PROGRAMME SUPPORT COMMUNICATIONS SERVICE: PRESENT STATUS IN UNICEF

1.   Justification: Programme Support Communications (PSC) is an important
element of the strategy of Basic Services for Children, which advocate
community participation through: education; access to correct information
relating to community problems or needs; the acquisition of new skills and
the mobilization of international, national and community resources through
political support.[1]

2.   Aims and Objectives: PSC is not merely the provision of educational
materials or equipment.   The overall objective of PSC is to facilitate
advocacy and the improved achievement of programme objectives by the
systematic use of communication processes, systems and techniques which
are available at national, sub-national and community levels.[2]   At the
community level, PSC aims at facilitating behavioural change by imparting
new skills and knowledge to deal with issues and problems facing each
particular community.   Most UNICEF-assisted projects call, for some form
of information exchange at various levels aimed at more effective imple-
mentation and policy orientation.   Both efforts may involve winning the
acceptance of new methods or of changed attitudes and behaviour, and
encouraging the active support by the people in the programme area.

While the concept is not new and many UNICEF-assisted programmes have
foreseen such elements in the past, the strategic importance of PSC as an
integral part of programmes from the formulation stage onwards has only
recently gained wide acceptance.[3]   The use of PSC to accelerate the

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[1]
 Basic Services for Children in Developing Countries: Executive Board 1976
 Session - E.ICEF/L.1342, para. 91(f)
[2]
 EXPRO-240:   Communications Support to Project Implementation dated 12 May 1975.
[3]
 UNICEF Information Policy: Executive Board 1975 Session - E/ICEF/L.1321, paras 31-2

implementation of programmes and the generation of national policies or plans which are conducive to childrens development has included the provision and utilisation of a variety of media--posters, leaflets, filmstrips, puppet shows, radio, films and - more recently - television circuits, including video.[4] However, more attention must be paid to the development of strategic PSC elements in the programming processes based on social data and with well-defined behavioral change objectives which can lead to change in-knowledge, attitudes and practices within the programmes' population.

3. <u>PSC Programme Component</u>: PSC is an essential programming component. Therefore, at each stage of the programme process (problem identification, studies, programme formulation, implementation, and monitoring and evaluation), there are a variety of PSC issues which should be considered. UNICEF involve-ment in PSC in developing countries falls into 8 categories:

I.. <u>Policy Support Communications</u>: This involves more targeted communications to policy and decision-makers, legislators and senior management of mass media systems. The major objective of this activity is: to influence and facilitate the development of plans and policies which create an environment conducive to the optimal development of the child; to encourage the allocation of more resources for programmes benefiting children within national, social develop-ment and service plans; and to stimulate increased international assistance to programmes benefiting children. This type of activity is popularly known as advocacy for children. Well-targeted mass media messages have an important role to play in this activity. .

II. <u>Advocacy for PSC - Orientation and Training of Planners and Administrators</u>: This refers to awareness-raising workshops and seminars as well as brain-storming sessions for planners and administrators from government and NGO's,

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EXPRO-189: Communication Techniques for Implementing Projects, dated 23 Oct.1970.

on the role of communications in the development and maintenance of basic services. UNICEF also assists planners and administrators to establish lateral and vertical communication lines between different centres of responsibility as well as to strengthen linkages between project personnel and communities in assisted-programme areas.

III. Orientation and Training of Extension Workers: Community education and motivation in places where literacy is low can be attained through interpersonal contacts and participatory demonstrations, with the assistance of unsophisticated visuals. Unfortunately, most of the various extension cadres and community workers are not well trained in communication techniques. UNICEF assistance is therefore directed at the training of trainers of extension workers on communication and how to teach it. Secondly, increased assistance has enabled the holding of PSC workshops for extension workers, media planners and personnel. However, the production of PSC training and field manuals also requires substantive assistance.[5]

IV. Community Education: This activity aims to facilitate the mastery of new ideas and skills, and to provide information on available resources to meet community needs.[6] . The type and format varies accodring to the project, local communication systems, the social aspects of the community and the peoples knowledge, attitude and practices relating to the subject matter. Therefore, this process plays a key role in encouraging the participation of communities in the provision of basic services benefiting children.[7] It is the major emphasis of PSC during programme implementation.

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[5]
Project for Training in Communications for Basic Services in Eastern and South-Central Africa, Programme Committee, Executive Board 1981 Session - E/ICEF/L.2058 Rec.

[6]
Executive Board Policy Decision-Excerpts from Reports of the Board 1974-1977- E/ICEF/L.1309/Add.1, 11 May 1978.

[7]
Report of the Executive Director, Executive Board 1982 Session - E/ICEF/1690, para. 149.

V.   Strengthening of National PSC Capacities: Assistance in this area

focuses on increasing the countries' capacity for training front-line

workers and their trainers in applied social communication; assisting

planners and policy-makers to incorporate PSC in their work; designing

advocacy materials to explain children's problems and new programme trends;

and improving vertical and lateral communication, especially the linkages

between project personnel and the communities in the assisted programme

areas.[8]   This assistance enables institutions to establish communication

training units which will eventually have a long-term impact on the pro-

vision of basic services for children.

VI. Family Education Materials for Children in the form of comic books,

games such as snakes and ladders on hygiene, and puppet-based TV programmes

have a large role to play in positive character and behaviour formation

among children.

VII. Equipment and Supplies: The easiest thing to do for an international

organisation like UNICEF is to provide equipment for PSC. There have been

all too many instances in the past where UNICEF has provided equipment

without those programme components which ensure that the equipment being

provided was the most suitable or that it could be properly used and main-

tained. In addition, there has been a tendency to provide equipment

sophisticated beyond the users' capacities.[9] This occurs when neither the

assisted units nor the UNICEF office concerned have the capacity to design

and implement comprehensive communications support for project-level activ-

ities. The efficient utilisation of this assistance has not been possible

without a systematic framework, and the experience has been disappointing.

However, with the advent of PSC officers in UNICEF offices and as a result

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[8] Statement of Chairperson, executive Board 1980 Session - E/ICEF/CRP/80-36, page 5.

[9] EXPRO-240: Communications Support to Project Implementation, dated 12 May 1975, section 10.

of the PSC training programmes mentioned earlier, the situation is slowly improving.

VIII <u>Strengthening of Training Activities</u>: PSC processes and techniques enhance training programmes per se. Assistance in this area is directed to the training of trainers and the development of prototype training manuals and curricula which extension workers' institutions can adopt or adapt.

4. <u>PSC Programming and Implementation</u>: It is the responsibility of the programme officer- in consultation with a PSC officer where one exists - to take the initiative to identify needs and opportunities for basic com-
munication components of UNICEF-assisted programmes.[10] For specific PSC components, an expert in PSC is required to formulate a comprehensive PSC strategy, plans and activities which should then form an integral part of the programme. Comprehensive PSC programme strategy, plans and activities comprise:

(a) analysis of problem(s) and programme objectives for communication components;

(b) specification of societal values, goals, objectives, etc.;

(c) identification of communication technology, resources and services;

(d) specification of all target groups;

(e) setting of behavioural objectives for each programme objective and target group;

(f) design of activities to achieve the behavioural objectives;

(g) design and production of materials and media messages to support the activities;

(h) development of an implementation workplan and schedule;

(i) design of monitoring and evaluation mechanisms, including the

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  EXPRO-240: Communications Support to Project Implementation, dated 12 May 1975, section 4.

identification of quantifiable indicators;

(j)   design of mechanisms for sectoral co-ordination or integration; and

(k)   monitoring of PSC inputs and outputs.

This process should be incorporated into the main phases of programme formulation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation.   By following this process, it is possible to edge PSC away from the piecemeal approach - away, for example, from the sequence of: "If it is malnutrition, let us produce a poster, flannelgraph or a radio programme." This is a 'fire-brigade' approach.   This takes place when communication is remembered after something has gone wrong, or when the intervention does not appear to have an impact on the communities, policy-makers, politicians, etc.

5.   Financing: All PSC programme components are funded from the programme commitment under the PSC programme activity category and code pp. 40.   However, there will be occasions when pre-programming studies to establish an information base for PSC components or advocacy activities should be undertaken.   In this situation, financing could be drawn from information activities under administrative budget allocations in codes 40, 41, and 44 or IFP.[11]

6.   Role and Duties of Field PSC Officers:

(a)   Working with programme officers, project personnel, advisers and their government counterparts to identify communication dimensions in existing and planned UNICEF-assisted projects.

(b)   Advising and guiding the assisted government ministries, the Representative and Programme Officers in pre-operational community knowledge, attitude and practice appraisal; formulating, implementing, monitoring and evaluating the communication·dimensions of the assisted programmes; participating in programme formulation, previews and reviews is essential.

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[11]EXPRO-240, section 12 and EXDIR 2837 dated 19 March 1983.

(c) Guiding relevant ministries in the orientation and training of all levels of staff in the theory and practice of PSC in social development programmes, and strengthening of national and PSC training capacities.

(d) Advising representatives and programme staff on advocacy, on strategy and policy support communications, and on plans to explain new trends in UNICEF policy, as well as the problems and needs of children, to senior government officials and planners.

(e) Organizing communication research, evaluation and training activities, and exploring opportunities (e.g., use of group/village networks, appropriate communication technology, etc.), and testing of communication concepts and methods within the context and needs of programmes for children.

(f) In collaboration with programme staff and in concert with the supply staff and procurement staff, supervising the administrative details of PSC programmes (e.g., equipment and supplies specifications, field testing and monitoring, etc.).

(h) Overseeing the production of prototype communication materials, integrated nutrition messages, packages for promotion of breastfeeding, area development, training manuals, PSC programming guidelines, etc.

(i) Identifying, selecting, orienting and supervising outside expertise and resources - including consultants employed for specific communication activities (e.g., production of radio or television programmes in support of specific programme objectives, evaluation of PSC programmes, etc.).

(j) Designing programmes for the development and testing of field-level communication equipment (e.g., battery-or-solar-powered radio receivers or tape recorders, film and slide projectors, cameras, etc.).

7.   PSC Section, New York: The New York Unit was established to assist the Programme Division and Field Offices in the promotion, programming and appraisal or evaluation of PSC activities in programmes benefiting children. Specific areas include:

(a)   Strengthening of awareness and understanding among UNICEF and government staff of the concept, role and function of PSC in the development, implementation and evaluation of programmes.

(b)   Acting as focal point for the exchange of experience and skills, and as co-ordinator for communications planning, implementation and evaluation.

(c)   Providing guidance to Programme Division and Field Offices in the assessment and evaluation of PSC components of UNICEF-assisted programmes and projects.

(d)   Identifying PSC sources and keeping track of the latest communications research relevant to UNICEF programme work in the field.

(e)   Disseminating communications research findings to PSC and programme officers in the field through the quarterly PSC Newsletter; holding regular consultations and organising staff development training programmes.

(f)   Providing technical backstopping to Field Offices in the production and - in collaboration with the Supply Division - the purchase of education and communications equipment. [12]

PSC Officers normally report to the person who has the overall responsibility for programme co-ordination.

R.R.N. Tuluhungwa
Chief, PSC Service
19 January 1983

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[12] PRO-62: Headquarters-Based Advisers, dated 22 February 1980, section (f)

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Notes

The paper discusses: justification; aims and objectives; PSC programme component; policy support communications; orientation and training of extension workers (in the field); community education; strengthening o national PSC capacities; family education materials for children; equipment and supplies; strengthennig of training activities; PSC programming and implementation; financing; role and duties of field PSC officers; PSC Section, New York.
The paper is footnoted with references mainly to UNICEF official documents, placing PSC within the official languag and context.

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