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18 April 1961

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UNITED NATIONS CHILDREN'S FUND

Executive Board

SURVEY ON THE NEEDS OF CHILDREN

Preliminary Review by Executive Director

Conclusions and Recommendations *

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* For the Review itself, see E/ICEF/L10.

1. The rights of children, as set forth in the Charter adopted by the General Assembly in November 1959 (Resolution 1386(XIV)) constitute a basic expression of the needs of children.
2. The basis for the conclusions and recommendations set forth below have been developed in detail in the main document of the Executive Director giving a preliminary review of the needs of children (E/ICEF/L10), in the studies and the views expressed by participating Governments, in the analytic studies made by the specialized agencies (FAO, WHO, ILO, UNESCO) and the United Nations Bureau of Social Affairs.
3. The needs of children may be expressed in the terms of an inventory which defines the problems and brings them into focus. They may also be expressed in terms of possibilities for action so that each country can work out its own policy for meeting these needs.

Inventory of Needs

4. The studies indicate that an inventory of needs cannot be limited to the major causes of child distress (disease, ignorance, poverty, hunger, lack of social protection), and that a deeper analysis is required. Not only must there be an inventory in terms of needs, but it is equally important to pinpoint, as precisely as possible, action to meet them at community and national levels in terms of health, nutrition, education, etc.

Environment

5. It is therefore necessary to ascertain the relative importance of needs resulting from environmental influences. Such needs may vary substantially from country to country; a minor need in one place may be a major one elsewhere.
6. In this connexion, the studies have shown great differences between the needs of children in economically developed and under-developed countries. Between the extremes a series of intermediate situations can be found. Although the picture is generally dark in the under-developed countries, there is also considerable diversity

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of needs. Some needs may, of course, arise from similar situations, for example, the needs of the urban child in the "shanty-towns", which are scattered over the world, and which are increasing year by year in number and in importance. Even here, however, the situation cannot be entirely the same from one country to the next because of variations in the general way of life, climate, cultural patterns and the economic and social situation.

Age-Groups

7. The studies also show that needs (considered in terms of the afflictions and deficiencies suffered by children) vary considerably according to age-groups. Overall priorities for particular age-groups need to be recognized, without, however, minimizing in any way the importance of other problems. During birth and the first few months that follow, the gravest threat is to the maintenance of life itself. During weaning and early childhood, the nutrition problems are often primary. Still later, ignorance threatens the future development of the child. Social protection is needed to avert serious harm even in early childhood, but it is of major importance later as the child begins to live more outside his family circle.

8. The inter-play of environmental influences with the general priorities for age-groups determines the situation in specific instances. Thus an extreme diversity is inevitable when analysis of needs is extended to take account of diseases, nutritional deficiencies and psychological and social conditions.

9. These considerations lead to a conclusion. In the countries where surveys of children's needs have not yet been conducted, they should be undertaken in order to set a national policy based on the needs of the child as they appear at the local levels, since there is no general formula for a priori definition of needs in a given situation, or of a given age-group.

Policy on Needs

10. While a major objective of a country survey is to determine child needs and their priorities as a basis for charting a policy for the children of the country, this policy must obviously be integrated into a social and economic context, and especially into national policies on health, nutrition, education and social welfare.

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11. Moreover, needs must be determined in terms of possibilities of action. A country survey of needs should make it possible to draw up a plan taking into account the priority needs of various age-groups, the influences of the environment and the possibilities and opportunities for action. A plan of this kind must be concrete and realistic. Of course if poverty could be eliminated, many of the needs of children would be met at the same time. But this would involve an attempt to solve the most difficult problem of all, and often quite in vain, because of the complex economic and social factors involved. Some diseases may constitute the most serious threat to children of a certain age-group and yet there may be no practical possibility of eradicating these diseases. Social services may be indispensable but such services cannot always be readily established.

12. Thus every plan must take account of over-all factors (such as the technical soundness of the proposed action), and specific factors arising from the physical, economic and social environment (including organizational structure, financial resources, available staff, etc.).

13. Moreover, whatever the methods that have already given a good account of themselves in many developed countries, they must still, in most cases, be adapted to the special conditions in the receiving country. The experience gleaned in a European country cannot be directly applied to an African country, where conditions are radically different. These considerations apply to problems of health, education, social welfare, labour protection, etc. Thus to the greatest degree possible a country plan must be related to the specific conditions in that country.

14. It follows therefore that country studies of needs are essential as a basis for establishing priority upon which concrete programmes of action can be undertaken and be fully adapted to the economic and social conditions of the country.

15. Are such surveys and planning at national level of a nature likely to advance the child aid policy in the country? Can they contribute new elements? The reply must be in the affirmative. The pragmatic approach tried in many regions of the world has often been most beneficial. However, sometimes it has involved the

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governments in programmes of doubtful priority both from the point of view of inventory of needs and of action. Planning based more solidly on analysis of needs is essential if an effective policy regarding children is to be achieved in government programmes, particularly when a number of elements are involved (health, nutrition education, labour protection, social services, etc.). This planning is also essential if policy regarding children is to be fitted into the over-all framework of national economic and social policy.

16. At the level of international aid, plans prepared by the Government (in cooperation with various international, multilateral, bilateral or non-governmental organizations) would permit aid to be given for programmes best designed to meet the special needs of the country. However, to meet Government requests, on the basis of priorities set up by the Governments themselves, would require a broadening of the range of aid that UNICEF can offer. It would appear, indeed, that restrictions placed on UNICEF aid have been due to the limitations of resources rather than the terms of reference of UNICEF. As other priorities are recognized - and in this respect the Declaration of the Rights of the Child serves to broaden the ultimate scope of UNICEF aid - policies need to be broadened or re-oriented, within the main principles which the Board has already developed, whilst taking care not to endanger gains already made. Certain divergencies might occur between restrictions on aid laid down by the Executive Board and the desire of countries to receive aid which is not limited by global priorities but rather is available on the basis of national priorities and opportunities for action. (See for example the report from Senegal). Present limitations mean that UNICEF aid cannot cover the diversity of situations as they appear on the different continents. In certain cases, of course, primacy may need to be given over Government priorities to programmes, such as malaria eradication, where a regional or continental solidarity is necessary.

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17. At the same time the Executive Board will, of course, wish to continue present policies which experience has shown to be essential for effective international aid.

18. On the surface it might appear that an aid policy based upon government requests according to national priorities and opportunities for action might be inconsistent with Board policies which have restricted the fields in which aid can be given. These two concepts, however, are not necessarily irreconcilable, given a certain flexibility in Board policy. The Board might agree to have some projects submitted to it which the requesting governments regard as important but which are in fields where UNICEF aid has not yet been given. The Board would thus be in a position to judge on the basis of specific project proposals whether it wished to enlarge the scope of aid.

19. Moreover, as in the past, the Board will annually review financial prospects in the light of forecasts of allocation requests. It will thus continue to be in a position to change policy emphasis when necessary and determine the balance to be maintained between various types of programmes and geographical regions.

20. It is clear therefore that no radical shift of the policy is proposed. At the most, the Board might envisage a slow but progressive development which would permit it (after appropriate assurance of the financing of previously approved programmes), to devote a part of the steady increase of resources to projects given high priority by the Governments on the basis of their own surveys.

21. However, an important problem, to which the Delegation of Sweden has rightly called attention, still remains to be settled, for it has not, in the past, been resolved in an entirely satisfactory manner:

- one facet involves effective liaison between bilateral or multilateral aid on the one hand and the various forms of other international aid on the other. The purpose would be to assure concerted instead of fragmented effort, and to

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use to best advantage the various possibilities of aiding economically underdeveloped countries. Co-ordination procedures between the Specialized Agencies and the several departments of the United Nations already are in existence. Under the auspices of the Administrative Committee on Co-ordination, a meeting of all the agencies concerned in the United Nations family will be held in Geneva in August 1961 in order to simplify procedures in connexion with projects aided by UNICEF which are of interest to more than one technical agency. But the problem of liaison with the bilateral and multilateral organizations still remains a subject for basic study.

- the other facet of this problem concerns co-ordination, at national level, between the several forms of aid proposed. Too often, indeed, a sort of competition exists between the various offers of aid. One of the possible solutions might be to set up governmental co-ordination committees at the national level, which would include participation of representatives of the various organizations providing aid. The representation would include Technical Assistance Board Resident Representatives, the Specialized Agencies, UNICEF, the United Nations Bureau of Social Affairs, the bilateral or multilateral agencies, and the non-governmental organizations desiring to participate in this joint effort. But this co-ordination would be effective only to the extent to which the action planned for children would be within the framework of national economic and social development plans. Such a plan for children could be based only on a general survey of their needs, and a determination of priorities. The solution would thus reside in a dual mechanism of nation-wide planning and the co-ordination of all the different forms of aid offered. For the moment, all that should be done is to set the Governments on the path of making possible the preparation of co-ordinated programmes which meet the fundamental needs of the nation's children and are integrated into its over-all development policy.

Recommendations

22. In summary, the Executive Director of UNICEF calls attention to:

a) the interest in the needs of children manifested by the General Assembly and other United Nations organs, the Specialized Agencies, the United Nations Bureau of Social Affairs, the Governments that have made surveys, and other Governments consulted by the UNICEF secretariat;

b) the first results of this survey which have disclosed the diversity of priority needs, both according to age-groups and the influence of differing physical, political, economic and social environments;

c) the interest expressed by Governments in national surveys to determine the most pressing needs of their children in the light of local circumstances and possibilities for action, within the framework of broader national economic and social policy, and to determine the priority areas requiring additional national effort and international aid;

d) the interest of such national surveys to UNICEF as a basis for enabling it, within the framework of its general policy, to focus its aid on the types of programmes most in accord with the desires of governments.

e) the difficulties which many developing countries would experience in undertaking such surveys without outside help.

23. The Executive Director recommends that the Board take the following action:

- 1) advise receiving governments that UNICEF is prepared to assist them, in co-operation with the technical agencies, to survey the needs of their children and to plan programmes, within the framework of economic and social development plans, designed to meet children's needs considered to be of high priority and for which effective action is possible;
- 2) requests the technical agencies in the United Nations family, the multilateral and bilateral organizations, and the voluntary organizations, to continue to collaborate in such surveys;
- 3) include within the range of UNICEF programme aid, assistance to such surveys of child needs as the countries may desire to undertake, and allocate an initial amount of \$100,000 to assist countries to undertake such studies either for the country as a whole or for sections of the country. The aid provided by UNICEF could take the form of supplies, transport, local expenses, and international personnel;
- 4) consider whether the time has not come to review the range of UNICEF aid now being offered from the point of view of broadening the fields in which it now operates and opening new fields, (a point of view which for the most part was reflected in the surveys of the governments and the technical agencies). While all the Governments that responded recognized the importance to them of the UNICEF aid for projects in nutrition, health (including basic health services and control of communicable diseases), and family and child welfare services, a number of them requested the broadening of the scope of such aid in relation to needs to which they assign high priority in their own countries.* The new or extended fields which are considered of high priority by governments include the following:

a) Broad social services

- (i) aid for the establishment or expansion of various types of social services within the framework of family services and directed towards the specific child needs within each community;

* For example the report from Thailand states: "UNICEF should not restrict itself to aiding health programmes alone; its sphere of action should also include education and the social welfare of children".

aid to programmes of rural and urban community development, with special reference to programmes of environmental sanitation and housing;

- (ii) extension of training programmes for social services at three levels:

multi-purpose workers at the village level;

persons occupying key positions;

specialized personnel for training of social workers or for field operations;

- (iii) aid to programmes for abandoned children;

- (iv) aid in establishing a legal status for protection of the child, with special reference to the establishment or extension of a birth registration service that will give each child a legal identity at birth and permit it later to enjoy full rights at family, city, and national levels;

- (v) extension of aid for handicapped children.

b) Preparation of the child for adult life

- (i) Certain aspects of elementary education;

training of normal school instructors;

teacher training;

training of home economics instructors.

- (ii) Certain aspects of agricultural education (nutrition, production at village level);

training of agricultural extension service agents.

- (iii) Certain aspects of vocational training for various occupations (handicrafts and industry);

training of extension service workers.

For the three types of operations listed above (4 b (i) (ii) (iii)), aid could be considered for:

equipping centres for teacher training and for vocational schools;

equipping field demonstration and training centres and areas;

production of school materials and teaching aids;

aid in the form of honoraria, stipends, teaching grants, etc.

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(iv) Aid to pilot youth centres, including:

a vocational guidance section;

a section to prepare youth for certain occupations, and to give refresher courses for young workers;

labour protection of youth.

(v) Multi-purpose demonstration programmes covering a number of practical activities.

5) defer action on an extended global survey on the priority needs of children. It is more urgent to assist Governments without the necessary resources in surveying the needs of their own children, establishing priorities, and planning programmes of action. Resumption of a global survey of child needs, and of their financial aspects in relation to international aid, might be usefully considered later, particularly if much larger amounts were placed at the disposition of the United Nations. Preliminary studies of the cost of health and education programmes for a number of regions have already been made by the relevant Specialized Agencies. The degree of precision attainable by subsequent surveys would depend on the surveys and studies undertaken in each country at the national level.

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