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UNITED NATIONS CHILDREN'S FUND  
Executive Board

SCOPE OF UNICEF AID

Note by the Executive Director

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### Introduction

1. In view of the limited resources of UNICEF as compared to the tremendous needs of children, it is clearly of the highest importance that UNICEF select projects and forms of aid which will achieve maximum long-term benefits for the largest possible number of children.
2. At the sessions of the Programme Committee and Executive Board held in June 1963, considerable discussion took place on the question of the proper limits for types of activity and forms of aid for a children's agency such as UNICEF. Some delegations questioned whether UNICEF should be supporting certain projects or particular items of aid on the ground that the benefits to children seemed remote, and they requested that the matter be placed on the agenda of the January 1964 session of the Board.

"The Deputy Director (Operations) stated that ... on the matter of the scope of UNICEF aid he did not believe it possible for the secretariat to prepare in time for consideration at the Bangkok session a review of the general assistance policies of UNICEF; it could, however, prepare a paper limited to the specific policy issues which had been raised by various delegations at the current session" (E/ICEF/469, para. 66).

3. The present note is presented to the Board in accordance with this statement.

### Historical evolution

4. Before dealing with specific questions, it may be useful to consider briefly the historical evolution of the Board's policy and the general criteria established by the Board by which all requests must be judged.
5. At the conclusion of the emergency phase of UNICEF's early activities, the General Assembly in 1950 agreed that there was a need for a different approach to the problems of child welfare and adopted the following resolution;

"The Board, in accordance with such principles as may be laid down by the Economic and Social Council and its Social Commission, shall, with due regard to the urgency of the needs and available resources, formulate the policies, determine the programmes and allocate the resources of the Fund for the purpose of meeting, through the provision of supplies, training and advice, emergency and long-range needs of children and their continuing needs particularly in under-developed countries, with a view to strengthening, wherever this may be appropriate, the permanent child health and child welfare programmes of the countries receiving assistance." (G.A. Res. 417 (V))

6. Under this general mandate, the Executive Board in the early years adopted certain broad principles to guide the secretariat in its discussions with Governments and the co-operating technical agencies and in selecting the requests for aid to be submitted to the Board. For example, since financial limitations made selection inevitable, the Board decided at an early stage that UNICEF efforts should be directed to helping solve the major hazards to children, and that projects should be selected which would benefit the largest number of children at the lowest possible per capita cost. Thus, a project to control or eradicate a disease which affects a high percentage of children would be preferable to one which affects only a small percentage. A campaign against a disease for which there is a known and relatively inexpensive cure would be helped before one where the per capita costs were very high or the results less predictable. The Board decided that help to projects which were under way and which showed promise of success should have first consideration. This priority has continued, and under the present pattern all UNICEF aid shows about 80 per cent for continuing projects and 20 per cent for new projects.

7. In the first few years of UNICEF's long-term aid, most of it went direct to the child in the form of food, BCG vaccinations or pre-natal and midwifery services. However, for effective long-term solutions it became clear that an attack must be made on causes, so far as possible, and that solutions must be sought within the assisted country which would reduce its dependence on gifts of imported food, drugs and personnel.

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### Training

8. In most countries probably the most serious impediment to the progress of programmes of interest to UNICEF has been lack of adequately trained personnel, whose availability governs the rate at which progress can be achieved. UNICEF aid was first offered to train midwives and public health nurses and their auxiliaries in the assisted projects, and was widened to the general categories of workers needed for developing children's services. As the number of such workers increased, it was necessary, in the interest of effective operation, to train workers at a higher level, particularly for teaching and supervising other workers. Sanitarians, although they would not ordinarily work directly with children, were added to the list of trainees because of the importance of community hygiene in relation to the health of children.

9. The Board also looked at training from another viewpoint. It was often found that existing training schemes gave little emphasis to children's problems. Medical training gave little place to paediatrics, and human nutrition was neglected by medical, agricultural and teacher-training institutions alike. It was agreed that certain forms of assistance to the teaching institutions were needed to encourage them to give attention to these neglected areas. These included staff costs for a limited period, equipment and fellowships. As it was apparent that there was also a lack of persons qualified to teach paediatrics and nutrition at the college and university level, similar aid was offered for the smaller group of high-level instructors. Each of these steps extended the long-term benefits to future generations of children; indeed, in some cases, the advantages will accrue only to future generations.

10. The same pattern was evident when UNICEF entered into such fields as education and social services. Assistance was required for the training of school teachers and child care workers dealing directly with children, but there was also a need to train teaching and supervisory personnel.

11. After a review of existing aid, the UNICEF Board in June 1961 concluded that training required more urgent attention. It adopted a policy which broadened the scope of UNICEF aid for training and allowed it to be used more extensively for staff in all the various fields of service for children, and for all levels of work: planning, directing, teaching, professional and auxiliary. UNICEF is thus able to assist in certain ways to help training at all levels from primary schools through university and post-graduate training (E/ICEF/431, paras. 74-81).

#### Health

12. The earliest long-term programmes aided by UNICEF were in the field of health and took the form of assistance to campaigns against major endemic diseases. In certain cases, the emphasis was mainly on children, for example in the BCG vaccination campaigns. In others - such as the malaria and leprosy campaigns - no such separation was practicable and to benefit children, it was necessary for the campaign to protect the whole community. Campaigns of this nature were recommended only when the disease constituted a serious threat to the health of children. To these campaigns were added assistance to maternal and child health services and, later, other aspects of permanent health services.

13. Since 1953, UNICEF has, on the advice of the UNICEF/WHO Joint Committee on Health Policy (JCHP) given aid to environmental sanitation in rural areas (large urban waterworks and sewerage being excluded because of the cost factor). The matter was reviewed by the JCHP in 1959 and its recommendations were subsequently adopted by the Board (E/ICEF/398, paras. 70-74). (This involved some increase in UNICEF aid for environmental sanitation including water supply.) The JCHP shared the belief of WHO that "sanitation in general, and water supply in particular, had a direct bearing on morbidity and mortality of children". (E/ICEF/396, para. 7.3) Its attention was called to studies of the Pan American Sanitary Bureau indicating that, regardless of other factors, a reduction of from 30 to 60 per cent in the diarrhoeal diseases could be achieved through a readily accessible



and potable water supply, and that in many developing countries diarrhoeal diseases were either the first or the second major cause of infant mortality and an important cause of childhood sickness. In addition, a number of studies had been made which indicated important relationships between the availability of water and the incidence and persistence of diseases such as trachoma, yaws and bilharziasis (WHO/ENV.SAN/123).

#### Nutrition

14. The need for some imagination and experimentation in tackling different facets of a problem has been illustrated in the evolution of UNICEF activities in the field of nutrition. Feeding programmes, based on imported supplies, can reach some hungry children for the moment but offer no solution for the future. One early and continuing form of aid to which UNICEF has made substantial contributions is the equipping of milk plants. In countries with a dairy potential, the assurance of an adequate supply of safe milk is of great importance to child health. Certain conditions were attached to ensure that a proportion of the product should be made available for free or subsidized distribution to needy children and mothers, and that low-cost safe milk would be available for the benefit of the low-income group generally. UNICEF's entry into the field of processing of other high-protein foods is for the purpose of promoting the availability, in areas where little or no milk is available, of low-cost protein-rich food supplements that are suitable for children.

15. But neither imported nor locally processed foods can meet all the needs. The great majority (80 per cent) of people in developing countries are dependent on their own food production and it was therefore necessary to consider what might be done at the local level to educate both producers and consumers as to what foods were required to promote and maintain health and to demonstrate how these could be obtained locally. This involved mainly the production of fruits, vegetables, fish, poultry and small animals. The necessary education included

practical demonstrations, by means of which schools, villages, women's clubs and other community groups could learn effective techniques and see the benefits which children derived from improved diets. The supplies necessary to the demonstrations were provided by UNICEF on the condition referred to earlier, namely, that in addition to encouraging greater home consumption of nutritious foods a certain part of the production would be devoted to welfare distribution to mothers and children, and the balance put on sale. The Board gave its approval in 1957 to an expanded nutrition programme which included these forms of practical nutrition activities (E/ICEF/353/Rev.1, paras. 70-78).

16. Nutrition is therefore being aided at the present time by means of: (a) imported milk (a form of UNICEF aid which is decreasing as other sources of imported milk become available; (b) assistance for food production, particularly milk and other high-protein foods; (c) demonstrations of village food production and distribution; and (d) training from the highest academic level to the simplest village programme (see paragraphs 8 and 9 above). In addition, UNICEF can assist in nutrition surveys designed to establish the facts on which practical programmes must be based.

#### Family and child welfare services

17. Under the heading of family and child welfare services, UNICEF aids mothercraft and homecraft, community development and social services for children. The classification of projects under these headings is to a certain extent arbitrary since a number of health and nutrition projects have significant community development or social services aspects. The Board first approved aid for mothercraft and homecraft projects in 1956, agreeing when it did so that training stipends, which had previously been given only to auxiliary workers in the health field, could be extended to workers in the child and family welfare aspects of community development. In 1959 the Board gave its approval in principle to aid for social services for children. Projects are aided through agencies serving child welfare and youth, with emphasis on group or community activities and on the training of various levels of workers.



### Broadening the approach

18. To achieve maximum usefulness, an agency such as UNICEF must retain sufficient flexibility to enable it to evolve in the light of experience and the widening interests of developing countries. The Board has been willing to approve a broadening of the range of programmes for which assistance may be given, as well as increasing flexibility in the forms of aid which may be approved. This has made possible certain pioneering efforts where these seemed appropriate in helping countries meet the needs of their children and youth.

19. The future orientation and scope of UNICEF activities was a matter of major interest at the March 1960 session of the Executive Board. Ten years had elapsed since UNICEF had shifted its major emphasis from emergency relief to aid for programmes of long-range benefit to children in developing countries.

While the pragmatic approach of UNICEF had resulted in remarkable achievements, the question was raised whether a systematic survey of children's needs would not be useful.

20. As a result of its deliberations on this question, the Board requested the Executive Director:

"To undertake consultations with beneficiary countries and the technical agencies concerned for the purpose of ascertaining the priority needs of the children of these countries and identifying the fields in which UNICEF might assist in order to contribute to the greatest possible extent to their present and future welfare." (E/ICEF/398, para. 46).

21. This report was reviewed in June 1961, and, as a result, the Board approved a number of changes in the scope of UNICEF activities designed to permit Governments to request aid in fields not hitherto assisted by UNICEF, providing the Government attached high priority to its request. This enabled UNICEF to give greater recognition to the main needs of children in each country where opportunities existed for effective action. It also made it possible for UNICEF to provide aid in the fields of education and vocational training.

22. In earlier years it was often left to the international agencies to make the major decisions as to priorities, but the last decade has seen a great increase in government planning. Developing countries, in the light of their limitations of budget and personnel, are tending more and more to establish long-term planning machinery for economic and social development in order to make the best use of available resources and to establish priorities among many needs. In most of such plans, however, no special emphasis has been placed on the particular needs of children and youth. The Board therefore agreed on various measures which would encourage Governments to give sufficient priority to meeting the needs of children and youth as an essential element in ensuring the continuing success of their economic and social development plans.

23. The Board recognized that, as the only United Nations agency concerned exclusively with the needs of children, UNICEF had certain responsibilities in addition to assisting country projects. One is to persuade Governments to assess the needs of their children. UNICEF aid may be given for the conduct of studies for such a purpose. Another is to persuade Governments to plan to meet these needs within their national development plans. Moreover, as the international aid required for this purpose far exceeds its own resources, UNICEF agreed that it had a further obligation: to help direct the attention of donor Governments, international agencies and voluntary bodies to the needs of children and youth so that they might give appropriate emphasis to these needs in the aid which they provide for economic and social development.

Questions raised on scope of aid

24. The expansion of UNICEF aid, in regard both to areas of need and to the form of assistance provided, has resulted in a number of new UNICEF activities in recent years. In presenting recommendations, the Executive Director has endeavoured to follow Board decisions where these are specific and otherwise to implement the spirit of the decisions in a reasonable way.

25. As indicated in paragraph 2, some Board members posed the question at the June 1963 session of how far UNICEF aid could be extended without losing its focus on children. They felt that UNICEF differed from other agencies concerned with economic and social development and that it was important to maintain its character as a children's agency. It was agreed that further discussion would take place at the Board session in January 1964 and that the Executive Director would prepare a paper on the specific points about which questions had been raised.

26. The reservations expressed by several delegations - which were not shared by others - related not so much to the newer areas approved for UNICEF aid as to the interpretation placed upon Board policies by the secretariat in connexion with certain aspects of health and nutrition projects. This may indicate a difference in the understanding of the Board's intentions, or it may be due to the fact that the secretariat, in the interest of brevity, had failed in the case of some projects to make clear the significance of proposed aid in relation to children's needs and previous decisions of the Board.

27. The questions raised can be classified into three main categories:

- a) General questions which might apply to any project;
- b) Questions relating to health problems;
- c) Questions relating to nutrition problems.

(a) General questions

28. One of the general questions is whether projects of benefit to the whole community can be justified as appropriate for UNICEF support. It is, of course, the view of the Executive Director that community problems without special significance for children should not find a place in the UNICEF programme. Children have special needs which should receive help from UNICEF. At the same time, it is clear that many of the problems of children can only be solved within the context of the family and the community.

29. For example, certain endemic diseases, because of their nature, can only be eradicated or controlled on a community basis. These include malaria, yaws and leprosy. The importance of pure water for children has already been referred to, and this obviously must be provided on a community basis. Good nutrition for children can only be achieved in a family setting. The inadequate production or consumption of food affects all the members of a community, and most of all the young children. It is, however, difficult if not impossible to try to improve the nutrition of the child without considering the food habits of the family as a whole. Only when the family has enough food of the right quality and uses it wisely will every member - including the children - be well and economically fed. In the developing countries the majority of the consumers are also the producers. Long-term efforts to prevent protein malnutrition in children need therefore to be based on improvements in agriculture and the other aspects of food supplies, already briefly described, and on improvements in the level of consumption and food habits of the families who make up the community and the nation. In the field of social services for children, it is generally recognized that these cannot be provided effectively without involvement in conserving the integrity and welfare of the family, which in many cases requires the strengthening of social institutions and community resources.

30. This point of view was recognized by the Board in June 1962 when it adopted a "Declaration on a Long-Term Policy for Children in Relation to the Development Decade", in which it was stated that - "help for children and young people cannot be regarded as an isolated field of work: it must be related to the improvement of conditions in the family, the community and the nation<sup>1/</sup> (E/ICEF/454/Rev.1, para 12). At the same time the Board has recognized that projects to be aided by UNICEF must be evaluated primarily from the point of view of their benefits to children.

<sup>1/</sup> Italics included in Declaration as adopted by the Board.



31. Another general question which concerned some of the Board members was how high a level of training it was appropriate for UNICEF to help. As has already been indicated (paragraphs 8-11), the extension of aid to training at various academic levels has been part of the natural evolution of UNICEF programme policy. The higher levels of training involve relatively few people, but the lack of top-level personnel for planning, direction, supervision and teaching within a country will inevitably impose limitations on the quality of the programme and the rate at which it can develop. UNICEF assistance at this level has been directed to such fields as paediatrics, nutrition, teacher training and social services, where some stimulus and incentive appeared necessary.

32. A third general question is whether UNICEF is, in some cases, undertaking projects which should more properly be the responsibility of other agencies. Because children's needs cannot be compartmentalized UNICEF inevitably provides aid in fields of interest to certain specialized agencies and the Bureau of Social Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat. However, the forms of aid which UNICEF gives are not those for which the technical agencies have funds. Under certain circumstances UNICEF also pays the cost of experts for certain projects when the funds available to the agency under its regular budget or the Expanded Programme of Technical Assistance are fully committed.

33. The question was raised at the June 1963 Board session whether the United Nations Special Fund could not assist an environmental sanitation project of the type for which a considerable amount of UNICEF help was being asked. The policy of the governing body of the Special Fund does not permit the kind of aid for rural sanitation which UNICEF is providing. The programmes of UNICEF and the Special Fund are, however, in many cases complementary and a system of inter-secretariat consultation is in effect to ensure co-ordination. Not only in connexion with the Special Fund, but generally, the Executive Director makes every effort to avoid UNICEF support for projects for which other aid is available.

(b) Questions relating to health projects

34. Among the questions relating to health projects the question is whether a children's agency should be assisting in rural sanitation and water supply. The evolution of UNICEF aid to sanitation and water supply is referred to in paragraph 13. While this is a programme which benefits the whole community, it is also vital to the health of children. Moreover, the availability of water can release the mother from spending hours each day fetching water from distant sources<sup>2/</sup>. (E/ICEF/398, para. 75). The conditions recommended by the JCHP and adopted by the Board that such a programme should be integrated with general health services or programmes of community development and be accompanied by properly trained sanitation staff, health education, and community participation, should ensure maximum benefits.

35. A second question regarding UNICEF aid for health problems is whether UNICEF should assist in mass campaigns (such as, for example, the one against malaria) which are a problem for the whole community. This has already been commented on above (see paragraph 12).

36. A third and related question is whether UNICEF should not be concentrating its aid on static health services rather than on mass campaigns. UNICEF has for many years been giving assistance both to mass campaigns and to the development of infrastructures for basic health services. The Board has never considered them to be mutually exclusive, although its expressed interest in the development of the latter is reflected in the steadily increasing proportion of UNICEF resources which is being devoted to their development. However, the permanent health services will have a better chance to develop and to

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<sup>2/</sup> "Water has to be carried, and often for many miles, on the heads or shoulders of people, in jars, cans and a variety of other containers. This task falls to the women, and it is not uncommon to find them employing more than half their time in this back-breaking, foot-bruising labour" (WHO/Inv.San./123, 8 October 1959, page 5).



concentrate on MCH, preventive services and health education if the major endemic diseases have been eradicated or reduced to manageable proportions. That basic services are also needed to consolidate the gains of a mass campaign and to permit the campaign itself to come to an end is a fact which is being increasingly stressed by WHO.

37. Another question is whether UNICEF should not be concentrating on maternal and child health (MCH) rather than on general public health. While MCH is obviously of the highest priority in UNICEF planning, certain other aspects of general public health services have great importance for child health. In 1957, when the UNICEF Board had before it an extensive review of experience with joint UNICEF/WHO aid for maternal and child health, prepared by a special WHO consultant, (Dr. Jessie Bierman), it agreed that it was important to encourage and help Governments to integrate maternal and child health services into general health services while at the same time ensuring that the special needs of mothers and children should be met (E/ICEF/353/Rev.1, paragraph 51). Preventive services, immunization, health education and sanitation have long been approved activities of UNICEF. On the other hand, a number of aspects of public health, for example, industrial health or air pollution, are considered to be beyond the scope of UNICEF and have not received UNICEF aid. It is proposed that the next session of the UNICEF/WHO Joint Committee on Health Policy should have on its agenda the question of the relation of maternal and child health to other basic health services.

(c) Questions relating to nutrition projects

38. In connexion with applied nutrition projects, the question was raised as to whether UNICEF was justified in paying staff costs for training schemes in home economics and agricultural extension work, including the costs of teachers in rural sociology and research fellows.

39. Applied nutrition projects which are to reach effectively into the village and home need to stress increased local production of protective foods and their more effective use, particularly for children. A serious handicap in the implementation of these projects, especially in Africa, has been the lack of home economics and agricultural extension personnel who have an adequate training in human nutrition and an understanding of the social, economic, and cultural deterrents to putting available knowledge successfully into practice. In many countries these are the only workers in rural areas who are in direct contact with farmers and the rural population on matters of food production and consumption. The purpose of UNICEF aid in helping pay for staff costs in courses or departments of existing training institutions (and in a few cases new training institutions) is to promote adequate emphasis on human nutrition in agricultural extension and home economics programmes.

40. It is now becoming generally recognized, on the basis of long experience -- including a number of failures -- that more effective use of extension approaches to the improvement of human nutrition in rural areas, more adequate orientation towards human nutrition in agriculture and home economics training, and improved field training, cannot be successfully accomplished without a greater understanding of the obstacles to the acceptance of better food production and nutrition practices for various specific population groups. When the UNICEF Board is asked to approve funds for a post for a rural sociologist, it is specifically for the purpose of contributing directly to this understanding.

41. The use of the word "research" in this context is perhaps misleading. The term "field studies" would be more appropriate in that lecturers would, as necessary, study local village practices in terms of food production and consumption and related matters for guidance in the preparation of their own teaching material and as a basis for field assignments and practice in extension work undertaken by their students.

42. Another question which arose from the consideration of specific projects at the June 1963 session of the Board was why UNICEF should provide boats and nets for fishermen. UNICEF and FAO have helped establish successful pond fish culture in a number of applied nutrition projects. This is the best - and frequently the only - way of making fish available for local consumption and in ways which would especially ensure provision for children. Transport, preservation and handling problems are minimized and areas such as swamps which are unsuitable for agricultural purposes are made to produce nutritious food.

43. One popular supply item made available by UNICEF to several countries in this connexion is nylon twine. This is distributed to the fishermen in charge of the local fishponds, who themselves weave the twine into the required nets. Nylon is lighter, water-resistant, longer-lasting and has greater tensile strength than the traditional cotton yarn netting. The nets are more easily handled and many man-hours of labour are saved in the repairing and renewing of nets as cotton yarn is replaced by nylon. For large inland water areas and for immediate offshore marine fishing, UNICEF has provided a number of small outboard motors to mechanize local craft. This increases the efficiency of operations by reducing the time taken to reach the present fishing areas and find new ones, and therefore extends the number of hours per day that can be given to netting operations. In the circumstances, nylon twine and outboard motors represent the logical and strategically important supply items which UNICEF is in a position to contribute to such programmes. In return for this aid, a specified quantity of fish is provided over a given period in schools, children's institutions and other local child feeding channels to supplement other produce from applied nutrition projects; moreover, under schemes aided by UNICEF, more fish is generally available in the local markets at a lower cost, and the projects serve as a demonstration intended to stimulate wider production.