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The distinctive character of UNICEF

(see pg 6 ff)  
for more  
points about  
UNICEF

SUB ALSO CF/HST/030  
(Draft of section to be in Chapter IV,  
Executive Director's General Progress Report)

At the 1978 Board session the Executive Director agreed, at the request of a Board member, to present to the 1979 session a report "on the specific character of UNICEF and its achievements, as distinct from other organizations concerned with services for children" (E/ICEF/655, para. 224).

This request reflects a long standing concern of those involved in fund-raising for UNICEF that there appears to be insufficient recognition of the work of UNICEF in the broader context of the development process, on the part of many decision-makers - parliamentarians, ministers and other holding public office, and senior civil servants - in a number of countries on which UNICEF must depend upon for increased support to meet its financial targets.

In the UNICEF Board there has been a broad agreement on the general scope and pattern of UNICEF co-operation with developing countries and on the methods used to provide this co-operation, although, from time to time, there are certain differences among delegations on specific programme emphases. The debates on UNICEF in the Economic and Social Council and the Second Committee of the General Assembly, where in recent years its work has been considered along with other United Nations operational

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activities for development, and the resolutions adopted on UNICEF in both bodies, have indicated an extensive appreciation among delegations for the policies and achievements of UNICEF.

In the donor countries themselves, however, the individuals usually involved in the key decisions on the funding of external development aid, including UNICEF, are not on delegations to the United Nations or the UNICEF Board. Sometimes their knowledge of the role of UNICEF in contributing to development may be only of a very general nature; moreover, they are normally faced with competing pressures for commitments to bilateral and other multilateral aid, often in a situation in which domestic priorities and disappointments with the results of external aid create difficulties for over-all increases in such aid.

The desire expressed in the Board appears to reflect a belief that since IYC is a year for all children in all countries - developing and industrialized - this might tend to blur an understanding of UNICEF as it now is. The scope of national advocacy and action that IYC is intended to stimulate is considerably broader in substance and in geographic reach than the programme co-operation concerns of UNICEF. At the same time, however, UNICEF has for many years been identified in the public mind as having the main responsibility for United Nations activities for children. This identification has been reinforced by the role which has been accorded UNICEF as the "lead" agency of the United Nations system responsible for co-ordinating the activities of the Year. Most of the public, and many persons in government, do not distinguish between the "lead" role of UNICEF and UNICEF's participation in the Year in line with its own mandate.

Additionally two other recent developments underline the need for a clear understanding of UNICEF. One relates to the implementation of those parts of the General Assembly's resolution on the restructuring of the economic and social sectors of the United Nations system concerned with operational activities for development. The other relates to various views about the heritage of responsibility which UNICEF should assume for the wider scope of concern and action for children which is expected to be opened up by IYC.

Thus there is good reason for a new emphasis in information and education activities on the distinctive role of UNICEF and its accomplishments. Primarily this needs to be done in terms geared to specific target audiences such as decision-makers, schools, non-governmental organizations, and various group interests (e.g. professional, academic, women, youth, labour, family, business, religious, etc.).

To reach different audiences it is necessary for UNICEF, in addition to its own direct information activities, to work through the two information conveyors - the mass media and organized groups. The media are most effective in promoting general awareness. Organized groups are usually in a better position to spread knowledge geared to special clientele and to generate action. UNICEF National Committees in some 30 industrialized countries constitute a vital extension of UNICEF in reaching national audiences both directly and through other information conveyors.

The main approach for UNICEF, therefore, is to make available information materials which can be adapted for national use in the light of different political systems and cultural circumstances and focussed on specific target audiences. The materials would be drawn upon selectively depending upon the audience, the media, and the occasion. There obviously are considerable differences in what would be provided, for example, to school audiences or youth groups and to legislators, senior officials and persons engaged in work related to development. One result of these differences is that the various audience may have perceptions of UNICEF which are incomplete. It is therefore a continuing task to encourage more rounded presentations wherever feasible.

The basic materials available from UNICEF consist primarily of:

(a) documentation (e.g. Board reports; Executive Director's progress reports; regional programme progress reports; programme recommendation and evaluation papers; policy papers; the annual compilation of projects available for supplementary funding; and various papers issued in the E/ICEF/Misc. series \*/); (b) basic/core information materials for adaptation or completion by users (fact sheets, story outlines, press and feature releases, film sequences, still pictures, slide sets, photo stories), and (c) material for direct use (periodicals and other publications, syndicated features, interviews on audio tapes, films, posters etc.).

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\*/ For example, the following recent papers issued in the Misc. series would fall in this category: addresses by the Executive Director to the International Congress on Nutrition, Rio de Janeiro, August 1978 (E/ICEF/Misc.303) and to the International Conference on Primary Health Care, Alma Ata, September 1978 (E/ICEF/Misc.306); "The UNICEF experience from programmes for children - and needs for the future", paper prepared by UNICEF on occasion of receiving the René Sand Award from the International Council on Social Welfare, August 1978 (E/ICEF/Misc.305); Economic and Social Council and General Assembly consideration in 1978 of UNICEF and IYC (E/ICEF/CRP/79-1).

Materials can lend themselves for direct use and/or as source data in information for special audiences. The annual "UNICEF report" and the "Overview" report of UNICEF policies, organization and working methods are especially useful. At present the "Overview" serves primarily as a basic reference document. While it will continue to be issued in up-dated versions from time to time after the 1979 Board session, it is also intended to issue an abridged version which would omit much of the detail prepared mainly for the information of Board members. What would remain would be material which could be presented directly, or drawn upon by information conveyors, to provide a basic summary of the specific character of UNICEF in such matters as organization, general objectives and programme guidelines, fields of assistance, UNICEF inputs, relations with Governments, relations with other organizations in the United Nations system, financing etc.

In many instances, of course, material about the policies and work of UNICEF needs to be presented in a broader context than a strictly UNICEF institutional context. Understanding would need to be imparted on the situation and needs of children in the developing countries and on the possibilities for action through methods that are known to be technically sound, cost effective and relevant to the country situation. For some audiences, additionally, information may need to be presented on the relationship of external aid benefiting children to current international concerns, such as the NIEO, programmes against poverty, integrated rural development, population pressures, etc.

Following is what in essence is a briefly annotated checklist of the main points which have been put forward in one form or another in written and oral comments or interpretations of the work of UNICEF, both by the UNICEF secretariat and those outside the secretariat (delegates to the UNICEF Executive Board and other United Nations bodies, UNICEF National Committees, NGOs, prominent personalities in government and other fields, etc.). Taken together they provide what appears to be generally considered to constitute the distinctive character of UNICEF among those who are seeking to promote its work. The points <sup>usually</sup> are selectively presented, elaborated upon and interrelated in a number of different ways, depending on the audience, the media used and the immediate purposes sought. Specific examples in connexion with elaborations are, of course, provided as circumstances indicate.

Built-in assets

- Only agency in United Nations system exclusively concerned with the protection and preparation of children. Objectives reflect universal humanitarian impulse to care for children, thus creating atmosphere of international solidarity transcending political and cultural differences and eliciting a strong sense of commitment and cause associated with work at all levels; serves to attract resources which would not have been available had there been no special agency for children;

- Unique partnership with public; in many countries, provides an opportunity for thousands of individuals to contribute in a direct and personal way;
  
- Represents an important practical means for: international co-operation with countries seeking to ensure a better distribution of their income and the well-being of their population; helping make possible sustained economic progress and giving it a more human focus; complementing the more immediate goals of the New International Economic Order by contributing to self-reliance and equity within countries;
  
- Complete dependence on voluntary financing provides UNICEF a continuing impetus to justify the confidence of its contributors; this in turn requires that it constantly seek to operate so that: Governments with which it co-operates value an association with it; the policies set by the Executive Board are sound and its review of the work of the organization adequate; the organization and the work of the UNICEF secretariat is efficient; the organization is responsive to changing concepts on the role of external aid in development;
  
- Widespread expectation that UNICEF has responsibility to assume a leading "advocacy" role in focusing attention on critical needs of children and opportunities to meet them, and on securing a greater deployment of resources in services

benefiting children both by the developing countries, and by outside aid through the United Nations system, bilateral aid and non-governmental organizations;

- With the stimulus of IYC acting on existing aspirations a number of developing countries will be setting higher targets in fairly specific terms toward meeting the needs of their children as soon as possible; this requires a significant increase in external assistance from the international community as a whole in the years following IYC. It becomes incumbent on UNICEF to give leadership to international community in helping developing countries carry out decisions they make during IYC.

- Since children's needs cannot be compartmentalized, or solved in isolation from services benefiting the family and community, there is a natural tendency in trying to meet them by moving toward intersectoral and multidisciplinary approaches, nationally and internationally. Responsibility falls on UNICEF to take initiatives to expedite this process through the exchange of experience, assessment and reformulation of programme concepts and approaches<sup>s</sup>, and, on an international level, the development of appropriate procedures for co-ordination of effort and sharing of tasks;



- Because of their natural emphasis on tangible results, services benefiting children often provide an easily understood and motivating starting point for co-operative action of government, communities, parents and voluntary groups; they provide a good focal point for promoting greater community participation and responsibility which often leads to community self-help efforts of wider scope;
  
- UNICEF Agreements with Governments must provide that UNICEF aid be used or distributed without discrimination because of race, creed, nationality status or political belief;

Programme aspects

General

- Basic premise is that most effective approach to helping countries improve the situation of their children is to do it through support of policies and programmes benefiting children which contribute to national development and benefit from it;
  
- Encourages a comprehensive view of the child's development, including the intrinsic value of childhood in its own right and a concern not only with the physical needs of children but with their intellectual and emotional needs and their preparation to function in society;

- As part of its "country approach" UNICEF field staff in their consultations with planning authorities and sectoral ministries discuss various systematic approaches benefiting children that would be most relevant in the light of national priorities, organizational, technical and financial possibilities, and related UNICEF policies for co-operation;
  
- Emphasis is placed on improving effectiveness of services by taking into account interrelations between health, water supply, nutrition, education, community development and social welfare services; and the interrelations between these and other aspects of national development;
  
- So far as possible, projects having components involving different ministries are prepared at the same time; this enables the planning, financial or other co-ordinating authority in the Government to support objectives concerning children that require the attention of several ministries, and generally to further mutually supporting activities by ministries; a key objective is the convergence of sectoral services at the community level so that they complement and reinforce each other.
  
- Wherever possible UNICEF co-operation is fitted into each country's own planning cycle;

- UNICEF co-operation is concerned with the personnel, financial resources, organization and capacities that are available and can be built up for services not only in federal and state governments, but also in intermediate levels of government (e.g., provincial and district) and in the villages and peri-urban and urban areas.
  
- In addition to material aid (equipment, supplies and cash grants) which in dollar terms constitutes the largest part of its assistance, UNICEF provides consultative and advisory services for the planning, design, administration and evaluation of policies and services benefiting children; facilitates the exchange of experience between developing countries on services benefiting children; and assists in seeking additional resources which might be available for the services, both from within the country and outside.
  
- The mix of UNICEF inputs in the form of consultative and advisory services, supplies and equipment and local costs is fitted to the specific needs of each country programme, taking account of the availability of other sources of aid for these inputs;

- UNICEF contributes to local costs where this constitutes the most effective way for aiding strategic elements in a project, and where such funds are not available from other sources.  
For projects in countries in the earliest stages of development or in special circumstances, UNICEF may absorb local costs on a longer-term recurring basis than in other situations where they are normally expected to be borne by the country;
  
- Tries to respond flexibly to particular circumstances of individual countries and areas or zones within a country, with relatively more help to programmes in low-income countries, and with co-operation adapted to changing needs and priorities as countries move from one stage of development to another;
  
- Programme elements are favoured which either aim to solve a problem or, in the case of larger, longer-term problems, are likely to have a catalytic or multiplier effect, enhancing the country's capacity for substantially expanding services benefiting children, both in coverage and quality. This means a concern with recurring local costs and replicability;
  
- Encourages innovative approaches (some of which may not initially be part of national development plans) to help prepare a national or zonal base for expansion of services and stimulate further investments of substantial size from various sources;

support is thus available for the risk-taking involved in testing project designs and strategies that have potential as "growing points" in services benefiting children.

- In deciding on UNICEF support, account is taken of aid which might be available from other sources. Whenever feasible, UNICEF seeks to arrange its co-operation in effective relationship to large-scale development aid.

Programme emphases

- Basic services approach - now the major unifying UNICEF programme policy theme - offers practical possibilities for reaching in foreseeable future large numbers of children now poorly or not at all served. It involves as integral part of development strategy, greater decentralization, popular participation and reorientation of supporting government services;
- UNICEF gives priority in co-operation to programme components which:
  - benefit the young child,
  - reach children of especially deprived social groups and in disadvantaged areas of the country,
  - increase national capacity and self-reliance in services benefiting children (i.e. training, use of national expertise, development of appropriate technologies, local

purchase and production of supplies, strengthening of organizational, management and logistic capacities, exchange of experience between developing countries),  
- especially benefit women and girls.

- A major emphasis is placed on including in projects the strengthening and extension of within-country schemes for the training and orientation of personnel involved in services benefiting children;
- Acts quickly in providing relief for special needs of children in disasters and emergencies not always taken into account in the rush of providing general relief. Arranges for diversion of supplies already in country and drawing on stockpile of emergency supplies in UNICEF Packing and Assembly Centre in Copenhagen (UNIPAC); UNICEF staff in affected country participate in rapid assessment of urgent needs; wherever possible relief help is used as basis for restoration and development of children's services with long-range impact; co-ordinates with other relief-giving efforts; funding system enables rapid response; can be channel for distribution of larger-scale relief donations-in-kind;

Medium-term work plan

A medium-term work plan, updated and revised annually, which relates financial, budget and personnel planning in a systematic way to revenue and project assistance forecasts is designed to help the Board in its responsibilities for overseeing financing and assistance policies, for reviewing operations and administration and for approving new commitments; serves the secretariat as an operational tool in planning over-all activities; it is expected to be a help to donors in funding discussions.

Financial aspects

- A financial and fund-raising system which:
  - provides UNICEF a stable general resource basis;
  - gives Governments assurance that UNICEF commitments will be respected,
  - allows for supplementary funding which provides additional resources to UNICEF by bilateral aid agencies,
  - provides opportunity for non-governmental and the public to contribute to UNICEF's general resources or for specific purposes; Greeting Card Operation provides substantial revenue;
  
- Financial controls to achieve balance between use of resources to maximum and as early as possible for operational purposes at the same time maintaining a sufficiently prudent liquidity position;

- Able, on the whole, to make good use of non-convertible and restricted currencies;

Administrative aspects

- Long experience in material aspects of programmes benefiting children and in programme support services, including project preparation and management, delivery of services, and programme monitoring and evaluation.
- Supply purchasing and delivery system allows for considerable savings and makes possible speedier delivery to end-users. Through reimbursable procurement UNICEF supply purchasing services are directly available to Governments, other agencies in United Nations system and NGOs working in fields of benefit to children.
- Management and administrative adaptations are underway, as part of a long-term process, to fit the organization to handle an increased workload as a result of new requirements for co-operation with developing countries and substantial increases in revenue;



Relations to other organizations in United Nations system

- System of co-operative relationships long been in effect between UNICEF and various organizations of the United Nations system, and are continuously being improved in light of changing requirements. Includes arrangements for collaboration so as to bring to bear at the country level an interdisciplinary approach and complementary inputs, a systematic exchange of relevant experience, joint reviews of priorities and, where appropriate, the development of co-ordinated operating procedures.
  
- UNICEF Board and Executive Director agree that in restructuring of economic and social sectors of United Nations system UNICEF's identity, organizational structure and operational capacity should be maintained; at same time UNICEF should co-operate fully in efforts to improve the co-ordination and coherence of United Nations system and play an active part in development of new initiatives for working co-operatively with international and national technical and financial agencies and operating organizations, particularly from point of view of promoting basic services strategy.

Relations with UNICEF National Committees  
and non-governmental organizations

- UNICEF National Committees, normally organized in countries not having UNICEF-assisted projects, play an important role in helping to generate a better understanding of the needs of children in developing countries, as well as public support for the work of UNICEF. They provide a means for thousands of individuals in many countries to participate directly in an activity of the United Nations.
  
- UNICEF has long worked closely with voluntary agencies concerned with children. UNICEF encourages the use of resources which may be available from non-governmental organizations (both locally and through outside aid) on projects which UNICEF is aiding, or in supplementing or complementing these projects. Non-governmental organizations also offer UNICEF information and advice based upon their experience. Many co-operate with UNICEF or UNICEF National Committees in information and fund-raising work. An NGO Committee on UNICEF comprises over 100 international non-governmental organizations having consultative status with UNICEF.