

UNICEF History Project  
Standard language included in follow-up letters sent to retired  
staff members, where appropriate

Excerpt A

Our current views about the History Project are set forth in the enclosed recent statement on what the Project is all about -- an excerpt from an Information Note (HIST/2/Add.3) presented to the May 1983 Board session and, in essence, approved by it. As you will note we use the term "History Project" rather than "History". This was deliberate in order to indicate that our approach was broader than one to produce a tome, typical of most institutional histories, which usually has a rather limited readership and impact.

UNICEF is facing an enormous "generation gap" and there is a great need for a collective "institutional memory" so that the experience, and the lessons to be learned, can be more readily accessible to the oncoming generations engaged in UNICEF work and in behalf of children generally. What we would really like from you, in addition to the emphases set forth in HIST/2/Add.3 para. 10, are your reflections and comments (rather than a recapitulation of what you remember or can call our attention to as already available in writing) with the main focus on key issues, policies, trends, problems, etc. as well as achievements and failures. What would be most useful is that they be in the context of your own particular experiences and which you would illustrate with specific programmatic and other examples. Some attention, of course, needs also to be given to the people of UNICEF and their part in all this. This includes your reflections on ways in which the key UNICEF actors performed their roles, interacting with events and challenges.

We originally sent you a general outline (HIST/16/Rev.3, 26 October 1982) and tips for participants (HIST/31/Rev.3, 2 December 1982). These are still generally valid (and enclosed again for your convenience) but we now suggest some additional broad emphases (as is apparent from HIST/2/Add.3 enclosed). In addition we believe you will find a number of useful ideas in the enclosed memo from Ed Lannert (HIST/2/Add.4).

Just to prime the pump a bit further we are setting forth below some other points to which you may wish to respond, in whole or in part, with retrospective wisdom, giving specifics based upon your experience:

- It is commonly said that UNICEF has had an influence on ideas and policies beyond its financial inputs and immediate programme co-operation and that it has greater credibility with governments than some other agencies. In what respects has this been true and why?
- It is also commonly said that flexibility and responsiveness to changing situations has been a main characteristic of UNICEF. In what respects has this been true and why?
- Sometimes it seems that the progress in achieving our aspirations is inordinately slow. Is this just our natural impatience or were there some obstacles which could have been overcome more rapidly if we had done things differently or better? In your experience have you observed any evidences of significant declines in infant mortality and child death rates which could be attributed at least in part to UNICEF's work - or actions we have advocated?
- What aspects of UNICEF's programme co-operation (both methods and kind of programmes) have worked best? Least? Why?
- From your experience how do you think UNICEF's approach to child health through vertical and horizontal strategies might have been made more complementary than they had been? What were the factors considered in making choices?
- A perennial problem for UNICEF as a children's agency has been the scope of its work. This has sometimes been discussed in terms of concentration versus diffusion, the child's well-being in relation to family and community problems, and the role of other agencies. What has been your experience with this issue? In the work you participated in, should the interpretation of UNICEF's mandate and the scope of its activities have been broader or narrower?
- Comment on your experience with the use of national resources, the use of national officers. How has this changed over the years?
- What has been your experience with headquarters/regional/country office relations and delegation of authority?
- What trends in UNICEF need to be encouraged? Guarded against?

Excerpt B

To ease the flow of juices on the early period we are enclosing the following:

- a) Final report of the First UNICEF Board, 11 December 1946 through 31 December 1950 (E/ICEF/160)
- b) Draft of unpublished history of UNICEF by Charnow - Gaan (1964-65)
- c) Excerpts from Board reports classified by subject: ICEF/337, Rev.2; ICEF/L.309, ICEF/L.309. Add.1; ICEF/L.309, Add.2

Excerpt C

You will also note from paragraph 6 of HIST/2/Add.3 that spouses and children of staff members would be asked to reminisce about the conditions under which they lived and worked as a member of the family of a UNICEF field person. Would this kind of supplement interest ----? Perhaps some of this may already be available in copies of correspondence they carried on during the years.

Excerpt D

We do not know whether you prefer to type your reflections or to dictate them into a cassette which could then be transcribed and edited by you. In the latter case, if it is practical, you could arrange locally for the typing of the transcript. Naturally we would pick up the tab for these expenses (as well as costs for zexing letters, memos, etc. which you wish to send us). Otherwise send the tape to us, and we will transcribe and send it back to you for final editing.

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