low-cost activities which can help ensure the survival and development of children. Three of these, food supplementation, female literacy and birth spacing, are especially relevant to working children and street children, most of whom are between 5 and 15 years of age. 1/ Actions such as family planning education and counseling are important in preventing teen-age pregnancy, which is both a threat to these young people and a cause of child abandonment.

24. For programming, one important variable is the extent to which children are served and protected by their families - whether they are functionally with or without family support and whether they are exploited by their families. Working children and street children can be divided into three groups, according to the degree of family support:

(a) Group A: By far the majority of the children in this group live with their families. For them, assistance should concern protection, improvement of working conditions and preventive action in the form of services for the family as well as the children. Such services may include child survival and development and other health services, such as information on birth spacing; food and nutrition; basic education; vocational education; training for income-generating activities; access to credit institutions; combining work and education; and promotion of better working conditions and wages and services for children;

(b) Group B: The second largest group has some family connections but support is inadequate and/or sporadic. These children and their families require special attention in addition to the services mentioned above, since they are at risk of losing family support. Such attention may include family counselling and assistance to single parents in the form of food supplements; day-care facilities; access to credit for income-generating activities; education; health; nutrition; and other services at the work site and on the street.

(c) Group C: The number of children functionally without family support is relatively smaller but still distressingly large, including significant numbers of working children on farms and in factories and other businesses who are without family support. Some of these children have abandoned their families (runaways); others have been sent away or pushed out of the home by families that can no longer support them. Most of these children feel

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abandoned. They need special services such as vocational education; organizations to assure better working conditions and wages (such as residential work/education institutions); adoption or re-integration into their own families; and education and other services at the work site.

25. Street children are found in each of these three groups. Estimates based on findings in Latin America place 75 per cent in Group A - "candidates for the street". About 20 per cent are in Group B, where they are most at risk of family separation - "children on the street". The last 5 per cent are in Group C and without family support - "children of the street". This typology is useful to determine the kinds of intervention needed to address adequately the special needs of street children (ranging from prevention in Group A to special services in Group C).

26. Three broad approaches to improving the lives of working children and street children have emerged. The first uses legal instruments to prevent or diminish exploitation, through adoption of new regulations and enforcement of those that already exist, and to guarantee safe working conditions for child workers. The second approach seeks to provide basic services to working children and street children in such a way as to facilitate their development. The third and most recent of the approaches seeks to transform the nature of work itself into a vehicle, rather than only an obstacle, to the child's growth and development. This approach seeks to enrich and humanize children by forging a link between work and education.

27. For both working children and street children, it is necessary to extend the concept of the child survival and development strategy by including:

    (a) Protection provided by the community;

    (b) Implementation of existing laws and/or enactment of new laws;

    (c) Access to basic services and decent living conditions;

    (d) Treatment of children as persons, not just as delinquents, clients or consumers of services;

    (e) Empowerment, equal pay for equal work and the encouragement of self-esteem.

28. Innovative ways to reach working children and street children must continue to be explored. In both rural and urban areas, parents are the principal influence in their children's lives. But other possible channels must also be employed. These include seeking the participation of public officials such as teachers and social workers, the media, NGOs, and, of course, employers themselves.

29. Until recently, UNICEF programmes on behalf of working children have consisted mainly of support for a number of approaches helping street children in Latin America. In the last year or two, however, additional activities have begun in Africa and Asia. NGOs have frequently taken the lead, and there are some notable joint government/NGO interventions as well. Perhaps the most effective role which UNICEF has played to date has been that of an advocate on behalf of street children to change attitudes and ideas.

30. UNICEF, within the context of existing programmes of support and in
co-operation with other agencies, should advocate and support the progressive
abolition of child exploitation, the protection of working children and street
children, the amelioration of working conditions and the analysis of the
impact of national policies on these children. While the underlying causes
are basically structural - widespread poverty, underdevelopment and gross
inequality - society must do more than wait for the long-term results of
structural changes that it may be seeking to effect. Through extending the
child survival and development strategy in response to the special needs of
these children and youth, families and communities can be strengthened to
decrease and/or prevent the exploitation of child work and the growth of
numbers of street children.

C. Children in circumstances of abuse and neglect

31. Although relatively little is known about world-wide patterns of child
abuse and neglect, extrapolations from existing information suggest that
perhaps 10 per cent of the world's children suffer some form of abuse or
neglect during their childhood. Child abuse is active, and neglect passive.
While both can result from poverty and ignorance, they also frequently occur
as a result of purposeful action or inaction directed against children. Such
mistreatment normally comes from persons close to the child, is preventable
and is not approved by society. Those children most at risk include females,
late birth-order children, children with certain behavioural or physical
characteristics, sick and handicapped children, orphans and adopted children.

32. It is useful to divide the problem into four categories: physical abuse;
physical neglect; emotional abuse and neglect; and sexual abuse.

Physical abuse

33. Child battering, often to the point of endangering health, appears to be
the most common form of physical abuse. Usually it is administered as
punishment by family members, although it also frequently occurs in schools,
factories and child-care institutions. While few battered children die or
incur permanent injuries from such mistreatment, it is known that the
psychological damage can be severe and long lasting.

Physical neglect

34. Selective physical neglect is extremely common, and there is evidence
that in some societies it may be a leading cause of child morbidity and
mortality, an important point usually overlooked by programme planners and
administrators. Such neglect leads to malnutrition and disease and is most
likely to be directed against girls, handicapped children and late birth-order
children.

Emotional abuse and neglect

35. Emotional abuse and neglect are the most difficult to define, diagnose
and deal with, and yet also might be the most common. They take many forms,
but usually involve lack of love for and interest in the child, and lack of
support for building self-esteem. They may be practised either by parents or
other caretakers, especially those in institutions.

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Sexual abuse

36. Recent studies suggest that sexual abuse of children may be far more common than had been expected. Although research is still limited largely to Western Europe and North America, new information is being acquired in other parts of the world as well. It is clear that girls suffer far more sexual abuse than boys. Another finding is that parent-child sexual involvement is more widespread than had been realized. While quantitative data are lacking for most areas, it appears that this problem thrives in situations characterized by male sexual domination, low self-esteem among females and family isolation - conditions which exist in many parts of the world. It has been established that most sexually abused children suffer that abuse from persons they know well who, in addition to parents, may include uncles, brothers and authorities such as teachers and baby-sitters. Little is known about child rape, but it is worth noting that it is feared by families worldwide. Sexual abuse for commercial purposes is more visible, but compared to other forms of sexual abuse, relatively few children are involved.

37. Thus far, most organized programmes to combat child abuse and neglect have been concentrated in industrialized countries. Attempts to transfer prevention and treatment models developed in these countries raise questions about the effectiveness of using high-cost, professional approaches in developing countries. Moreover, in all countries, much still remains to be learned about how to prevent and treat child abuse and neglect effectively.

38. International interest in child abuse and neglect has been increasing over the last decade as research has demonstrated the importance of child abuse as a major problem. Until now it has been difficult to define child abuse and neglect in cross-cultural terms, for the differences in local culture and social organization are marked. It is now clear, however, that there are solid bases for defining part of the problem independently of local norms. This definition can be based on medical and scientific research, the results of which have articulated some objective standards for physical and mental health. In addition, certain standards are emerging from international consensus. For example, in virtually no culture is it considered appropriate to beat a child to the point of injury. Because some technical and consensual bases now exist, it has become possible to undertake the task of discussing child abuse in international terms that can promote positive action. UNICEF, as the international agency most closely identified with the well-being of children, is in a privileged position to help encourage and develop international dialogue, concern and action.

II. GENERAL PRINCIPLES

39. Improving policies and services for children in especially difficult circumstances requires greater involvement of numerous government, semi-autonomous and non-governmental agencies, as well as the private sector. Support may come also from a number of international and bilateral co-operation agencies. Many services designed for all children do not in practice reach children in especially difficult circumstances. Hence much can be accomplished by reviewing policies and adapting and extending services to reach these children. All agencies concerned with policies or services

affecting children should include, in their programming, consideration of
their potential impact on the children in especially difficult circumstances.
In addition, there is a need for some policies and services addressed
specifically to these children. As a point of departure, the following
general principles are suggested:

(a) The diverse needs of children as growing whole persons, and the
necessity for maintaining broad concern for their integrated physical, mental,
emotional, spiritual and social development, should be recognized. Awareness
of the situation of children in especially difficult circumstances and of the
possibilities for improvement should be more widespread;

(b) Priority should be given to preventive and protective actions that
will reduce the likelihood of children falling victim to disaster,
exploitation, abuse, neglect or other especially difficult circumstances;

(c) Whenever possible, emergency assistance should be linked to
long-term development;

(d) Support should be given to reinforcing family and community
solidarity in the context of modernization, and family and community
initiative, capacity and self-reliance in monitoring and protecting the
survival and development of children should be encouraged;

(e) Priority should be given to actions on behalf of the most vulnerable
categories of children, without ethnic, political or religious discrimination,
and access by children on all sides of armed conflicts to essential services
should be available;

(f) Co-operation among both public and private sector organizations
should be encouraged and information on workable solutions should be shared.

III. RECOMMENDATIONS

40. The following recommendations are proposed for approval by the Executive
Board to govern the activities of UNICEF in this field. The recommendations
are divided into two areas: co-operation in services at the country level,
where the bulk of UNICEF input would be; and activities at the international
level. (Where the same heading occurs in both categories, the content is
different.) Implications for the UNICEF organization are described in a third
section. Where other agencies are present, whether international or
non-governmental, UNICEF should act in association with them, complementing
their activities and never replacing existing support.

A. Country-level recommendations

41. UNICEF collaboration should be related to a few priority fields within a
particular country, established by consultations and in light of the situation
analysis. This support should complement the country's governmental and
non-governmental development activities.

Situation analysis .

42. UNICEF should help countries to widen the scope of the regular country situation analysis to include the needs of children and women in especially difficult circumstances and, if necessary, in different regions of the country. Developed in consultation with the authorities concerned, this analysis should describe priority areas (physical, intellectual, emotional, cultural and social); current trends and future prospects; the impact of existing policies and services; available human and material resources; and opportunities for preventive and remedial action.

Advocacy and promotion

43. UNICEF should take available opportunities to advocate:

(a) Implementation of international laws and conventions regarding the protection of children during armed conflict, and support of other rights of children;

(b) Practical means of protecting and bringing services to children as a "zone of peace";

(c) Protection of the rights of working children, both as children and workers;

(d) Protection of and services for street children;

(e) Prevention of child abuse and neglect, and help to children and families where abuse occurs.

44. Where public policies and actions are a significant cause of a child entering or continuing in especially difficult circumstances, UNICEF should approach the government authorities involved, advocating changes and suggesting corrective measures.

Information dissemination

45. UNICEF, in collaboration with other international and non-governmental agencies, should assist countries to spread awareness among government policy makers, judicial and law enforcement authorities, concerned professions, the private sector, labour unions and other NGOs, communities, parents, and children themselves, of the internationally recognized rights of children and available measures for reducing their vulnerability and assisting their rehabilitation. This may involve, for example, co-operation in working with mass media organizations; developing appropriate teaching materials for use in schools and universities, including medical and law schools and military academies; preparing and circulating materials useful in designing and implementing community projects; outlining successful approaches and difficulties encountered; and, in large countries, encouraging exchange of information among groups active in the field.

Capacity building

46. UNICEF should seek to strengthen the capacity of government agencies, universities, institutes and non-governmental and community organizations to improve information systems, undertake problem analyses, design action programmes (where possible relating relief to development) and strengthen monitoring systems. This may include early warning systems and preparedness for potential areas of armed conflict and for disasters triggered by natural phenomena. UNICEF should be ready to assist in the training and reorientation of staff, including those of residential institutions, and in introducing innovative roles such as street educators or counselors.

47. Building on the experience of national commissions for children acquired during the International Year of the Child, local government and community organizations should be encouraged to include in their area of concern both children in general and children in especially difficult circumstances. UNICEF should also promote and support national and subnational expert advisory and co-ordinating mechanisms concerned with children's needs and services, including those of children in especially difficult circumstances, where they do not already exist.

Assistance to existing services

48. UNICEF should be ready to assist existing government services — health, formal and non-formal education, vocational training, women's programmes and childhood disability programmes — to reach children affected by armed conflict and other disasters, working children and street children and children suffering from abuse and neglect. UNICEF and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) are the two agencies with mandates that allow them access to those suffering on different sides of conflicts, and UNICEF can promote and support wider application of the concept of children as a "zone of peace". The services comprising the child survival and development strategy can greatly reduce the burden on children and mothers. Curriculum reform programmes could incorporate material about peace and development and children's rights.

Special services

49. For children in circumstances of armed conflict and other disasters, UNICEF should assist government authorities to anticipate which sectors of the population are in danger, to identify actions that can reduce their vulnerability and to prepare disaster contingency plans.

50. Working with other United Nations agencies, UNICEF should help countries develop new programmes where the needs of affected groups go beyond the provision of existing sectoral services — for example, services for displaced families, young widows and abandoned mothers and abused children. It is particularly important to implement tracing systems to reunite children with their families as soon as possible after displacement.

51. Working children and street children can be helped by community-based projects which reduce the risk of separation of children from their families or which assist those who have weak or no ties with their fam.'ies. These projects can combine work and education relevant in timing and subject-matter; ameliorate working conditions; and promote income-generating acti.ities for women and better arrangements for day care, which can reduce dependency on child work.

52. UNICEF should be ready to help countries prepare national legislation on the rights of the child, including the prohibition of work that is intrinsically hazardous or detrimental to their physical or psycho-social development; and to strengthen the implementation of international norms of child protection.

Studies

53. UNICEF should be ready to support studies that form a basis for advocacy, situation analyses and planning and implementation of services. Where appropriate, such studies should be undertaken by national organizations and should include the perspectives of affected communities, families and children.

Monitoring and evaluation

54. UNICEF should help countries to include, in their programme monitoring and evaluation systems, services benefiting children in especially difficult circumstances, including cost and outcome. Both qualitative and quantitative methods should be used with involvement of, and feedback to, communities and administrations at local and subnational levels.

Funding

55. UNICEF support in the above fields should come primarily from country programme funds. Since the funds are always substantially committed to ongoing programme support, it will be necessary in many cases to seek specific-purpose contributions once projects are defined. UNICEF may also be able to help in the mobilization of local funds.

B. International-level recommendations

Advocacy

56. UNICEF should work with its National Committees, and with international and non-governmental organizations such as the NGO Committee on UNICEF, in disseminating information about the effects of armed conflict on children, about working children and street children, about child abuse and neglect and about possibilities for ameliorative action. The Executive Director's report on The State of the World's Children could review the situation of children in especially difficult circumstances.

57. In industrialized countries wishing to do more about the problems of these children, UNICEF should assist the National Committees for UNICEF in educational and advocacy activities.

Collecting and disseminating information

58. To support its advocacy and programme objectives, UNICEF should promote and assist in the collection, analysis and diffusion of information regarding the situation and needs of children in especially difficult circumstances and about effective ways of providing protection for them, in particular through the following:

Clearing house

59. A clearing house is needed for information relating to research, technology, project experience, availability of expert advice, etc., and it should be run by an organization other than UNICEF, but with UNICEF support. The clearing house would need global and regional focal points. It may be desirable to have separate clearing houses for the three fields discussed in this paper.

Networks

60. UNICEF should promote the formation of information networks of interested organizations and individuals for children and women in areas of armed conflict; working children and street children; and children suffering from abuse or neglect.

Information dissemination

61. UNICEF should assist Governments, international agencies and NGOs to prepare and disseminate information about:

(a) The consequences of armed conflict on women and children, about their internationally defined rights and about means for advancing these rights;

(b) Available measures at the family, community and national levels that reduce vulnerability to the disruptions of armed conflict, drought, flood and other disasters, to the hazards facing working children and street children and to abuse or neglect;

(c) Recommended short- and long-term procedures for protecting the lives, health and psycho-social development of children in disaster situations, in particular, unaccompanied and uprooted children in these especially difficult circumstances.

Development of, and compliance with, international law

62. UNICEF should undertake an active, supportive role in promoting effective compliance with international humanitarian laws designed to provide special protection to children and women in armed conflicts. For this purpose UNICEF should:

(a) Work with ICRC, United Nations bodies, NGOs (including religious and professional groups) and women's organizations to promote international humanitarian instruments protecting civilians in situations of armed conflict. This collaboration should also be used to encourage wider ratification of the 1977 Additional Protocols to the Geneva Conventions;

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(b) Encourage more active participation of third world countries in drafting the Convention on the Rights of the Child;

(c) Participate in the further stages of drafting the Convention on the Rights of the Child, including implementation procedures;

(d) Co-operate with ICRC, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and other United Nations bodies and NGOs in formulating guidelines for implementing international principles and norms of conduct in armed conflict relating to protection of children and women. These guidelines should be translated and widely disseminated in readable form, and they should also be taught in schools;

(e) Assist ICRC to develop and promote the use of teaching materials on international law relating to the protection of children and women for use in establishments teaching defence and international relations.

Preparedness

63. UNICEF should co-operate with relevant United Nations bodies to strengthen preparedness systems covering armed conflict and other disasters. UNICEF should suggest establishing viable focal points at global and regional levels and strengthening ongoing consultations involving ICRC and UNHCR.

Children not covered by existing protective arrangements

64. For a number of categories of children in especially difficult circumstances, e.g. abandoned or unaccompanied children, traumatized and abused children and young abandoned mothers, there is no agency taking responsibility for overall review of their situation and advocacy of assistance. UNICEF, with other concerned agencies, should explore which organization would be willing to assume this role.

Science and technology for child survival and development

65. There is a need to release scientific and technical personnel to work on problems of children's survival and well-being. In view of the success of scientific co-operation between the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics and the United States of America in the eradication of smallpox, further joint scientific and technical efforts to resolve major child survival and development problems, with access to the best available scientific resources, could be very fruitful.

C. Implications for the organization of UNICEF

Organization

66. The existing organization of UNICEF can carry out many of the above functions. UNICEF works regularly with countries on situation analyses undertaken in preparation of programme recommendations to the Executive Board. This procedure could be extended to cover children in especially difficult circumstances where preliminary inquiries show that there is a significant problem. The UNICEF field office network provides a channel for

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disseminating programme information to concerned agencies in various
countries. The collec ion of data and synthesis of case studies can be
strengthened at very moderate expense. UNICEF has long experience in support
of training activities.

67. There is already considerable programme activity regarding children
displaced by disaster or armed conflict and regarding the continuation of
existing services in areas of armed conflict. However, some additional
activities may be appropriate where opportunities open. Programmes currently
exist for working children and street children in Latin America, but there is
little UNICEF co-operation in areas of Africa and Asia where the problem is
growing. To combat abuse and neglect, examination of the extent and nature of
the problems is needed, particularly with regard to abandoned children. Where
new functions have to be undertaken, only a few country cases should be
handled each year.

Financing

68. The financing of activities at the country level, where the bulk of
UNICEF input would be, should be charged to country programme funds and to
specific-purpose contributions. The financing of headquarters activities
should be charged to the interregional programme preparation, promotion and
evaluation fund.

Personnel

69. Some orientation and training of UNICEF field staff is needed, preferably
together with national officials and staff of concerned NGOs.

70. Wherever possible, UNICEF should work with universities, institutes and
NGOs in developing countries, including contracting with them for temporary
assignment of staff. Some project personnel posts would probably be needed in
countries undertaking substantial activities. These posts would be charged to
the country programme, including specific-purpose contributions. There may be
a need for one post at headquarters to support field offices and to monitor
activities.

Notes

1/ See The State of the World's Children, 1984, and subsequent years for
a fuller description of the child survival and development revolution.