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IMAGE & IDENTITY
THE SPECIFIC CHARACTER
OF
THE UNITED NATIONS CHILDREN'S FUND



UNICEF

(16 pt 1 B)

This document is intended to serve as a basic reference for all those engaged in explaining and furthering the cause of UNICEF's activities for children.

It has been reviewed by European National Committees for UNICEF at their annual reunion in London, and was made available to members of UNICEF's Executive Board at its meeting in Mexico City in 1979, International Year of the Child.

INTRODUCTION

The nature of UNICEF and its work, what the organisation is and does, provide an identity. The public image of UNICEF should be consistent and compatible with that identity.

It is in the interests of fostering such a consistency and compatibility that the present paper has been prepared. It is not intended to be a detailed exposition such as is provided by the Executive Director's report "An overview of UNICEF policies, organisation and working methods".*

The purpose of this paper is to present a broad picture of the specific character of UNICEF as established by the organisation's mandate and as it has evolved through the policies and practices derived from operational experience.

A Time for a Special Effort

There are indeed several reasons today for a special effort to encourage wide acceptance of a strong, unambiguous and positive image of UNICEF and to increase thereby moral and material support for the organisation's co-operation with countries to improve the situation of their children. They are:

an opportunity to increase moral and material support for external assistance benefiting children by capitalizing on the exceptional interest in that cause stimulated by the International Year of the Child;

to support UNICEF's expanded programming goals and the target of \$500 million in annual income by the mid 1980s; these goals recognize the magnitude of children's needs in developing countries and the possibilities for effecting lasting improvements - both of which have never been greater than they are today;

to underline UNICEF's development role in social programmes benefiting children as part of the operational activities for development of the United Nations system.

* E/ICEF/CRP/79-2

UNICEF and the Climate of Interdependence

The International Year of the Child, for which UNICEF is lead agency within the United Nations system, together with growing recognition of the world's interdependence, provide reinforcement for the arguments in support of UNICEF and its approaches. Aspirations such as self-reliance and equity in developing countries, fostered by the sort of co-operation UNICEF favours, are in fact keystones of the basic or community-based services approach which the organisation has made its over-all policy.

At the same time, the interest and support generated by the Year of the Child is focusing new attention on the possibilities of helping to achieve the social development priorities which UNICEF assists.

In this new climate of opinion, UNICEF's experience and expertise have a direct relevance on its work for children and an enhanced claim on support in the future.

While capsule descriptions cannot do more than summarize the most important points, they have the virtue of suggesting a focus. The following is presented as a possible example:

"UNICEF is a United Nations organisation supporting the rights and fostering the well-being of children in developing countries without discrimination, a mandate which gives the organisation both an advocate's voice and an active role in the development process. UNICEF co-operates with developing countries in the design and planning of long-term national programmes for the physical, mental and social development of children, and provides material aid for these programmes together with support for the training of their personnel. In particular, the organisation advocates self-reliant services - especially those providing primary health care, clean drinking water, nutrition and education - which are largely developed, managed and maintained by the community. Financed entirely by voluntary contributions, UNICEF provides a non-partisan channel which enables private citizens to take part, along with their governments, in achievement of social change and improvement of the situation of children. It is thus a force for international solidarity and justice."



THE APPROACH

Focus: the Child

The General Assembly resolution which created UNICEF in 1946 specified that the organisation would give its help to programmes benefiting children equitably "on the basis of need, without discrimination because of race, creed, nationality, social status or political belief."*

Thus was established UNICEF's focus on the child in need without regard to any other consideration - an impartial, non-partisan singleness of purpose, which today is the central characteristic of the organisation, one from which its strength in large part derives.

The focus on the child - and especially on children of low-income families in the least developed countries - is central to an understanding of what UNICEF is and does, how the organisation has evolved, its policies, structure and working methods and, as a consequence, how its work has achieved the level of acceptance it enjoys among governments and people in developing and developed countries alike.

In its work, UNICEF's clear pursuit of a single purpose provides a focus for efforts and resources, a point of reference for a diversity of actions ranging across disciplinary and sectoral borders.

At the same time, insistence on the non-partisan nature of this work - a part of every assistance agreement between UNICEF and governments - has resulted in depth of goodwill and breadth of co-operation.

In a world often polarized by politics, one of the few principles still universally accepted is the vulnerability and innocence of the child. It is a principle which at times transcends political division, as UNICEF has demonstrated when it provided emergency assistance in Nigeria, the Indochina Peninsula and other situations of conflict.

This singleness of purpose is also at the heart of UNICEF's popular appeal, an appeal, among development organisations, uniquely human.

No expert knowledge is needed to appreciate the importance of health care, safe water, proper nutrition and education to a child who does not have them. This is true for people in developed and developing countries alike and this common understanding provides a bond, a partnership of people united by a concern for children. In a very real sense UNICEF acts as a channel for this people-to-people partnership.

*GA Res57(1)

POLICY PRINCIPLES

ACTION FOR THE LONG-TERM - From inception, UNICEF has been action-oriented. The organisation's approach quickly evolved into one of action for long-term development, a concentration on building up services in developing countries which would have lasting benefits for all their children. It has also evolved into a concern with a broad range of problems which bear on the well-being of the child.

In sum, therefore, UNICEF's approach is to assist governments to plan and carry out action aimed at lasting benefit in a comprehensive range of fields through social services made as widely available as possible.

THE HUMAN FACTOR - UNICEF is a development agency with direct impact on projects that help children and advance the social aims of the New International Economic Order. Because of the contrast with big economic projects such as dams, roads, industries and so on, this is sometimes called "development with a human face."

As such, UNICEF's work is easy to understand and appreciate. However, it is important to realize that social development also has economic impact which is often significant because it acts directly on the lives of the individual family and community, and through them, on the lives of children.



REACHING THE CHILD - A key to an understanding of UNICEF's approach is the realization that most children can only be reached in any lasting way by a channel which runs through the family, and, in many cases, through government and community.

COUNTRY APPROACH - To do this, UNICEF works in partnership with governments to strengthen local institutions and community authority. It follows logically that UNICEF co-operation is country-specific, adapted to the needs, priorities and circumstances of each country. Through the structures appropriate to each country, UNICEF becomes a partner with people in the development of community-level services.

INVOLVING THE COMMUNITY - This emphasis on local action is one of the principles of basic or community-based services, found in a wide range of developing countries with different economic systems and political ideologies.

The services involved are the main ones bearing on the well-being of children: primary health care, community water supply for drinking and household use, formal and non-formal education, social welfare, and women's activities.

UNICEF's adoption of the approach as over-all policy is based on its conviction that such services should be extended to all children, and that involvement of communities in their own self-reliant development effort is not only the best, but also the only way country-wide coverage can be achieved.

BREAKING THE POVERTY CYCLE - Services benefiting children often provide the first stimulus for community involvement in developing countries because people of the community, as parents, can readily see the value of these services and agree on their priority. Apart from the tangible benefits provided by the services, children also gain because they easily adopt the attitudes and practices which self-help development engenders. The endless cycle of poverty and ignorance, helplessness and hopelessness, is broken.

It should be noted that government support for community efforts is equally important for the effectiveness of self-help development. Practically speaking, communities cannot supply all the necessary resources and expertise. Moreover, the interaction between community and government services, and the sense of partnership, is crucial if the over-all development process is to be sustained.

MAXIMIZING CO-OPERATION - Just as development is a partnership of effort, so it must be a co-operative financial endeavour. No single source of financing is sufficient to tackle the needs of hundreds of millions of disadvantaged children: not the resources of the community nor the budget of the government, and certainly not the funds available to UNICEF. UNICEF's approach, therefore, is thoroughly based on co-operation, not only with governments - which commonly provide several times the level of UNICEF funding - but also with other donors, bilateral, non-governmental and inter-governmental.

The same principle extends to resources of expertise. Since the needs of children span many sectors of specialized knowledge, UNICEF draws on the resources of relevant institutions in developing countries as well as of specialized agencies of the United Nations system.

In sum, UNICEF's operations work to maximize co-operative effort at the national and international level - and for the same reasons as the organisation works to promote co-operation at the local authority and community level: because only by pooling resources and effort can tangible and lasting improvements be made in the situation of children.

THE CATALYTIC ROLE - To make the best use of scarce resources, UNICEF seeks a catalytic role in the development process by identifying particular priorities or opportunities.

This may focus on a particular disadvantaged target sector of the population, such as efforts to improve the situation of women and girls; or it may support concentrated efforts in a particular development zone with the potential for spreading the experience gained to other parts of the country; or it may permit innovative approaches which otherwise would be denied their opportunity by static sectoral budgets.

It is thus part of UNICEF's approach to seek the "multiplier effect", to identify potential "growing points" in strategies and projects which will benefit children, to co-operate in pilot or "starter" activities which may evolve into national policy, to provide where it seems justified the "venture capital" of the development effort. As a result, the effects of UNICEF co-operation often develop out of proportion to the small size of the organisation's inputs.

OPERATIONS

WORKING ON THE SPOT - The operational character of UNICEF, the way the organisation works, can be clearly seen from its field orientation. UNICEF's field structure is one of the most extensive in the United Nations system.

Three out of every four UNICEF staff work in the network of field offices now serving more than a hundred countries; and a considerable proportion of the rest of the staff is directly involved in support for these field operations.

Field staff are posted to a country or area for four to six years and travel extensively, becoming thoroughly familiar with local conditions and the needs of children, whether in scattered villages of the rural areas or in the overcrowded and fast-growing slums of the cities.

This local knowledge and involvement is a major characteristic of UNICEF's co-operation, providing a realistic basis for advisory services and other assistance aimed at tackling children's problems in a down-to-earth way, and ensuring that projects are implemented as efficiently and effectively as possible.

MATERIAL HELP - Just as important is that a large part of UNICEF assistance comes in tangible form. More than three quarters of all UNICEF spending is on supplies and equipment - more than a hundred million dollars' worth a year - plus help for training of several hundred thousand local personnel each year, most of them working at the community level.

The procurement, supply and logistics expertise developed to handle the flow of material goods is one of UNICEF's strengths. There is a wide recognition among international organisations of UNICEF's pre-eminence in the business of delivering to hundreds of ports of entry around the world and of helping government supply organisations to store, transport and maintain tens of thousands of different types of equipment. Economy is assured by UNICEF's search for optimum price-quality benefits on the world market; efficiency is assured by packaging of unique special-purpose kits combining items assembled from different suppliers. Other agencies of the United Nations system and some 40 non-governmental organisations working in social development frequently use UNICEF's supply and procurement operation, on a reimbursable basis, to get goods needed for their own projects cheaply and speedily.

SWIFTNES IN EMERGENCIES - Emergency relief is a small part of UNICEF's assistance, but it demonstrates how swiftly the organisation can respond. Drawing on a stockpile of selected supplies at the UNIPAC warehouse and packing centre in Copenhagen, on its world-wide network of suppliers, or on flexible use of funds for local purchasing, UNICEF has often managed to supply urgent needs in a matter of days and to find means of delivery even when normal channels in the country of destination are in turmoil because of war or disaster.



ADVICE AND ADVOCACY - This involvement and experience informs UNICEF's advocacy and has its greatest impact in UNICEF's co-operation in the design and planning of national programmes, and in the advisory services the Children's Fund is requested to supply.

Because UNICEF deals with a range of problems affecting the child, the organisation is not restricted, as a sectoral agency may be, to a working relationship with a single ministry. Since a number of executive branches are involved in different ways with the welfare of children, UNICEF has correspondingly wide access, an asset that often results in a substantially greater concern for, and investment in, children than could be achieved through any one channel.

BRINGING KNOWLEDGE TO BEAR - At the same time, UNICEF seeks to promote the convergence of inter-related sectoral services at the community level so that they complement and reinforce each other.

The scope of UNICEF access in the countries in which it works also lends opportunity for the organisation to foster inter-sectoral or multi-disciplinary approaches through exchange of national experiences. In these situations, UNICEF staff, generalists by virtue of their work, can act as a channel of crucial information, helping to identify successful innovations in another country which may have local application.

ORGANISATIONAL FLEXIBILITY - UNICEF, while an integral part of the United Nations system, has its own 30-nation Executive Board which establishes policies, reviews programmes and commits funds.

Policies set by the Executive Board have adapted UNICEF's operational scope to changing needs and new situations. These policies, together with the broad responsibilities vested in field representatives within general guidelines supplied by headquarters, allow a considerable degree of flexibility and exercise of initiative in UNICEF's day-to-day operations.

This flexibility is appreciated in developing countries since it allows UNICEF to respond quickly to particular opportunities, and the specific circumstances of a country, or area or zone within a country.

MESHING WITH OTHER EFFORT - Indeed it is UNICEF's flexibility which often makes possible the organisation's catalytic role. It is a valuable attribute for an organisation often confronted in the field with fast-moving developments, an attribute which enables UNICEF to seize the potential of collaborative arrangements with national and international non-governmental organisations and local institutions and groups, many of which do not have long-term planning capacity, but can supply considerable numbers of volunteer personnel or other resources at short notice.

UNICEF also actively seeks to co-ordinate assistance plans with government budgetary and planning cycles, and to take advantage of large-scale development aid from other sources, bilateral or multilateral.

UNICEF does not duplicate the work of specialized United Nations agencies, such as the World Health Organisation, UNESCO, ILO and others; UNICEF's generalist staff draw on the technical guidance and expertise of these agencies.

SPECIAL ASPECTS

A PARTNERSHIP OF PEOPLE

A CONCERN FOR EFFICIENCY - UNICEF relies entirely on voluntary contributions - from the public as well as from governments. The organisation receives nothing automatically from the United Nations or by assessment from United Nations member states.

This imposes on UNICEF a special concern for efficiency, and for accountability to donors. A measure of the Fund's success in maintaining high standards of efficiency is the response of donors. Despite inflation, UNICEF's resources and activities including the organisation's advocacy of needs of children in developing countries have grown steadily in real terms. Lasting improvements in the situation of children have been achieved, although the needs continue to outstrip resources.

In 1952, contributions for UNICEF's work amounted to \$10.3 million; in 1978, this figure was \$211 million and considerable support has been expressed in UNICEF's Executive Board for an annual revenue level of \$500 million by the mid-1980s.

PEOPLE WORKING TOGETHER - In the industrialized societies, popular support of the Children's Fund is embodied in the tens of thousands of people, most of them volunteers, who work for the UNICEF cause through 32 national committees, which act as points of convergence in their countries for government departments and especially, non-governmental organisations and private citizens.

Tens of millions more people support UNICEF's work through purchase of greeting cards, or fund-raising campaigns and events organised by national committees.

Often there is particular focus to committee fund-raising - a project which has been "adopted", or a country the committee feels is particularly in need of help - and this focus provides an important educational dimension.

Through this and "development education" efforts aimed at school age children, as well as through more general information efforts, UNICEF has strengthened the sense of "people to people" participation which is such an important characteristic of its popular support.

THE MULTILATERAL VIEW - This popular support is no less important for the fact that a considerable proportion of UNICEF's funds come through governments. Since UNICEF is entirely funded by voluntary contributions, all its resources are directly or indirectly related to public support as a whole.

In addition to these general factors, major governmental donors recognize and appreciate the confidence in UNICEF of developing country governments with which the organisation works. They also value UNICEF's record of systematic co-operation, not only with other parts of the United Nations system, but also with local and international institutions and non-governmental organisations as well as with bilateral agencies - a network of relationships which acts as a way of focusing human and material resources and avoiding wasteful and duplicative efforts.

This more detailed understanding of the complexities involved in long-term development assistance also values UNICEF's scope and its capacity to handle a rapidly-expanding workload.

SUMMARY

The Child - The central fact of UNICEF, in the sense of both the organisation's identity and image, is a non-partisan concern for the child.

Action for the Long-Term - To deal with the problems of vast numbers of underserved children in developing countries, UNICEF has adopted a long-term developmental approach oriented towards local level action, tangible results and lasting benefits.

Services for Children - This has focused on co-operating with developing countries to strengthen and extend the social services - water supply, health, nutrition, education, women's activities and others - which have direct impact on the situation of children.

Field emphasis - To tackle these problems, UNICEF has developed a preponderantly field-oriented structure.

Practical help - The organisation has backed up its help for planning and design of social services with tangible assistance - supplies and equipment for social services, help for training of local personnel to work in these services and some support for their local costs - developing in the process a body of practical knowledge and experience, and a remarkable supply and logistics operation.

Flexible, collaborative - UNICEF's co-operation is flexible, seeking to use the limited resources at its disposal in a catalytic way to maximize their impact. Similarly, this co-operation often is extended through governments to local institutions and community organisations, frequently in collaboration with other sources of external assistance, drawing on the technical resources and expertise of specialized agencies and other parts of the United Nations system.

Community focus - While UNICEF's flexibility allows the organisation to adapt to particular needs and to identify specific priorities for this co-operation in different countries, the organisation has also advocated an over-all policy for tackling the generally inadequate coverage of social services benefiting children in developing countries: the basic or community-based services approach.

This approach, derived from experiences in a wide range of developing countries, favours a primary level of service developed and managed by the community with support from the government services.

Accountability - Since UNICEF, unlike most other United Nations organisations, is entirely funded by voluntary contributions which are both governmental and private, the organisation has a special sense of accountability to its donors. Administrative costs rarely rise above eight per cent.

Acceptance - Steadily increased support from donors has raised annual revenue from some \$10 million in 1952 to \$211 million in 1978. This is seen as resulting from a recognition of the need for more attention to the situation of children - and a general perception of UNICEF's effectiveness as a means of non-partisan and practical action on children's behalf. To expand assistance, UNICEF is aiming at a \$500 million income level by the mid-1980s.

Major governmental donors appreciate UNICEF's acceptance by governments of developing countries, and the organisation's network of co-operative relationships.

The People Link - However, it is felt that UNICEF's broadest appeal in industrialised societies, for the tens of thousands of volunteers working under its 32 national committees, and many millions more who contribute individually to UNICEF, stems from a sense of people-to-people partnership in the development process, with the welfare of children as the common objective.

