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The contribution of UNICEF to the peace process*

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Introduction

The year 1986 which has been designated by the United Nations as the Year of Peace is also the year of UNICEF's fortieth anniversary. This eminently suitable concordance is exemplified in a statement at the time of UNICEF's 25th anniversary in 1971 made by the United Nations Secretary General, U Thant, who wrote: "UNICEF has been one of the most moving examples of human solidarity at the individual level arising directly from the sufferings of war...Reflecting on UNICEF's accomplishments of the past quarter of a century brings to mind the Preamble of the United Nations Charter and the way in which UNICEF aid has given life and meaning to the Charter's mandate 'to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war', and 'to promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom'...In offering its aid to all children, without regard to their colour, creed, nationality or political belief, UNICEF has demonstrated to the world that the highest aspirations of mankind embodied in the United Nations Charter can, indeed, be fulfilled in a practical way."

Creation and early years

UNICEF was established by the United Nations General Assembly on December 11, 1946 under authority of article 55 of the Charter which provides that the United Nations "With a view to the creation of conditions of stability and well-being which are necessary for peaceful and friendly relations among nations" shall promote "solutions of international economic, social, health, and related problems." Embodying the universal humanitarian impulse to care for children, UNICEF's creation reflected the widespread view that peace consisted not only of the absence of war but the right to live and grow.

In recommending the establishment of a United Nations Children's Emergency Fund the Third Committee of the General Assembly (Social, Humanitarian and Cultural) pointed out that "the child victims of the war were not only deprived of food for several cruel years, but lived in a constant state of terror, witnesses of the massacre of civilians and of the horrors of scientific warfare, and exposed to the progressive lowering of standards of social conduct...The hope of the world rests in the coming generation".

Although UNICEF's initial priority was to carry on the post-war child relief work of the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration then being liquidated, from the very beginning UNICEF had as a major objective strengthening of the permanent child health and welfare programmes of countries. The types of aid UNICEF could provide went considerably beyond the usual information, research and advisory services which international organizations in the social field offered. It encompassed "supplies, material, services and technical assistance" thus setting a precedent for what the United Nations Temporary Social Commission in June 1946 called "practical help" to promote solutions of international social problems. Its assistance was to be given on the "basis of need without discrimination because of race, creed, nationality status, or political belief" - a provision which has been of immeasurable strength to UNICEF throughout the years in carrying on its work without regard to politics.

The first Executive Director of UNICEF, Maurice Pate, had earlier worked closely with two of UNICEF's main founders, one of whom was very much concerned with the urgent need for relief to child victims of war, and the other who in addition emphasized enhancing countries own capacities to improve the situation of their children on a long-term basis. The first was Herbert Hoover, former President of the United States, who had prompted and directed large-scale relief operations following both world wars, and the second, Ludwik Rajchman, a Polish doctor who for many years had headed the League of Nations Health Section and was a pioneer in international cooperation in public health.

Maurice Pate agreed to become UNICEF's Executive Director only on condition that the new agency would be able to help children of "ex-enemy countries." Directing UNICEF's work for 18 years, he had a deep commitment to bettering the lives of children, a responsibility he regarded as "service to humanity." The staff Pate brought into UNICEF, the Board members who shaped the basic policies of UNICEF during its early crucial years, and dedicated supporters in many countries, were all basically inspired by the same beliefs as UNICEF's founders and Maurice Pate: there was a need for human values to predominate in international cooperation; UNICEF's work in behalf of children was an important way of helping create an atmosphere of international solidarity transcending political and ideological boundaries.

In its first few years, UNICEF concentrated on helping war-torn countries in Europe and Asia meet the emergency needs of their children for food, drugs, and clothing. With the rehabilitation of the countries concerned and these needs largely met, UNICEF shifted its main focus in the 1950's to children in developing countries where the "silent" emergencies--hunger, disease, and lack of essential services - had for long wasted the lives and potential of millions of children. UNICEF-assisted health and nutrition projects began to be related to long-term needs but they remained relatively isolated endeavors, except for mass campaigns against endemic diseases largely affecting children, tuberculosis, yaws, leprosy, trachoma and malaria.

Declaration of the Rights of the Child

In 1959, the United Nations General Assembly, responding to urging by the International Union for Child Welfare, adopted a Declaration of the Rights of the Child which affirmed in its preamble that "mankind owes the child the best it has to give." Its predecessors were a 1923 Declaration of the International Union for Child Welfare and a 1924 Geneva Declaration adopted by the League of Nations.

Among the principles in the 1959 Declaration, which included, directly or indirectly, all the earlier provisions, were that the child should grow and develop in health and have the right to adequate nutrition, housing, recreation, medical services, education, and moral and material security. The Declaration stated that "The child shall in all circumstances be among the first to receive protection and relief."

The "whole child", the "country approach",
and planning for children in national development

In the 1960's UNICEF began to add to its humanitarian concerns development objectives with a special emphasis on children. The wider field of social concerns which UNICEF gradually moved into, and which helped to implement the rights set forth in the Declaration, stemmed mainly from a new premise: activities benefiting children would be more effective if they took account of the interrelations between health, nutrition, education, community development and social welfare, and in addition, of the interrelations between all these and other aspects of national policy.

This concept recognised that children's needs could not be compartmentalized or solved in isolation from their families and communities. Intersectoral and multi-disciplinary approaches were necessary, both nationally and internationally. Not only physical, but intellectual, emotional and vocational needs were to be addressed through linkages of services affecting "the whole child". Moreover while investment in the child as a "human resource" was essential, there was additionally a need for emphasis on the child's individuality and for a concern with the intrinsic value of childhood in its own right.

Closely related to all this was a "country approach" in which the possibilities for effective action in each particular country became the main programme guideline. UNICEF also began advocating planning for children in national development and supporting programmes which formed an integral part of the country's development efforts, adding to these efforts and benefiting from them.

The role of UNICEF thus became considerably wider than the volume of UNICEF's material aid might indicate. Focussing attention on the critical needs of children, it helped generate efforts by each developing country to give higher priority to bettering the condition of its own children as part of the mainstream of national development. It encouraged catalytic and innovative approaches as a nucleus for the extension of services. It encouraged greater investment for children from international, multinational, bilateral, and non-governmental sources as well as within each country. It helped countries build up their own capacities for services benefiting their children.

Emergency relief

Although moving toward a comprehensive view of children's needs, UNICEF did not neglect its earlier emergency relief role. Wherever possible it linked its participation in relief efforts to rehabilitation and long-term development programmes, working closely with other United Nations agencies and with non-governmental organizations.

Relief was provided following natural disasters and to victims of the man-made emergencies resulting from civil conflicts and war. In many situations, UNICEF was able to operate in politically difficult

circumstances--in the early days on both sides of the civil war in China, in the different occupation zones in Germany, and for children among Palestine refugees and in Israel, and later for children caught on different sides of armed conflicts in Nigeria, Vietnam, Kampuchea, Lebanon, Central America, and Uganda. It provided aid for children and mothers under the care of liberation movements in southern Africa.

Nobel Peace Prize, 1965

UNICEF increasingly became a world-wide symbol for cooperation involving the international community, governments and people in a global partnership to take advantage of substantial opportunities for improving the lives of the world's poorest children.

This partnership was highlighted when UNICEF received the Nobel Peace Prize in 1965. In an official address that accompanied the award it was pointed out that the international action promoted by UNICEF was forging a link of solidarity between rich and poor nations and was helping fulfill Alfred Nobel's dream of brotherhood among nations. UNICEF was characterized as "a peace-factor of great importance."

The Executive Director of UNICEF, Henry R. Labouisse, elaborating on this theme, stated: "To all of us in UNICEF the prize will be a wonderful incentive to greater efforts in the name of peace. You have given us new strength. You have reinforced our profound belief that each time UNICEF contributes, however modestly, to giving today's children a chance to grow into useful and happier citizens, it contributes to removing some of the seeds of world tension and future conflicts."

Referring to the more than 120 governments who contributed on a voluntary basis to UNICEF's budget and almost the same number receiving UNICEF's assistance he said "Such world-wide cooperation contributes, in itself, to a better understanding within the family of Man. But to me, the great, the most important meaning of this Nobel award is the solemn recognition that the welfare of today's children is inseparably linked with the peace of tomorrow's world. The sufferings and privations to which I have referred do not ennoble: they frustrate and embitter. The longer the world tolerates the slow war of attrition which poverty and ignorance now wage against 800 million children in the developing countries, the more likely it becomes that our hope for lasting peace will be the ultimate casualty."

This theme was reiterated by the United Nations General Assembly when in its 1966 resolution on UNICEF it applauded the Nobel Peace Award to UNICEF "which reinforces understanding of the importance for peace in the world of the welfare and recovery of children in a spirit of friendship among nations".

Disarmament

In 1978 the Executive Board of UNICEF sent a message to the General Assembly asking it to take "whatever steps it appropriately can in order to assure that there may be a reduction of expenditures on armaments so that a portion of the savings can be channelled through national or multinational

programmes towards meeting the minimum requirements of children everywhere - adequate nutrition, safe water, primary health care and suitable education. These are entitlements under the Declaration of the Rights of the Child and are based equally on the principles of humanitarianism and the pragmatic necessities for sustained development".

o In 1981 the UNICEF Executive Director, Mr. James P. Grant, noted how difficult it was to achieve progress for the well-being of children in a world beset by an uncontrolled arms race, and in which the precious resources necessary to improve the condition of children were diverted to the manufacture of armaments. He considered that UNICEF's everyday work was itself a fundamental, albeit small, element in the struggle for peace: UNICEF's emergency activities not only saved lives but helped create a more stable environment in which political solutions could be pursued, and UNICEF's day-to-day response to the silent emergency also helped to foster a climate more conducive to political peace and stability by the lessening of economic and social conflict and instability.

In 1982 the UNICEF Executive Board in an appeal to the Second Special Session on Disarmament of the General Assembly repeated the essence of its 1978 message.

International Year of the Child, 1979

The International Year of the Child in 1979 generated an interest in the well-being of their children in many countries that far exceeded the expectations of many. In industrialized countries it also resulted in a greater awareness of the situation of children in the developing world. Additionally it focussed attention on needs and problems of children which were common to developing and industrialized countries.

IYC brought strikingly to the fore the increasing need felt in a large number of developing countries to complement services directed to the survival and physical well-being of their children with other measures concerned with their upbringing and personal development. Also highlighted was the need to find more effective ways to protect children against neglect and exploitation and provide more attention to groups of children confronted by special problems.

The Child Survival and Development Revolution (CSDR)

The first half of the 1980's marked the beginning of a new phase in the evolution of UNICEF, building upon its experience and its capacity to respond to new opportunities. It was clear, however, as UNICEF's Executive Director Mr. James P. Grant put it that "the central issue for much of the world's population is still life itself - that is, sheer survival. Human survival is, after all, the necessary foundation for all other human development".

With new vaccines and new possibilities of social mobilization, UNICEF began putting a major emphasis on universal immunization by 1990 against the most dangerous diseases of childhood - tetanus, measles, polio, whooping cough, diphtheria and tuberculosis - a goal adopted by the World Health Assembly in 1977.

Related to this were several relatively inexpensive, high-impact measures: growing monitoring of infants and young children through the use of measuring devices such as growth charts to enable the mother to detect early signs of malnutrition and deal with it; oral rehydration therapy to treat the dehydration which resulted from diarrhoea - the biggest single killer of children; and the promotion of breast-feeding as the safest, most nutritious infant food and of good weaning practices. These child protection techniques, along with female education, family spacing, food supplementation, protection against Vitamin A and iodine deficiencies, and other measures within the framework of basic services for children and primary health care, became part of a strategy for accelerating efforts for child survival, health and development.

Children in especially difficult circumstances

The overall evolution of UNICEF's role as the United Nations agency with a special mandate for children, combined with the broadening of UNICEF's perspective due to the International Year of the Child, and the dynamic of the CSDR, are leading to additional significant responsibilities to be undertaken by UNICEF beginning in the second half of the 1980's.

UNICEF is now considering policies and actions for children in especially difficult circumstances, including street children, working children, children affected by natural calamities and children in situations of war and civil conflict. For this last group practical ways are being sought for implementing the concept of children as "zones" or "bridges" of peace for whom help can be provided on both sides of hostilities.

The specific actions envisaged for UNICEF are advocacy; collection and dissemination of information; new or extended services as part of country programming; interlinking of relief with long-time development measures; and strengthening the capacities of countries and others to plan and carry out activities for children in especially difficult circumstances.

As part of this emphasis, UNICEF would increase its participation in international efforts for compliance with international humanitarian laws and the establishment of norms for the protection and development of children everywhere. This includes the adoption and implementation of a Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Financing of UNICEF

The voluntary basis of the financing of UNICEF was established by the General Assembly at the outset. It was recognized that while voluntary government financing would be the major source of UNICEF income, contributions from private sources were important. Starting with a small group, the number of governments making regular annual contributions rose over the years and included virtually all governments of both industrialized and developing countries. In recent years between 75 to 80 percent of UNICEF's income has come from governments, some 15 percent from private sources (fund-raising campaigns, greeting card profits and individual donations) and the remainder from miscellaneous sources.

Income goals have been set by the UNICEF Board from time to time. In the mid - 1950's it was \$20 million a year. In the mid - 1960's it rose to \$50 million. For the International Year of the Child in 1979 a \$200 million goal was exceeded. In 1986 - the International Year of Peace and UNICEF's fortieth anniversary year - UNICEF's income is expected to be \$400 million.

° When UNICEF started, it had ready-made assets of good will. However these would not have lasted if UNICEF's work had not justified the confidence of its contributors. The world-wide support of UNICEF by governments and people in its first forty years gives promise that the scope of this global partnership for helping countries give their children a better start in life will continue to expand, and that its impact on the peace process will continue to grow.