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The author believes that advocacy is at the core of UNICEF's role in development assistance, coupled with a catalytic role in channeling funds to programmes that benefit children, not limited to those programmes implemented by the agency itself. The paper mentions UNICEF's successful advocacy ventures in Brazil, e.g. for the International Year of the Child (1979) and promotion of breastfeeding.

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UNITED NATIONS CHILDREN'S FUND

U N I C E F

UNICEF/TARO/RRS/80-14  
September 1980

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Americas Regional Staff Meeting  
CEPAL Building  
22 to 26 September 1980  
Santiago, Chile

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ROLE OF ADVOCACY IN BRAZIL

Jacob Matthai  
UNICEF - Brasilia  
September 1980

ROLE OF ADVOCACY IN BRAZIL

JACOB MATTHAI  
UNICEF - Brasília  
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Advocacy has always played an important role and can be considered as an integral part of the regular programming and planning activities in Brazil. UNICEF's role in "better-off" countries cannot be visualized without a carefully thought out advocacy strategy. The fundamental issues related to the need for social development policies, sensitising local authorities on issues related to children, creation of political will backed up by financial resources, etc, can only be achieved through patience and perseverance, which in the final analysis amount to advocacy. Experience in Brazil during the past three years indicates that results can be positive, and with sustained efforts much more can be accomplished.

#### WHY ADVOCATE?

There are two major reasons why we need to advocate.

1. To be instrumental or supportive in fulfilling our programme objectives.
- 2 To be used as a tool in our fund raising efforts.

#### Programme Objectives

As a starting point, the role of UNICEF in "better-off" countries needs to be clearly understood, since this is an issue that is often raised by some donor countries, some Board members and even some UNICEF staff members. One of the reasons for such questions can be attributed to the difficulty in understanding the reality of the situation within the country from statistical information presented as national averages. Some examples from Brazil show that disparity ranges from 100% when compared to

national averages and even up to 200% when compared to other regions.

	Northeast of Brazil	South of Brazil	National average Brazil
Population <sup>(1)</sup>	29%	18%	100%
Infant mortality <sup>(2)</sup>	190 per 1000	58 per 1000	98 per 1000
Housing with access <sup>(1)</sup> to safe water	21%	70%	57%
Housing with access <sup>(1)</sup> to drainage	26%	67%	56%
Primary school <sup>(3)</sup> enrolment	35%	68%	65%

There is a dangerous tendency for the gap to increase unless development strategies devote more attention and resources to the social sector. The advocacy role of UNICEF is extremely important to convince Senior Government Officials concerned with policy, plan formulation and programme identification of the important relationship between social and economic development plans. This would lead to the formulation of a national policy for children and youth as part of a national development plan for increasing the productivity of the entire population, thereby the capacity of generating larger resources for future development, as well as a higher standard of living.

(1) Anuário Estatístico do Brasil 1978 - FIBGE

(2) Estimates calculated based on Anuário Estatístico do Brasil, 1978-FIBGE

(3) Estimates calculated based on Indicadores Sociais-Tabelas Seleccionadas, 1979, FIBGE

Very often national development plans are formulated without taking into consideration children as main beneficiaries. A greater emphasis is required to formulate comprehensive schemes directed to children and their families, with a multisectoral approach to ensure that activities relate to each other and also complement each other. The underlying principles of basic services and primary health care emphasize this, but unfortunately, they are experiencing the initial teething troubles in many countries. The acceptance and practice of these strategies can only be achieved through continuous advocacy and promotional work.

In Brazil, there is a wealth of information on children which are available under different sectors. UNICEF initiated discussions with Government authorities to compile all this information and publish a document to help plan policies and programmes for children. This has motivated the National Statistical Institute of Brazil to prepare regional and state level statistical profiles and they have requested UNICEF assistance to analyse the 1980 census results and reformulate questionnaires for the next census for a more comprehensive coverage on children. The Institute has understood the value of the statistical profile and have expressed an interest to publish a second edition of the profile with more detailed information.

The major objective of the urban development programme is to prepare a detailed plan on how to improve the situation of children and families in marginal slum areas based on the priority needs expressed by the slum dwellers. It is obvious that UNICEF will not have the resources to implement the plan of action, and therefore, emphasis on advocacy is crucial to

attract other funding institutions within Brazil or from outside Brazil. World Bank has expressed interest in this programme and we have already had about three or four meetings with the Bank Officials. Advocacy has already created interest among officials from other cities to try a similar approach to resolve their own slum problems. UNICEF assistance to this programme started in Rio de Janeiro and requests from other cities in Brazil for similar help to develop their own plans demonstrate the impact of advocacy.

The programme on breastfeeding in Brazil concentrates on a comprehensive approach to resolve some of the basic issues that are fundamental causes for the decline in breastfeeding in Brazil. These types of programmes are normally restricted to promotion and education of mothers, and often neglect the realities that force mothers to abandon the process of breastfeeding. Advocacy on the part of UNICEF and local experienced authorities have successfully influenced the Government programme to take a comprehensive approach as per the recommendations of the UNICEF/WHO meeting on infant feeding held in Geneva in 1979. A strategy we have successfully deployed to motivate high level Government officials and other decision making authorities includes the presentation of an audio-visual with Brazilian personalities explaining the present situation of breastfeeding in Brazil, the reasons for its decline, the detrimental consequences of premature weaning and finally some suggestions and recommendations to reverse the trend. Our objective was to receive positive reactions from these high level officials which could be considered as support from the highest level to plan and implement the programme. We have been extremely successful in achieving our objective and all of those who have seen the

audio-visual are in full agreement to implement a comprehensive programme on a national scale. Newspaper articles appeared the day after the Minister of Health and the Minister of Social Welfare viewed the audio-visual expressing their support for the programme. Extensive promotional work is foreseen in the implementation of this national programme.

The goitre problem caused by the lack of iodine is extremely serious in Brazil and is concentrated in pockets all over the country. Salt has been proven to be one of the most efficient and cheap way of introducing iodine into the diet of people. Unfortunately, in Brazil the disorganized salt industry and the vastness of the country make it difficult to enforce a national salt iodination programme. Alternative strategies are being explored to concentrate on goitre endemic areas which would include advocacy and promotional work to convince the salt producers and consumers about the value of salt iodination programmes.

The planning work for the International Year of the Handicapped\* will have to be centered around advocacy and appropriate communication activities. UNICEF's role as the lead agency for the International Year of the Child and advocacy work has enhanced our credibility in Brazil. The leading television company in Brazil is planning programmes, spot announcements and messages to be broadcast during 1981. They have already approached UNICEF for guidance and advice to plan their campaign. This and other channels of communications including simple manuals, information materials, audio-visuals, etc, are foreseen to transmit messages and information about prevention, early detection and treatment of different types of handicaps and deficiencies in children.

\* In 1976, the General Assembly proclaimed 1981 as the International Year of Disabled Persons (IYDP) [www.un.org/esa/socdev/enable/disiydp.htm](http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/enable/disiydp.htm) accessed 13 Nov 2007



(1979)

The promotion of IYC done by UNICEF and local individuals and organizations have resulted in creating an unprecedented awareness and motivation to improve the situation of children. Governmental and non governmental organizations and the public in general have a much greater awareness of the needs of the children and in many cases are willing to respond favourably to programmes helping children. UNICEF is now appreciated and recognized in Brazil as an organization capable of helping the children of Brazil.

These are specific activities which have benefited from advocacy and promotional work. On the other hand, the technical assistance of UNICEF leading towards the formulation of a national policy for children involves almost entirely advocacy and promotional work. Seeking information on the situation and needs of children, understanding the impact of existing programmes and formulating recommendations requires the cooperation and help from sectoral Ministries and the main planning unit of the Government. This has to be achieved with proper advocacy techniques necessary to support and promote intersectoral and interdisciplinary reviews of social and economic development questions.

In addition to the examples cited above UNICEF is directly involved in advisory and promotional work with the Ministry of Social Welfare to develop plans and policies for the young child and to advice the Secretary of Social Welfare on issues related to planning and management of social development strategies. Likewise, the cooperation with the Ministry of Agriculture will concentrate on their programming and planning strategies to improve the situation of the low income people of Northeast Brazil.

Advocacy can therefore be considered as the principal element and backbone of UNICEF input to Brazil.

### Fund Raising

The second important objective of advocacy is to obtain financial resources. The fund raising activities should not only restrict to improve UNICEF's financial situation, but also to identify major funding sources to help programmes that benefit children. The catalytic role of UNICEF is crucial to motivate and convince other major funding sources. The flexibility of UNICEF should be preserved to initiate such activities that have the potential to attract other major funding sources. Some of the activities mentioned above have resulted in this type of catalytic effect attracting organizations and institutions from within the country and also from outside the country.

Representatives of leading donor countries and other multilateral donor organizations should be kept fully informed about programmes and activities of UNICEF. Information to these people should not be restricted to UNICEF assisted activities within the country, but should also include information concerning UNICEF policies and programmes for other countries that would interest them and thereby improve the credibility of UNICEF.

Intensive advocacy efforts should be continued to improve the contribution from local Governments for the maintenance of offices within the country.

Greeting Cards being an important source of ~~income~~ to UNICEF and also a channel of communication to the public should be promoted

through advocacy. In Brazil the sales of cards have increased steadily with limited promotional work. This leads us to believe that there is a tremendous potential to generate more revenue by increasing the sales and using the opportunity for a more intensive promotion of UNICEF programmes and policies.

The difficult foreign exchange situation in Brazil and stringent exchange laws that prevent conversion of cruzeiros to dollars makes it necessary to find alternative ways of using the funds generated by the sale of greeting cards. A different type of advocacy work is required to obtain the necessary permission to purchase Brazilian products using cruzeiros since regulations stipulate that all export orders should be paid in hard currency. Products purchased by UNICEF would be strictly for donation to programmes assisted by UNICEF in other developing countries, it would give the opportunity for Brazilian products to be known in these countries, and would give Brazil an opportunity to become associated with social programmes in other developing countries which is in line with the principles of TCDC. These factors are being favourably considered by the Government and we expect an agreement to be reached very soon.

#### "GO-PUBLIC"

All these advocacy and promotional related activities indicate the importance of UNICEF to "GO-PUBLIC". Mass media is a powerful tool that has to be exploited to the advantage of UNICEF goals and targets. Experience in Brazil has shown that this is possible. The leading Brazilian television company was primarily responsible for the intensive campaign during the International Year of the Child, which soon spread to other

media institutions. During the campaign UNICEF was often mentioned as the lead agency and as an organization committed to the cause of children. These types of exposures complemented with personal contacts have increased the credibility of UNICEF in Brazil. Today, programmes of UNICEF are given wide publicity and extensive press coverage is given to meetings with UNICEF and Senior Government Officials both at Federal and State levels. As mentioned earlier the television company has requested advise and guidance from UNICEF to plan a campaign strategy for the Year of the Handicapped.

#### THE ROLE OF UNICEF HEADQUARTERS

Adequate support and help from UNICEF-NY is essential for the success of advocacy at the field level.

Whenever an opportunity arises proper briefing should be provided to visitors from other organizations to UNICEF field offices. Lack of information and briefing to visitors have often caused difficulties and even misunderstandings. On the other hand, properly briefed visitors have made extra effort to meet UNICEF and understand the work in Brazil. In the recent past there have been examples of both of these types of visitors.

Very often advocacy work will have to be supported by accurate and reliable information based on UNICEF's experiences in other countries. UNICEF-NY should assume this responsibility by coordinating the information available within the various divisions and sections in New York. This should include the selection of appropriate documents and reports relevant to the situation in the field.

New York could help the field offices by identifying staff resources within UNICEF and also from outside and making them available to field offices.

Special training programmes should be organized which will help staff members to become more confident in advocacy work, and prepare them to accept speaking assignments with confidence and participate more effectively in workshops, seminars, etc.

Very often excellent agreements are prepared between UNICEF Headquarters and Headquarters of others UN agencies, but at implementation levels - field offices - it does not appear to function as originally planned. This is a phenomenon similar to what we are faced with in the application of the basic services strategy where agreements reached between sectoral ministries at the central level cannot be implemented at the field level. Perhaps we should spend more time to understand the underlying problems of cooperation between UN agencies at the field level and prepare agreements between Headquarters based on these findings.

#### CREDIBILITY

The ultimate responsibility of advocating UNICEF and achieving results rests with the field offices. There are certain minimum standards required to accomplish this successfully.

A good understanding of UNICEF policies and objectives is essential. As a result of many years of neglect of UNICEF in Brazil prior to 1977, the organization was known to many as a North American Company selling Christmas Cards. It has taken considerable effort during the past three years to change this outlook.

Maintaining good working relationship with local authorities as "partners in progress" is essential to create an atmosphere of confidence. Use of local talents and resources is extremely important to convince authorities that UNICEF is prepared to accept talents irrespective of their origins. The programmes in Brazil therefore use a mix of local and international consultants.

The staff members of UNICEF field offices who have the responsibility for advocacy work should be adequately informed and knowledgeable.

Ability to analyse appropriate programmes and projects from within or outside the country would motivate local authorities to accept the advice of UNICEF.

UNICEF's ability to be flexible, react promptly to Government enquiries and ability to take prompt decisions at the field level has always been a positive factor in favour of UNICEF.

In conclusion, advocacy is only possible by those who appreciate and enjoy their work which in turn is directly related to job satisfaction.

According to the dictionary, to advocate means to speak or write in support of something. Practising it without respecting the ability and sensitivity of those to whom we advocate could lead us into trouble. The attached short article "A Beam in the Eye" by Mr. Peter Adamson is worth reading.

**R**ecently, World Bank President Robert McNamara visited Sri Lanka to see for himself the wonders being wrought by a group of farmers, somewhere in the middle distance, were indeed feeling the benefit, he walked over to ask one of them how much he now earned and how much he had managed to save. Looking up into the eyes of the six-billion-dollar man from Washington, this Sri Lankan peasant smilingly replied - "None of your damn business".

Rumour has it that this story is told by McNamara himself, no doubt laughing all the way to the Bank. Nonetheless it is a tidy example of the gross impertinence which the rich, be they individuals, institutions or countries, almost invariably bring to their dealings with the poor.

Other examples abound wherever two or three collars and ties are gathered together. Henry Kissinger's memoirs (. . . and on the seventh day I rested) are perfumed with Western superiority in general and his own in particular. I dislike the appalling 'Five Minutes to Midnight' convey the impression, without even the mitigation of subtlety, that nothing ever happens in the developing world without a supervisory white face who is not uncommonly a wonderful human being. Economists in Europe and North America frequently take time off from their underwhelming efforts at solving their own countries' problems in order to dash off a quick prescription of the Third World's economic ills - 'trickle down', 'integrated rural development', 'basic needs' - take three times a day and wait for twenty years.

# A Beam in the Eye

In recent years the rich have preached a stream of sermons to the poor about population control. But what would happen if the poor world had the leisure and the money to concern itself with the rich world's problems?

By Peter Adamson.

Paul Ehrlich's description of the population problem:

But such arrows merely glance off the thick-skinned arrogance which threatens to trample over any Third World sensitivities. What is needed is something with what the Great White Hunters used to call more stopping power.

Perhaps, for example, the Third World nations should set up their own international voluntary agency to assist in the vital and urgent task of underdeveloping the developed world. To be called the Development Education Trust for the Relief of Privilege, its Articles of Association might begin:

- Nothing that fourteen thousand school-age children in the Federal Republic of Germany are now attempting suicide every year and that one in six of its under-fiftens is under professional psychiatric care.
- Grateful to the Director General of the World Health Organisation for drawing our attention to the fact that malnutrition remains a major problem in industrialised countries and its major form is obesity.
- Concerned that infant mortality rates in several large cities in the United States and the United Kingdom are at unacceptable high levels when compared with, say, Sri Lanka or Jamaica.
- Taking cognisance of the fact that half a million unnecessary tonsilectomies are performed each year in the United States - a country which cannot provide elementary health care for 25 million of its children.
- Noting with alarm that between one and two million children are physically or sexually abused by their parents every year in the USA.
- Disturbed that over 8000 French under-fifteen year-olds are now involved in organised prostitution.
- Recognising that rising divorce rates in the USA now mean that one child in every three will spend part of his or her childhood in a single parent family.
- Regretting that children in industrialised countries now spend more time in the company of the television set than with their parents.

We of the less privileged countries, notwithstanding our own problems and taking an interdependent view of the world, here by establish DE TROP for the purpose of uniting our efforts to educate the developed world in, to quote drivers, angry, hard-faced, tired looking monsters, the dust, noise, heat, poisonous fumes, angry, hard-faced, tired looking drivers gave the scene a hellish aspect. Would we ever get back to our hotel? All three of us were, frankly, frightened . . . since that night I've known the feel of over population.

It was only when he visited Los Angeles that Toure managed to put his feelings into words:

Sadly, 'populationists' are among the worst offenders. For years they assumed that the main reason why the propagating masses did not use contraceptives was because they were too embarrassed to go into the drugstore and that the cause of high birth-rates was the lack of television. The answers they came up with - touting elephants waving contraceptives in their trunks, transistor radios for minor operations and that infamous purple people-eater the myth-coloured condom - should have made them sadder and wiser men. But even now, populationists frequently get together in London or New York for seminars or the laughably named 'encounters' where they discuss the lives of people whom they do not know, whose cultures they do not understand, whose economic circumstances they cannot even imagine, and end up by passing resolutions (telling them what they should do when they go to bed together at night.

Most people from materially poor countries are aware of all this. But being frequently oriental and invariably witty, they tend to play it with a glide to leg rather than an on-drive.

Mostapha Toure, for example, was but faintly disturbed when he came across your damn business".