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Programme Committee

Recommendation of the Executive Director for an Allocation  
YUGOSLAVIA  
Maternal and Child Welfare Care of Premature Infants

1. The Executive Director recommends an allocation to Yugoslavia of \$32,000 for incubators, related ward supplies, refrigerators and books to establish four new demonstration and teaching centres for training in the care of premature babies. In 1950 the Board approved funds (E/1737) to provide 50 incubators for three pilot centres for the care of premature babies at Belgrade, Ljubljana and Zagreb where 900 infants received care in the five-year period 1951/1956. Four fellowships were also provided by the Fund and administered by the International Children's Centre at Paris. The four new centres for which aid is now proposed would be associated with teaching centres at the university level, located in Maribor, Rijeka, Sarajevo and Skoplje. This programme for care of premature infants is part of the broad maternal and child welfare programme for which the Fund has previously helped to establish eight demonstration centres, 221 major mother and child health centres and 493 health stations. The Government has budgeted the equivalent of US\$90,000 for the preparation of premises for the four centres for care of premature infants.
2. A WHO consultant visited Yugoslavia in October/November 1956 to study the problem of prematurity. The plan proposed in this paper is based on her

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recommendations<sup>a/</sup>. WHO fellowships will be requested by the Government for the training of four doctors and four nurses.

The problem and existing services

3. The infant mortality rate in Yugoslavia is four times higher than the lowest European rate<sup>a/</sup>. Over the years 1951/1956 it has decreased from 140 deaths in the first year of life out of 1,000 live births to 96 deaths per 1,000. The actual incidence of premature births is not known, but hospital records in various parts of the country indicate that six to twelve per cent of births are premature. Premature birth is only one of the principal causes of infant deaths the first year of life. The main causes other than prematurity are respiratory infections, digestive infections, under-nutrition, infectious diseases and tuberculosis.

4. Existing services for care of premature infants are outlined below, including the three centres for which UNICEF has provided incubators, thus:

- a) Belgrade Centre: This centre, located in Children's Home I, receives premature infants from Belgrade and nearby Serbian towns and has accommodation to care for 29 babies. It serves as a training centre for nursery nurses and pupil medical nurses. Demonstrations are also given to medical students and to doctors taking courses in social paediatrics and social obstetrics. The centre cared for 84 premature babies during the first semester of 1956.
- b) Zagreb Centre, located in Zagreb City Hospital, cares for premature babies from all points in the Republic of Croatia. The centre can accommodate 30 infants at a time. The staff consists of one doctor and fourteen nurses. Courses are given periodically for the training of other personnel from Zagreb Hospital and from small premature wards in general hospitals. In the first semester of 1956 the centre cared for 72 premature infants.
- c) Ljubljana Centre: This centre is located in the University Children's Hospital and receives premature babies from all points in the Republic of Slovenia. It was the first to be established in Yugoslavia. The staff consists of one doctor and six nurses, and training courses are given regularly for personnel from other

<sup>a/</sup> Report and recommendations on extension of the premature baby programme in Yugoslavia, Dr. V. Mary Crosse, WHO Consultant, October/November 1956.

institutions. During the first semester of 1956, 54 premature babies were cared for. The centre is too small to accommodate the cases which come to it and not sufficiently segregated from other services in the hospital. Plans are under way to expand and improve the facilities.

- d) Sub-centres: A network of sub-centres for care of premature infants has been set up in Serbia, Croatia and Slovenia to provide minimum services throughout these Republics. Services for premature care are as yet undeveloped in Macedonia, Montenegro or Bosnia. However, the three existing centres in Belgrade, Zagreb and Ljubljana serve as models and provide incentive to the three Southern Republics to devote more attention to the care of premature infants as an important part of their comprehensive health services for mothers and children.
- e) Related services in the network of MCW centres: Maternal education has an important place in the expanding MCW services towards which UNICEF has contributed equipment for 722 centres (see para 1). Pre-natal care is given free of cost at MCW centres, but staff is limited and, because of transport difficulties, many expectant mothers do not take advantage of the services available. During 1954 only 35 per cent of expectant mothers in Yugoslavia received one or more ante-natal examinations and only 42 per cent enjoyed qualified attendance at delivery. Lying-in wards and nurseries are overcrowded, and hospital beds are utilized for delivery only when there have been complications in pregnancy. There is as yet no organized programme for the follow-up of premature babies after discharge from hospital, nor any special home care programme for premature babies born at home. Research into the local causes of premature births and deaths, and into the causes and prevention of the various complications of prematurity, is being undertaken by the MCW demonstration centres.

#### Plan of Operations

5. The objectives of the plan are the following:

- a) to reduce the infant mortality rate resulting from premature birth by improving premature care services in the four university teaching centres (Maribor, Rijeka, Sarajevo and Skoplje);
- b) to increase the number of doctors, nurses and midwives trained in care of premature infants through training and practical experience provided at the existing centres in Belgrade, Zagreb and Ljubljana, as well as at the new centres to be created;

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- c) to strengthen health education through the network of MCW centres particularly with respect to the care of women in the pre-natal period in order to reduce the incidence of premature births. Such educational measures would also lessen the delays in referring premature infants to special centres and would help to improve follow-up and home care for premature infants.

6. Following is a brief description of the new centres to be created with UNICEF assistance:

- a) Maribor (Slovenia) will have two premature centres:
  - i) Maternity hospital: Limited facilities at present exist for prematures in the Maternity Hospital, which has just been approved for internship during the sixth year of medical training at Ljubljana University. One small room provides overcrowded accommodation for thirteen premature babies. A new room would be provided next to the present room to accommodate five incubators. There are no incubators at the present time at this centre.
  - ii) Children's Home: The present Children's Home will be converted into a unit for 40 premature babies.
- b) Rijeka (Croatia): One small room in the General Hospital is at present set aside for the care of premature babies. Accommodation will be obtained near the maternity department for a further 15 to 20 babies.
- c) Sarajevo (Bosnia): There is no special accommodation for premature babies at the Sarajevo University General Hospital. A university training centre will be developed by adapting a section of the maternity and paediatric departments to accommodate 25 premature babies.
- d) Skoplje (Macedonia): At the present time premature babies are kept in one small room in the university maternity department. Since 80 per cent of the approximately 3,000 yearly births in the Skoplje area are delivered here, a demonstration centre will be developed for the care of premature babies which will accommodate 22 babies.

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Training of staff

7. WHO fellowships will be requested for a doctor and nurse from each of the four university teaching centres to receive training abroad. When personnel for the four new university centres have been trained and the centres are operating they will also undertake in turn the training of personnel for other centres.

8. The premature centres will work in close co-operation with the MCW demonstration centres in the six Republics with a particular view to helping reduce the incidence of prematurity and death among premature babies. Arrangements will be made with the same centres for teaching home-care of larger premature babies born at home and for teaching how to care for premature babies after discharge from the special centres.

UNICEF commitments

9. UNICEF would provide the following supplies and equipment for the four new demonstration and training centres to be established:

		<u>US\$</u>
a) <u>Incubators</u>		25,400
i) fixed incubators	31	
ii) portable incubators	12	
b) <u>Ward equipment, including nebulizers, flowmetres, equipment for administration of oxygen, oxygen analysers, catheters, polyethylene tubing and weighing scales</u>		1,400
c) <u>Refrigerators for milk room,</u>	4	800
d) <u>Teaching equipment sets of books</u>	8	100
e) <u>Contingencies</u>		1,300
Total supplies and equipment		<u>29,000</u>
f) <u>Freight</u>		3,000
Total recommended allocation		<u>32,000</u>

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WHO approval and participation

10. The proposed project has the technical approval of WHO. As indicated above (para. 2), the plan is based on recommendations of the WHO consultant. Subject to a firm Government request and to the availability of funds WHO would provide fellowships for one doctor and one nurse from each of the four university teaching centres to study abroad.

Government commitments

11. The Government's commitments for capital expenditures in connexion with the preparation of premises for the new centres are to be met by the authorities of the Republics and the municipalities. The Government's matching for UNICEF's help, not including staff or operating costs, would be approximately dinars 27,000,000 equivalent to US\$90,000 to cover the following:

	<u>Dinars</u>
Sarajevo Centre	2,000,000
Rijeka Centre	10,000,000
Skoplje Centre	5,000,000
Maribor Centre	10,000,000
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Total Dinars	27,000,000
Equivalent to US\$	90,000

12. The Government will carry out all expansion and improvements to create suitable premises for the four new premature centres (see para. 6 above) and will provide all supplies and equipment other than those to be provided by UNICEF. Personnel will be assigned as required to run the centres and budgetary provision will be made to cover all operating costs.