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UNITED NATIONS  
ECONOMIC  
AND  
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UNITED NATIONS CHILDREN'S FUND

EXECUTIVE BOARD

SPECIAL MEETING ON THE SITUATION OF CHILDREN  
IN ASIA WITH EMPHASIS ON BASIC SERVICES

Held at the International Convention Center, Manila,

on Tuesday, 17 May 1977, at 2:30 p.m.

Temporary Chairman: Mr. ESGUERRA BARRY (Secretary-General  
of the Special Meeting)

Chairman: Mrs. ALDABA-LIM (Philippines)

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Adoption of the agenda

Election of officers

Statement by Mr. Esguerra Barry, Secretary-General of the Special Meeting

Statement by Mr. Maramis, Executive Secretary of the Economic and Social  
Commission for Asia and the Pacific

Services benefiting children in urban areas

- (a) "Development of Education and Welfare Programmes for  
Children in the Klong Toey Slum" (E/ICEF/ASIA/3)  
by Ms. Prateep Ungsongtham (Thailand)

This record is subject to correction.

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memorandum and also, if possible, incorporated in a copy of the record. They  
should be sent to Miss S. Barry, Meeting Room 7, International Convention Center.

Any corrections to the records of the Special Meeting will be consolidated in a  
single corrigendum to be issued shortly after the end of the Meeting.

(11 p.)

Services benefiting children in urban areas (continued)

- (b) "Face to Face with Poverty: The Mobile Creches"  
(E/ICEF/ASIA/5) by Ms. Meera Mahadevan (India)
- (c) "A Review of the Slum Improvement Programme in Calcutta with  
Special Reference to Services for Women and Children"  
(E/ICEF/ASIA/4) by Mr. K.C. Sivaramakrishnan (India)
- (d) Analytical comments by Dr. Stephen Yeh and  
Professor Myong-Chan Hwang
- (e) General discussion by participants

The meeting was called to order at 2:55 p.m.

ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA (E/ICEF/ASIA/1/REV.1)

1. The agenda was adopted.
2. Mr. ESCUERRA BARRY (Temporary Chairman) proposed that the Chairman of the Special Meeting should be a representative of the host government.
3. It was so decided.
4. Mr. ESCUERRA BARRY (Temporary Chairman) nominated Mrs. Aldaba-Lim, Philippine Secretary of Social Services and Development, for the office of Chairman.
5. Mrs. ALDABA-LIM was elected Chairman by acclamation.
6. Mrs. Aldaba-Lim took the Chair.
7. The CHAIRMAN said it was her understanding that the members of the Special Meeting wished to elect Mr. Hasan (Pakistan), Mr. Haque (Bangladesh), Mr. Tobgyel (Bhutan), and Mr. Kyi Maung (Burma) as Vice Chairmen of the Special Meeting.
8. Mr. Hasan (Pakistan), Mr. Haque (Bangladesh), Mr. Tobgyel (Bhutan), and Mr. Kyi Maung (Burma), were elected Vice-Chairmen.

STATEMENT BY MR. ESCUERRA BARRY, SECRETARY-GENERAL OF THE SPECIAL MEETING.

9. Mr. ESCUERRA BARRY (Secretary-General of the Special Meeting) said that he had requested the co-operation of several professionals who had devoted their lives to the promotion of basic services in urban and rural areas or to activities connected with area development. The documents submitted by them were considered to be of a technical nature and did not constitute position papers of the Government concerned unless so indicated.

STATEMENT BY MR. MARAMIS, EXECUTIVE SECRETARY OF THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMISSION FOR ASIA AND THE PACIFIC.

10. Mr. MARAMIS (Executive Secretary of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific) said that the majority of ESCAP developing countries had not met the targets set out in the International Development Strategy for the Second United Nations Development Decade. Performance had often been below those of the 1960s, whether in terms of aggregate growth and per capita income or in sectoral terms. Shortfalls in performance, particularly in non-oil-producing developing countries, had been caused by the world economic crisis, weather fluctuations, natural disasters, inadequate policies within the developing countries, the disruption of the international monetary system, adverse movements in the terms of trade, continuous or intensified protectionism in developed countries, the downward trend in the real values of concessional aid flows to ESCAP developing countries, large external debts and rising debt burdens, and the high import cost of oil and industrial equipment.

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11. The growth in agricultural production had been sluggish during the Decade, and although food production had increased in many countries per capita levels had shown no improvement. The combination of low food production, limited import capacity, depleted world stocks and inadequate food aid had diminished food supplies and had severely curtailed progress with respect to raising nutritional levels which constituted a determining factor for the physical and mental development of children. Although the trend towards declining food stocks in ESCAP developing countries had been reversed by the beginning of 1977, food production would have to increase much more rapidly to make up for past deficiencies and to meet basic nutritional needs. The tolerable limit for the cultivation of arable lands in the ESCAP region might be reached by 1985, and the region was heading towards a sizeable annual grain deficit by the middle of the next decade. Such projections should be noted with alarm.

12. In the social field, some progress had been made towards achieving the goals set out in the International Development Strategy, but much still had to be done. In a number of developing countries, social expenditure continued to grow as a proportion of total budgetary allocations, and social programmes have been incorporated in national plans. However, national budgetary restraints had led to reductions in that expenditure and had had an unfavourable impact on the provision of services to children, particularly in rural areas.

13. In much of the region, the will to accelerate social development had not been matched by available means, and many social programmes represented a response to pressures exerted by high birth rates, thus making the improvement of child health and welfare, schooling and housing a matter of urgency although enrolment ratios had continued to rise, those at the primary level had remained low, and existing figures did not indicate the number of pupils who did not complete their courses. Furthermore, there was a growing feeling that educational systems must be better adapted to development needs.

14. With respect to housing, low construction rates and rapid population growth had resulted in a growing lack of adequate dwellings. The supply of hospital beds and medical personnel had been increasing, but the situation remained unsatisfactory in most ESCAP developing countries. Diseases such as malaria had not been eradicated because of limited facilities, emphasis had been placed on curative rather than preventive measures, and basic health standards remained low.

15. Governments had pursued the goal of growth with social justice, but little progress had been made in improving the lot of the bottom 40 per cent of the population, and in many developing countries poverty prevailed even among the regularly employed. The ranks of the landless were expanding, and human resources were increasingly under-utilized. Employment opportunities generated by past development efforts had not kept pace with the expansion of the labour force, and the situation could deteriorate further as a result of rapid population growth. Effective population policies would have to become an integral part of development strategies in order to secure a better future for children. It was self-evident that such policies could have no direct bearing on the employment problems of the next decade, since practically the entire labour force of the 1980s were already born. However, a reduction in the rate of population growth would alter the dependence ratios immediately, thereby easing the burden on families and making it possible to provide the present generation of children with better services.

16. The fact that the developing countries in the region had not met the targets set out in the International Development Strategy for the second Decade gave cause for concern. There was a danger that the starting-point for the next decade would be lower than anticipated and that future targets might have to be lowered. The shortfalls of the past indicated that far more rapid progress was required if ESCAP developing countries were to come near the targets set for the end of the Decade. Efforts to improve the situation were often frustrated by particularly recalcitrant problems at both the national and international levels. Such problems, even when strictly internal in nature, could only be solved through co-operation, and self-reliance would be more effective when pursued collectively; co-operation among developing countries was basic to the establishment of a new international economic order. However, collective self-reliance must be complemented by greater understanding, co-operation and assistance from the developed countries and others. In that connexion, United Nations support activities should be strengthened, and efforts should be co-ordinated to avoid duplication. In order to ensure the relevance of the strategy for the coming decade, support activities would have to be examined within the overall framework of what the strategy was trying to achieve.

17. The overriding concern of Governments in the region was the alleviation of mass poverty which, with its associated phenomena, was a direct affront to human dignity. The extent and nature of poverty varied from country to country, and each country would have to find its own solution to the problem, but the strategy for the coming decade should have a distinct anti-poverty focus, and the United Nations system should provide co-ordinated support whenever necessary. While a development strategy with an anti-poverty focus should cut across sectoral boundaries, it would require an effective integrated rural development programme and such a programme had been designated as one of the priority areas in the ESCAP programme of work. The objective of integrated rural development was to improve the quality of life of the rural poor through greater productivity and increased access to resources and services, particularly with respect to meeting basic needs. Such an approach would have to ensure a more equitable distribution of production assets, particularly land, promote their efficient use with the appropriate technology, and provide better access to the relevant social services for the rural poor. In developing the programme, ESCAP had co-operated with specialized agencies and international organizations, and duplication would be avoided. It was important that the international community as a whole should participate in the struggle against poverty.

SERVICES BENEFITING CHILDREN IN URBAN AREAS

(a) "DEVELOPMENT OF EDUCATION AND WELFARE PROGRAMMES FOR CHILDREN IN THE KLONG TOEY SLUM (E/ICEF/ASIA/3)" BY MS. PRATEEP UNGSONGTHAM (THAILAND)

( ) "FACE TO FAC WITH POVERTY: THE MOBILE CRECHES" (E/ICEF/ASIA/5) BY MS. MEERA MAHADEVAN (INDIA)

(c) "A REVIEW OF THE SLUM IMPROVEMENT PROGRAMME IN CALCUTTA WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO SERVICES FOR WOMEN AND CHILDREN (E/ICEF/ASIA/4)" BY MR. K.C. SIVARAMAKRISHNAN (INDIA)

(d) ANALYTICAL COMMENTS BY DR. STEPHEN YEH AND PROFESSOR MYONG-CHAN HWANG

(e) GENERAL DISCUSSION BY PARTICIPANTS

18. Ms. PRATEEP, introducing her working paper on development of education and welfare programmes for children in the Klong Toey slum of Bangkok (E/ICEF/ASIA/3), gave a brief description of the Klong Toey slum (E/ICEF/ASIA/3, annex 1).

19. Slides showing conditions in the Klong Toey slum were projected.

20. Mr. LABOUISSÉ (Executive Director) asked whether the children in question were given any meals during the school hours.

21. Ms. PRATEEP replied that at first no meals had been provided. Subsequently, following a political crisis, the Bangkok Municipality Administration had begun to provide meals.

22. Mr. BAHADUR RAI (Nepal) noting that Ms. Prateep had said that there was a lack of teaching materials other than textbooks, asked what were the materials used.

23. Ms. PRATEEP replied that the classroom was the parlour of a slum house. She had used a blackboard and the textbooks donated by people of the area and also other raw materials from the neighbourhood.

24. Mr. SEDDIQ (Afghanistan) asked whether any housing projects had been built in the area.

25. Ms. PRATEEP replied that, when the residents had learned that the National Housing Authority intended to build projects,



(M . Prateep)

they had been very happy. However, they had soon been disappointed to learn that rent would be the prohibitive sum of 300 baht (\$15) per month. Furthermore, in order to obtain a house they would have to be employees of the Port Authority.

26. Mr. BROINOWSKI (Australia) asked whether it was the City of Bangkok or the national government which had laid down that children without birth certificates could not attend school, and whether the situation was being corrected.

27 Ms. PRATEEP said that the parents of the children in the slum came from the north of the country. Their houses had therefore not been registered; their children had therefore no birth certificates and so could not be enrolled in school. She had therefore decided to teach those children. She had collected their names and had gone to the District Officer who, contrary to the law, had provided them with birth certificates so that they could attend school. Subsequently, she had attempted to obtain birth certificates for other children. However, only 400 to 500 had been provided with certificates and, owing to political developments the entire process had been discontinued. She estimated that there were some 5,000 children from about 350 slums without birth certificates.

28 Mr. EGGINK (Netherlands) asked whether that educational arrangement and a direct effect on life in general in the slum. For example, were the children from the slum encouraged to follow the example of their teacher by seeking to become teachers? In other words, was there a snowballing effect?

29. Ms. PRATEEP replied that the children whom she had taught seemed, so to speak, like a cloth stained with ink. She had attempted to wash out the stain. Obviously, the cloth would not be perfectly clean but at least much cleaner than before. For instance, while those children were well-behaved and not drug addicts, the same could not be said of their companions who had not attended school.

30 Some of the children wished to become teachers and those who worked during the day sought advice on attending evening classes in order to improve themselves.

31 Mr. CHOWDHURY (Bangladesh) asked what vaccines had been provided under the vaccination programme.

32 Ms. PRATEEP replied that from time to time, especially during epidemics, the Municipality Administration provided vaccines.

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33. The CHAIRMAN drew attention to documents E/ICEF/ASIA/4 and E/ICEF/ASIA/5. Unfortunately, their authors could not be present to introduce them. She therefore invited Mr. Myong-Chan Hwang to present the highlights of the papers and make a critical analysis of them.

34. Mr. HWANG, referring to document E/ICEF/ASIA/5, said that the programme had been established first for the 0-3 age group and later extended to include the 3-6 and 6-12 age groups because the older children often took care of the younger ones. Even though primary education was free in India, many parents were not aware of the opportunities offered. The programme was therefore of great help to them.

35. One important feature of the programme was its low-cost approach. Ms. Mahadevan had used readily available local materials. However, as the programme had expanded, problems had developed: there had been dropouts as a result of poverty and low performance, resulting in frustration; other obstacles were the prejudice of the teachers and the apathy of the construction companies. The programme had avoided the usual organizational pitfalls because field workers had been allowed to participate in policy-making. Another problem had been the shortage of trained staff, which had led the planners to develop their own staff-training programme among the urban poor and others of similar background.

36. Ms. Mahadevan's paper indicated that the programme had "failed to bring a healthy environment in the labour camp as well as in the slums because sanitation was still a problem in most areas" and that, unless it was "decided to manage with little, the programme would not be able to bring every child the basic services it needed."

37. Referring to document E/ICEF/ASIA/4, he said that it had been difficult to launch the programme because of political instability and lack of funds. In the 1970-71 fiscal year a comprehensive programme had been started to provide latrines, drainage, water points and bathroom platforms for about 1 million people. It had been followed by others covering nutrition, health, education and recreation. While some of those programmes were successful, maintenance costs were high.

38. An important feature of those programmes was the attempt to encourage voluntary organizations to provide comprehensive social services. As was known, those organizations usually specialized in a particular field. A consortium had therefore been formed, but it had proved difficult to overcome sectoral barriers and conflicts had developed.

39. Furthermore, there had been a feeling that conventional approaches might not be relevant and so efforts had been made to establish infrastructures with a loan from the World Bank.

(Mr. Hwang)

40. His comments should not be interpreted as criticisms. In order to deal with a problem, the problem must first be defined. The role of social workers in the field appeared to be very important in that respect, as was clearly illustrated in the case of Klong Toey and of the mobile Creches in Delhi. In the latter case the social worker had not only made the government and construction firms aware of the implications of the children's welfare but had also persuaded firms to apply the provisions of the existing law which they had previously ignored.

41. There were many sides to the problems including religious, legal and other aspects that had their roots in social attitudes. Money did not cure all social ills. That was an important point that should be borne in mind dealing with the delivery of basic services for children. One of the key problems in the Klong Toey slum was the requirement of legal residence for enrolment in elementary schools. The social worker had decided to establish the school in the slum itself rather than try to remove the formal requirement.

42. Programme escalation often resulted from the fact that, although solutions were proposed to deal with specific problems, it later transpired that the problems were more complicated than they had seemed to be at first. Escalation took two forms: increased delivery of a particular service and expansion into other related services. In due course, the programmes become comprehensive. Because of the complicated nature of the problem, an overall or integrated approach was probably most effective and thus desirable.

43. There was, of course, the question as to how far escalation could or should go. Although the Klong Toey project was on the way to becoming integrated, it was still far short of its goal, for some essential services such as water supply, garbage collection, and housing were very inadequate. Without a comprehensive slum-improvement programme that included land tenure and vocational training for present and future breadwinners, the real problem would not be solved. The expansion of programmes, however, led to many administrative problems such as organizational conflict, shortages of trained staff and high maintenance costs.

44. Many ingredients were necessary for a programme to be effective, the most obvious one being financial resources. However, it was not too difficult to mobilize such resources once the attention of the public or of those allocating the funds had been drawn to the problems. The success of the Pattana school was due, to a large extent, to the support of the mass media and college students who influenced public opinion in Thailand. With that support it had been quite easy to obtain the necessary financing. The mobile crèches had made effective use of traditional dancing and drama and cooking demonstrations to mobilize support not only from the public but also from prospective clients.

45. It was wrong to assume that clients invariably welcomed the programmes. In fact, they were sometimes suspicious of or even opposed to them. Programmes were most effective when they used indigenous materials and locally-trained

(Mr. Evans)

staff recruited from the client group itself or from a community with the same social background. That was well illustrated in the case of the Pattana schools which employed teaching assistants recruited from among teenagers in the slum area. Not only was the utilization of indigenous resources effective, it also lowered programme costs and could contribute to breaking down the psychological barrier which deterred potential clients from participating effectively in the programme. In the case of the mobile crèches an attempt was even made to make the centers look like the huts or the urban poor by using the same materials. Training in the field was vitally important as it provided future staff with knowledge and skills relevant to the solution of the real problems, as was clear from the mobile crèches programme.

46. The most effective organizational structure for service programme seemed to be one that was not bureaucratic. The mobile crèches programme had avoided the all-too-frequent conflict between decision-makers and field workers by allowing the latter to participate in the policy-making process. Social workers and local staff acted as a sort of linchpin and could eliminate possible psychological barriers between the clients and the organizational structure as their approach in the field was experimental. They regarded the whole process of programme planning and implementation as a learning process and were therefore not too rigid. That was important, given the variety and changing nature of local conditions in most respects.

47. The welfare of children was, in the last analysis, the responsibility of the Government. The ultimate success of a programme in most cases depended upon recognition and financial support from the Government. The more comprehensive a programme became, the more that was true. The pattern of government response in the case of Klong Toey and the mobile crèches showed that such recognition was very slow in coming. Support usually did not come until the programme had proved feasible, and there was a considerable time-lag between official recognition of the problem and the taking of supportive measures.

48. MR. YEH said that, apart from the intrinsic value of individual projects, the question arose as to what light they shed upon broader policy considerations. All the papers related to one aspect of the urban problem, namely, urban slums or squatter areas. Accordingly, the most crucial centre from which to attack the problem of urban poverty was in the areas where it existed. The reason was evident from the fact that the over-all rate of population increase in the region was about 2.5 to 3 per cent annually, that the rate for the urban population was between 4 and 6 per cent annually, that the population of the main cities of South-East Asia was expanding at a rate of 5 to 6 per cent annually and that the increase in the urban squatter population was staggering. As an example he cited the case of Manila: whereas the population of Metro Manila was rising at an annual rate of 6 per cent, that of the slums was growing at an annual rate of 12 per cent.

(Mr. Awang)

49. It was therefore clear, when speaking of the concentration of the urban poor, including the problems of women and children, that the spatial target must be the slum areas. However, that raised problems, because Government attitudes to slum-dwellers tended to pass through three stages. Initially, when slums were viewed as a disease that must be eradicated through the construction of new housing, the attitude was one of hostility. The second stage, which was one of tolerance and neglect, came when the government realized the magnitude of the problem and the limited nature of its resources. The third and final stage was reached when the Government became aware that the housing problem had an impact on social and political conditions and that action was needed. In Thailand, for instance, the housing authorities were beginning to see that the slum colonies would be there for some time to come and that, in the interest of social development, action must be taken. The approach then chosen was that of upgrading the slums. That was an important development, for it showed that the Government realized that it must provide basic services for the slum-dwellers.

50. There was a possibility that material and other social services could be delivered and managed through a single agency. One of the difficulties of planning, evident in the Klong Toey project, was that the planners did not fully understand their clients. It would be interesting to hear from Ms. Prateep what the people thought of the Government and what they felt the Government thought of them.

51. One of the prevailing myths concerned community participation. It was too often assumed that most slum communities automatically had some cohesion and that the community could therefore be mobilized to perform wonders. However, to judge from some of the site and service projects of the World Bank, two things were clear. Firstly, it was not safe to assume that community cohesion existed in all low-income areas: that depended upon the size, density and ethnic composition of the population. Secondly, even assuming that there was some cohesion and a willingness to participate, it did not follow that community participation would automatically be in the direction desired by the Government: there might quite possibly be a conflict of objectives. It was clear from the Calcutta paper (E/ICEF/ASIA/4) that confusion existed between means and ends. It was meaningless to say that more funds should be allocated. A far more effective method was to decide first what objectives were desired and then determine the means of achieving them.

52. Finally, referring to children in the slums, he expressed concern at the problem of the abandoned child, for abandonment was a form of unconscious infanticide. It was not only poverty and fertility that led to a weakening of the family structure; urbanization was also a contributing factor. Child abuse and abandonment, while not peculiar to the developing countries, were problems that deserved close attention.

the meeting rose at 5:50 p.m.

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