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UNITED NATIONS
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GENERAL

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9 March 1955

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UNITED NATIONS CHILDREN'S FUND

Executive Board

Statement by Maurice Pate, Executive Director

to

the Executive Board 135th Meeting March 7, 1955

Last week I returned from a most inspiring visit of two months in the field, in Asia and the Middle East, and to our Paris Regional Office.

At the outset I wish to say that for the great humanitarian and economic values I have seen in these sixty-odd days in UNICEF-assisted programmes in twelve countries, I wish I could have shared this trip and these observations with each individual member of our Board. As it is, I will do my best to pass on to you the highlights of my impressions.

When it was suggested, in 1948, that a UNICEF team make a survey of needs in Asia and of opportunities for UNICEF service to mothers and children in this vast Region, this was one of a number of steps which have, over a period of eight years, brought UNICEF to the constructively helpful and universally respected position which it holds today. Put briefly, from villagers to Heads of State in each of the countries I visited, UNICEF means self-help, self-respect, international goodwill, and, above all, getting real and useful things done.

This was my third trip through Asia, at two-year intervals, since 1950. What has transpired over these years is far beyond my expectations of the possibilities I gauged in 1950. In the single year 1954, over twenty million beneficiaries were reached in Asia by UNICEF-assisted programmes in a concrete, individual way. In this one year, more children and mothers were helped than in the two preceding years cumulatively. For 1954, Mr. Keeny set targets as to the number of beneficiaries to be reached. These targets, country by country, were exceeded more often than not; and the average of over-accomplishment was much the greater. To the national leaders of the UNICEF-assisted programmes in the Asian countries and to their staffs, great

/credit is due.

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credit is due. In the several Middle Eastern countries I visited, the various mass campaigns were also proceeding on schedule or ahead of schedule.

Our UNICEF field staff are carrying out their responsibilities in a most devoted and productive way. For their value as catalytic agents, I think we might wisely use a few more senior and experienced people in further area and country offices. A live-wire UNICEF staff member has within her or his possibilities the sparking of the activities of hundreds or thousands of other people. Besides the function of liaison and planning and programming - and all the other functions of a UNICEF field representative - our people in the field give moral support, a cutting of red tape in securing of prompt actions, which is deeply appreciated on all sides. I am happy to report that our people generally work in the highest and most happily constructive relations with the officials of Governments and through Governments with voluntary organisations in the countries.

I would also like to report that over the years UNICEF has developed very well-chosen and consecrated national staffs in our field offices. It is fortunate that this group is now becoming eligible for membership in the U.N. Pension Fund. This will result in further stability and increased productivity among the staff, and is a consideration long due to them as most of them have not been covered by other insurances in their countries.

Our personnel, as a whole, both national and international, brings this Board close to the level of the world's villages and enables you to guide our policies in a wise and practical way which fits into the life of the countries down to the rural communities in all Regions. Our Regional Directors set the example by spending 3 to 5 months out of every 12 in the capitals, towns and villages of their Regions so that when they come here before you they speak from contact with the grass roots. Our area and resident country representatives, and nationals on their staffs, likewise spend a good part of their time in the field appraising needs, observing the fulfilment of programmes, and with an alert eye for bottlenecks and uncovered spots.

All this field work is done in close partnership with, and in the company of, the responsible nationals of the countries visited. Encouragement from UNICEF staff for work well done - and it generally is well done - helps a great deal to keep the wheels rolling with vigour and enthusiasm.

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The great and final producers in all this work are the many thousands of meagrely remunerated people of the countries who, in the mass campaigns - ECG, anti-Yaws, anti-Malaria and others - forge their way to the most distant communities, leaving their jeeps behind them and pushing ahead on foot into roadless sectors. These are the devoted workers who roll up the number of beneficiaries into the millions.

Communication facilities play an important role in our work. Since the beginning up to now we have put several thousand jeeps, land-rovers, cars, motor-bikes and bicycles into the field. To help you visualize how this equipment multiplies the value of human endeavour, it is estimated that the combined distance these vehicles move every 24 hours is twice the circumference of the globe.

To mention a detail to you, but one that is important in the daily work, UNICEF strives in the field for good maintenance and effective use of its transportation equipment. In each of the two Regions I have just visited, UNICEF has transportation maintenance officers. They help Governments to set up motor maintenance centres and assist in the training of personnel for them. This has resulted in substantial economies for Governments and for ourselves in transportation services.

Everything I have seen on this trip has strengthened my conviction that people - new individuals and trained individuals - are more important in economically underdeveloped countries than buildings. The two, of course, have to go hand in hand; but capital investment in buildings should be the modest, and the practical minimum to get the job done. One of the first requisites is to provide shelter for trainees, which is a problem at some points. The important thing is to encourage progress from the foundation upwards. I am happy to observe that most countries are making progress in training persons of utility in present and future UNICEF-assisted programmes, and we should not neglect the upper brackets of future leadership. Our Board has done wisely in giving every form of encouragement to training, and I believe we should continue to do this. Each alert and properly trained individual has the potentiality of bringing new light into the lives of thousands of other people, and will have a great influence in the future development of his country.

On this trip, I have had the further opportunity to note the valuable role played in our work, within the framework of Government, by voluntary agencies and individuals. Governments welcome their co-operation: they begin and stimulate activities. They fit not only into country programmes; they are also valuable in

/securing financial aid

securing financial aid from Governments and individuals both for UNICEF's international purposes and for child health and welfare programmes in their countries.

One of the most encouraging things to me on this recent trip was to see how many, and how increasingly, individuals are attacking the problem in which we are interested. As time goes on there are more and more persons involved with a sense of service to the coming generation. Of this one becomes more aware in going into the field and observing the results of their work and their enthusiasm. I might mention a few examples:

In Saigon, Viet-Nam, there is a pediatrician. It happens that he was the President of the first graduating class in Social Pediatrics of the International Children's Centre in Paris in 1948. Afterward, he went on to Saigon where he is one of the leading citizens in the community. In Saigon he interested the Rotary Club in setting up a greatly needed Mother and Child Health Centre. This Centre, which I visited, has grown now to a beehive of activity, serving 200 mothers and children each day. This pediatrician has interested leading pediatricians in Saigon to volunteer along with him to give two hours of their time each day to the Centre. The Municipality has come forward to give its help in providing the full-time personnel and supplies. Incidentally, this doctor purchased and distributed 10,000 UNICEF Greeting Cards in Viet-Nam last year. He modestly calls these activities "repaying his debt to UNICEF and to the International Children's Centre in Paris."

To skip to another country, Iran. In Teheran, a modern milk pasteurization plant is now under construction. There was a problem of finding desirable land close to the city. For this purpose an enlightened individual (a former Minister of Health in Iran) donated a large tract of land having a value of \$50,000.

I could mention many other cases of personal generosity and devotion. Everywhere thousands of individual and group forces are at work in our field of interest; and UNICEF equipment and supplies are a valuable source of encouragement and stimulation.

In practically all countries where there is a question of lifting the future scale of financial aid to UNICEF, I had an opportunity of discussing this directly with Ministers of Finance. In the near future we expect to be able to

/announce

announce several new and substantially increased government contributions from countries in Asia and the Middle East. I wish to again reaffirm that Finance Ministers are as human and understanding as Health Ministers when the whole story is conveyed to them; and furthermore, the economic values which UNICEF achieves appeal to them. When they see photographically the miracle that can be wrought in yaws with one injection of penicillin, they are deeply impressed.

Speaking of yaws, I come back to Asia now and would like to say a word on a very remarkable campaign against this terrible disease, in which UNICEF has the privilege of participating in Indonesia. In Indonesia, where doctors are scarce, this vast campaign is under the supervision of 10 full-time doctors. Last year in Indonesia, down to the most remote communities, 12,000,000 persons were examined for yaws and over 1,000,000 received penicillin treatment. How was this large operation, which is to be even larger this year, achieved? This handful of doctors multiplied their efforts through a thousand bright and keen young men who had received specific short-term training. Mr. Keeny, Dr. Nirula (our resident representative in Indonesia) and I visited an Indonesian village 160 km. away from the provincial capital of Djodjakarta. We were accompanied by the Indonesian head of the yaws campaign, Dr. Kodijat, and by Dr. Nicol, Regional Adviser of WHO. Here an Indonesian anti-yaws group were at work in the village, with the participation of a number of new trainees. Dr. Nicol, observing the careful sterilization of needles and the skill of blood sampling and penicillin injections, commented that these young men were doing their job with extraordinary competence. And they are doing it with an enthusiasm which some day in years to come may free Indonesia of the scourge of yaws.

In happening to mention this one campaign, I do so as an example of what is going on with semi-trained personnel all over Asia and the Middle East through the combined vision and imagination of energetic Government officials with the moral, technical and material backing of UNICEF and WHO.

On this trip I visited milk plants under construction in Indonesia, Iran and Turkey. All three of these pioneer projects are simply the beginning of patterns in the respective countries which I believe can have far-reaching effects. I also visited in India the now completed penicillin plant near Bombay

/and the nearly

and the nearly completed DDT plant in New Delhi. These are impressive undertakings, where I found that the Government has certainly done its full part in providing very substantial buildings and all the facilities on its side to make these plants a success. I was impressed by the background, technical skills and devotion of the antibiotics and DDT specialists whom Dr. Macpherson has managed to recruit from a number of countries. They are pooling their skills and working round the clock to bring their plants into early and successful operation. Thanks to international exchange of improved penicillin strains, the Indian penicillin plant will now be producing more than double the amount of penicillin originally foreseen. This means that India's present very restricted consumption can for the moment be met from this one plant, but it is foreseen that 4 to 5 years from now India's penicillin requirements will be quintupled.

In visiting milk and penicillin and DDT plants, I was interested to note what a multiplicity of countries are providing the equipment for these plants through UNICEF. We take the best and the most economical equipment from each country. It is a tribute to the UNICEF procurement staff in New York and in Paris, along with Dr. Macpherson's staff, that all this intricate equipment, coming from so many countries, has been procured and moved into place on time. The soya bean milk plant in Indonesia is a special case, because a great deal of individual designing and new-type equipment has required a little more time here, so that the Government is a step ahead of us in the construction of their building. However, this is now all coming properly into gear.

After my field visits I spent several days at our Regional Office in Paris. Besides carrying out the functions in the Region for which it is responsible, our Paris Office has an increasing role of usefulness in doing educational and fund-raising work in Europe. Our overall financial support from European countries is gradually increasing, year by year, and for a number of countries I hope will increase further. This also means increasing procurement activities in Europe, from which a substantial part of the equipment and supplies we now use comes.

In Paris, after an exchange of views with the French member on our Board, Professor Debré, I visited the International Children's Centre and conferred with

/Dr. Berthet

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Dr. Berthet who took over the direction of the Centre last year. Through the hundreds of alumni from some 58 countries who have had courses at the ICC, the constructive influence of the Centre is steadily expanding. On the day I visited the Centre, a new course of 32 persons from 26 different countries was just starting, for sensorially-handicapped children. Countries of Eastern Europe are again taking an interest in courses at the Centre; there have been, or are now, fellows sent from Czechoslovakia and Poland.

Week before last, the Chief of our Milk Conservation Section in Paris returned from a week's visit in Czechoslovakia, where he had been invited to see the Czech milk drying plants in full operation. The plants there are well maintained, in full production, and under good technical management.

In all, as I stated at the outset of this report to the Board, I have been greatly encouraged after witnessing all the results and the efforts in UNICEF programmes in the countries I visited. As in all human endeavour, there are problems: there are shortages in personnel; there are here and there gaps in administration; there are occasional budgetary shortages within the countries which result in delays. However, the number of children and mothers actually reached with some form of concrete assistance in 1954 tells an overall story of accomplishment which rises above the difficulties of detail, which difficulties one by one are gradually being conquered.

As to the future, the great sea of need of half a billion of the world's underprivileged children is always there. It will depend on our imagination and vision, along with that of all the countries interested, to alertly develop new measures and new programmes which will gradually have an impact on this vast problem.
