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Presented at a UNICEF Regional staff meeting to examine the future role of UNICEF in Latin America. The paper does not deal directly with PSC, but gives general background of UNICEF's situation in the region, outlines priority areas of action for UNICEF assistance, and possible strategies and approaches. Regrets that UNICEF in its analysis of development does not go beyond the 'simplistic criterion' of per capita income. Discusses UNICEF's mandate, and policies in Latin America, fundraising, cooperation between countries within the region.

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RESOURCES AND MECHANISMS FOR THE
DEVELOPMENT OF UNICEF COOPERATION
IN THE REGION OF THE AMERICAS
DURING THE DECADE OF THE 1980'S

Fritz Lherisson
UNICEF Representative
for the Caribbean
September 1980

INTRODUCTION

1. This UNICEF Regional Staff Meeting represents an important first as it is for the first time in the history of such an encounter - as far as I know - that the problems and issues facing both the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean as well as UNICEF as a development Agency, are seriously examined.

2. During the past four days, we have discussed what the priority areas of action for UNICEF's assistance to countries of the region and sub-region are. We have also examined the strategies and approaches for an effective delivery of this assistance. Underlying all our discussions, during the preceding four days, has been our constant concern and preoccupation that any strategy devised with regard to UNICEF's cooperation and its application is conditioned by the following three factors:

- a) the countries' policies and priority programmes in the social aspects of their Development Plans;
- b) the level of social expenditures and,
- c) above all, the expressed commitments of Governments to raise the quality of life of the vast majority of the deprived and poor people, particularly children, allowing in that process, an active involvement of the people concerned.

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3. If I try to interpret the opinions and views expressed by several participants, who intervened in the various topics discussed so far, I can sense that there is a feeling of disappointment with regard to the role that UNICEF has played in the region and sub-region during the seventies, taking into account firstly - the limited amount of funds assigned to countries of the region, and secondly - the inadequate responses on the part of most of the Governments with whom we are co-operating, to address themselves in earnest to the problems and needs of children in the context of their development efforts. In several countries of Latin America and the Caribbean, one cannot say that there exist plans and programmes of dynamic social development, incorporating all groups in the societies. In those cases, what is really offered are only palliatives, i.e., piecemeal provisions to services benefitting children and their families. As a consequence, this gives the impression that UNICEF, in supporting these services, is much more involved in "welfarism" than in development per se.

4. We are meeting here this week to examine the future role of UNICEF in Latin America and the Caribbean during the 80's, conscious at the same time, that there are grave problems and constraints confronting us. These are the challenges facing us:

- a) the magnitude of the problems facing millions of children who are undernourished, illiterate, and suffering from poverty in Latin America and the Caribbean;
- b) the lack of political commitments in some countries to tackle these problems seriously and solve them;
- c) the prevailing cleavages in the developing societies of countries of Latin America and the Caribbean in relation to opportunities, income, participation and lack of understanding between the small sector representing the economic and intellectual elites and the masses of the same society;

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- d) the present deteriorating economic situation in most of the countries of the region and sub-region, characterized by major balance of payments' problems mainly caused by rising energy prices and inflation;
- e) the growth of unemployment, particularly among young people and mainly in the urban areas;
- f) the continuous migration of people to urban areas in search of greener pastures, with all the attendant social problems that this creates;
- g) the pressure of increasing population;
- h) the pressure of the population for food, housing and other social outlays; and,
- i) the limitation of UNICEF resources at a global level and moreso, for Latin America and the Caribbean.

5. It is against this sombre background that UNICEF in the region and sub-region will have to work during the 80's.

6. At this stage, it may be appropriate to ask this key question. Can UNICEF meet these challenges and with what resources?

7. This is exactly the purpose of this week's exercise to try to devise a UNICEF strategy for the Americas to help the countries in a more effective way in the 80's, to improve the conditions of their children. (In passing, may I say this was lacking in the 60's and particularly in the 70's). It is our hope that this will also help to reverse the present trend and way of thinking in some quarters in New York, with regard to the problems and needs of children in Latin America and the Caribbean, which are not viewed with the same concern as those in other regions. With a better understanding now of UNICEF, I am certain that a new and positive attitude towards Latin America and the Caribbean will be developed.

8. This is quite a formidable task on which we have embarked. This exercise could not take place at a better time - at the beginning of the 80's - when the International Development Strategy for the decade is being devised.

9. This brings me now to the substance of this afternoon's discussion - Resources and Mechanisms for the Development of UNICEF's Cooperation in the Americas During the 80's and Beyond.

10. Under this heading, three sets of issues have been selected for discussion. Firstly, NECESSARY RESOURCES FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE PROGRAMME OF COOPERATION IN COUNTRIES AT DIFFERENT LEVELS OF DEVELOPMENT. Secondly, BUDGET - AS MANAGEMENT INSTRUMENT OF AN OFFICE FOR EFFECTIVE DELIVERY OF UNICEF ASSISTANCE TO THE COUNTRIES. Thirdly, NUMBER AND QUALITY OF STAFF REQUIRED IN THE OFFICES OF THE REGION AND SUB-REGION IN ORDER TO MEET THE CHALLENGES OF THE 80'S.

11. In addition to these three points, I think that the meeting should also look into the external factors hampering development, and delivery of services benefitting children, which inhibit smooth implementation of the UNICEF programme of assistance. Some of these problems are: administrative weaknesses, local financial problems, political instability, high level of centralisation of political and administrative structure, lack of authentic and meaningful popular participation in development.

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We need to be concerned with these problems in the countries where we work and know this type of situation as it may change our programming approach, strategy and assistance completely. Sometimes because of insufficient insight on our part into such real problems, local situation and values, we promote approaches, programmes and projects whose structures and mechanisms are not in conformity with local institutions and cultures. I am suggesting a discussion on this issue as it has a bearing on the level and form of assistance of UNICEF as well as on our administrative capacity to deliver such assistance. Discussion on this subject can fall under the first topic that will be presented shortly by Mr. Anthony Kennedy, I anticipate that the speaker will bring out this point in his presentation.

12. Not wishing to pre-empt the views of my colleagues who will present papers on the topics mentioned above, I would like to highlight briefly some key points on those subjects, which I hope might be of benefit to our deliberations this afternoon.

13. On the question of financial resources, as you are aware, the list of UNICEF-assisted countries is divided into three categories. According to the UNICEF standard, based on the rigid application of the GNP per capita criterion as a major determinant for the allocation of its assistance in each country, there are in Latin America and the Caribbean:

- (i) one LDC/MSA (Least Developed and Most Seriously Affected) country - Haiti; and, nine Caribbean countries, namely, Antigua, British Virgin Islands, Dominica, Grenada, Montserrat, St. Kitts-Nevis, St. Lucia, St. Vincent and Turks and Caicos Islands, considered as LDC's because of the child population which is under 500,000

- (ii) ten countries in Category II with a mid-range of income, therefore, receiving normal UNICEF assistance - Bolivia, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Colombia, Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador, Nicaragua, Peru and Paraguay.

- (iii) thirteen countries considered to be in the higher income bracket, supposedly to receive advisory assistance and exchange of experiences. These thirteen countries have a total child population of 109 million, representing 73% of the total child population of the region and sub-region. They are Argentina, Barbados, Brazil, Chile, Costa Rica, Cuba, Jamaica, Mexico, Panama, Surinam, Trinidad and Tobago, Uruguay and Venezuela.

14. Combined with this simplistic criterion of per capita income being used, is a poor understanding of the region and sub-region and their problems. In some quarters, it is felt that Latin America and the Caribbean are not priority regions for UNICEF assistance. Notwithstanding the progress which has been made - and is still being made - by some countries in raising the level of living of their people, there is no doubt, as revealed by the study of Critical Poverty, that in the region and sub-region, a large majority of the inhabitants, particularly children, still suffer from poverty. However, we are constantly reminded of the enviable socio-economic situation of Latin America and the Caribbean whenever we attempt to argue for a better share of the cake.

15. May I repeat here what I have stated many times. It is really with dismay that we observe that UNICEF, an agency mainly concerned with social aspects of development, in its analysis of the concept of development does not go beyond that measure of growth, especially in those countries where we know that no concrete measures are being taken to spread the economic benefits of development as widely as possible to arrive at a greater degree of economic and social equality.

16. In most of the countries considered as better-off, with perhaps few exceptions, a large percentage of the national income is in the hands of a small minority, in some cases, representing only 5% of the population. In those same societies, at the other end, one finds a large majority barely living at subsistence levels in shanty towns and in rural areas, very deficient of the minimum basic services.

17. I believe that the categorization of those thirteen countries mentioned before with some exceptions, is unrealistic, unjust and unfair to the large majority of children and families living in abject poverty in these societies. Other factors will need to be taken into account in determining the level of UNICEF assistance to a country. It is my sincere hope that the GNP per capita criterion will soon be considered as a relic of the past. We can be optimistic as new parameters are being brought to the forefront for assessing the quality of life.

18. I apologize for dwelling so much on the issue of GNP, but as we are searching for our new role in this region and sub-region in the 80's, I feel that we should be concerned as Latin America and the Caribbean are victims of this indicator.

19. It might be well to recall here, for the benefit of the participants that at the Regional Staff Meeting held in Cartagena, Colombia in September 1977, UNICEF assistance to the so-called more developed countries in the region, was

discussed and a report was prepared and submitted to Headquarters. It was recognized that "UNICEF has a legal mandate relating to the needs of children throughout the world, Priority action is to assist children in less developed countries, but as long as there are specific situations within more developed countries in which children are not receiving basic services, then UNICEF must make a maximum effort to help these countries towards eradicating those pockets of inequality".

20. Those of us who have participated in the meeting may rightly ask this question: "What has happened since then? Our voice is not heard and the status quo is maintained. But if we do not continue to exert pressure and try to explain with conviction the problems facing millions of children in the region and sub-region, we will allow the existing trends to continue.

21. It should be underlined that the implementation of the activities identified as priority areas within the framework of the strategies defined in order to reach the unserved, the underserved, and the deprived in both the rural and marginal urban areas of the countries of the region and sub-region, will require not only more resources but changes at different levels at:

- a) At the level of Headquarters - UNICEF assistance policies especially towards the region and the sub-region will need to be re-examined, and the planning level of assistance both from general resources and from noted funds should be increased;
- b) At our end, we need to have a better knowledge of:
 - i) the conditions of children in countries we are serving;
 - ii) the national context, political situation, socio-economic structures, cultural values, constraints

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(administrative, institutional and others), and availability of national resources.

22. During his interventions in this meeting, Mr. James Grant emphasized that we should be more selective. He is correct. We should be persuasive with regard to UNICEF's cooperation and try to concentrate on assistance to priority areas in regions and zones where local situation and existing institutions will enable its effective delivery, especially in some countries where the planning level is very low. I believe that we should be ready to take risks and try to find, with imagination and foresight, innovative ways to reach our target groups.

- c) At National Level, Governments should be prepared to back up their expression of interest in solving children's problems by long-term concrete measures, enabling the concrete participation of the communities in economic and political decision-making processes affecting their well-being. Furthermore, they should be able to raise the level of social expenditures at the expense, for example, of big, unproductive and prestigious projects.

23. It should be borne in mind that the level of UNICEF financing in a country could also be increased if the programme presented s of quality. I will not bother you with examples as I am certain there have several cases in offices of the region and sub-region.

24. May I say in passing a few words here ragarding Fund Raising. Given the alarming extent of poverty in the countries of the region and subregion -(according to the study on critical poverty, 40% of the population of Latin America are seriously poorand 19% are considered destitute) -

and assuming that policies and institutional changes referred to earlier will take place, more resources will need to be mobilized for UNICEF to be able to augment substantially its level of assistance for Latin America and the Caribbean countries. This means that more funds will need to be raised both in the recipient and donor countries. Since contributions from Governments are not assessed but are voluntary, we all have an important role to play in the fund-raising effort to put to donors and recipient Governments, the issues of children's problems and needs.

25. Another way that we can assist in this endeavour is to see that countries with "black gold" and those at a high level of development not only support their own programmes, but help finance projects in the least developed and least fortunate countries, or provide free of cost, the technical resources that the other countries may need for the implementation of programmes benefitting children. I should mention here the important and active role being played in fund-raising by our colleague in Bogota, Ms. Teresa Albanez. Thanks to her unstinted efforts, the Government of Venezuela, the first one in Latin America, has approved and provided the funds required for the financing of noted components of projects in four countries of the Caribbean - Antigua, Grenada, St. Lucia and St. Vincent.

26. I have already dealt with the question of UNICEF cooperation with the so-called "better-off" countries. Let me just add that in those countries that have enough resources to meet the needs of their children, UNICEF's role should be on advocacy. In some cases however, while we are trying to generate interest, stimulate awareness in children's problems and needs, and convince the policy-decision makers to reassign resources so that with the country's own resources they

c a n tackle the problems and meet the needs of children in the poorest areas of the country. I feel at the same time that funds should be earmarked for the development of initial practical activities in those unserved or underserved areas. Given the time, it usually takes for such consciousness-raising and its translation into action programmes, children will continue to die in the poorest areas. What I want to emphasize is that Advocacy should be linked during the initial period, with activities benefitting children in the deprived areas, involving effective community participation. This could serve as a catalyser for greater involvement on the part of the government in the shortest possible time.

27. Once the level of financial resources for the implementation of the priority activities defined for the 80's have been decided upon, it is equally important to pay attention to the establishment and/or strengthening of the machinery, which will facilitate the implementation of UNICEF cooperation in the countries. I now arrive to the second topic of this afternoon's meeting - Budget for the Operations of the Offices and as a Support to Programming.

28. This will be presented by our colleague, Jacob Matthai from the Brasilia Office. Several "whys" were raised regarding the inclusion of this subject in the Agenda. While it is not my duty to answer them, I would like to point out, however, in order to clarify some of the misunderstanding, that it is not the purpose of this meeting to discuss BUDGET proposal of each office, its preparation and control. This was dealt with at the three-day Regional Budget Workshop, which took place in Bogota at the end of August. What I think we should consider this afternoon, based on the premise that Budget is a management instrument for the delivery of UNICEF assistance to the country is the adequacy of the budget resources at our disposal to do a satisfactory job. As you are aware, since the management survey carried out by SIAR (Scandinavian Institute for

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Administrative Research) UNICEF has embarked on the "Unitary Budget approach", which means that the budget is based on "the volume and nature of assistance and the services to be provided to the countries", in other words, it is based on the workload of the Office. Therefore, the budget including its two components programme support and administrative services is a very important operational tool for the UNICEF offices in the planning, programming and implementation of UNICEF's cooperation in countries' programmes.

29. In this connection, I feel that the meeting should address itself to these key issues:

(a) Budget resources - Both administrative services and programme support which should be determined, not only on the level of cooperation in the country, but should take also into consideration the local situation problems, i.e. the financial and administrative constraints in the countries which have implications on the staffing and operating costs of offices. UNICEF may be faced in some countries with no choice but to assume direct operational responsibility for administration and execution of projects, although I realize that our role should be to help the countries build up their own capacity to implement their projects.

(b) Budget resources should also be determined by the types and forms of UNICEF cooperation. We tend, sometimes, to over-generalize; this is a wrong approach. There should not be any standard organizational pattern as situations differ in the countries where we are working.

(c) The criteria used by Headquarters in determining the manpower requirements of field offices and sub offices should also be examined.

(d) If we accept the premise that the budget is based on the level of UNICEF cooperation in the countries, and the local environment problems, it would be logical

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to assume that the budget should be prepared after the completion of the programme of assistance. Quite the contrary, the budget is prepared and presented before. The logical sequence for presentation of these documents and the timing for submission of the budget are questionable.

(e) Considering the "Unitary" budget approach which is based on workload, why should there be a division between administrative services and programme support services. As you are aware, Inspector Bertrand in his report of the Board, indicated that this division "seems unsatisfactory".

(f) The present practice of reviewing budget at Headquarters by a group which only includes Headquarters staff, leaves much to be desired, especially where cuts are made without prior consultation with field offices. Should not field offices be invited to participate in the budget review?

(g) Consistent with the decentralization spirit and the responsibility and authority vested upon the Head of Office with regard to implementation and control of his/her budget, more flexibility should be maintained, allowing him/her to make changes in the different codes of both sections that may become necessary during the execution of the budget, without prior authorization from Headquarters, while remaining within the approved allotments.

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Staffing requirements both in terms of quantity and quality to meet the challenges of the 80's

30. With regard to UNICEF as a development agency, there are two important dimensions to the question of staff. Firstly, the rationalization in the assignment of staff in field offices, and secondly, the improvement of the effectiveness of the quality of the staff at all levels in up-grading their skills and knowledge. In this connection, I would like to share with you my thoughts on this problem of staffing in UNICEF field offices, which has always been my constant concern especially since I became Representative having to open two UNICEF offices. This message was conveyed to New York in our 1979 Annual Report. Unless the UNICEF field offices are adequately staffed with professionals who are able to understand children's problems and needs to analyze their situation, and are capable of bringing to Government authorities these issues and ways of meeting them; unless a proper and systematic training scheme is designed to provide the staff with the technical and managerial skills required to do a good job, some of the performance problems now confronting UNICEF in general, which it is in our power to correct, will continue to be with us for some time. If UNICEF is indeed serious about helping the countries to improve the well-being of their children and families, it is imperative that the field offices be strengthened with trained professional staff so that they can function efficiently. If the present staffing situation is allowed to go unchecked, UNICEF's ability to effectively deliver its assistance and upgrade its performance will become blatantly evident and will have unpredictable implications on financial resources.

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31. However, optimism was conveyed in Mr. Grant's opening message to UNICEF staff at the last Executive Board. He remarked that "UNICEF's greatest strength is in the quality of its staff and the staff's ability to relate effectively to UNICEF's mission to enhance the well-being of children. With each passing year, it becomes clearer that the development progress of the great majority of the world's children is best achieved through development approaches that recognize existing social values and institutions and that emphasize growth from below by enhancing local capacities." He went on to say, "as UNICEF expands and intensifies efforts to achieve its goals, it will need to increase its capacity to apply such approaches by involving more staff with first-hand knowledge of local values and ways..."

Collaboration with other Agencies

32. I would like to express these words of caution. With its limited resources, even though UNICEF will succeed in mobilizing increased resources, it will not be able to finance alone all the activities in the priority areas defined. We should be conscious of this. Greater resources for projects in the social field are available from IBRD, IDB, UNDP, and several other bilateral donors. We can and should play, in the countries we serve, an active and perhaps aggressive role in trying to channel these funds to activities benefitting children.

We can also promote a coordinated approach so that inputs from these agencies and from UNICEF can be brought together to finance the same programme/project, thus ensuring greater impact and effectiveness. This also is one of the challenges facing us.

33. At this stage, I would like to raise this question: how efficient, effective and adequate is the mechanism or machinery through which UNICEF assistance is delivered? As you know, we can perform satisfactorily only if the environment is right. I will refer here only to internal factors, not overlooking the external ones. If we are to take up the challenges of the 80's we will need to increase our capacity in assisting the countries to assess the situation of their children in planning, programming and implementing programmes/projects benefitting children within the context of their national development plans. Some managerial improvement, therefore, seems necessary, and action needs to be taken at these three levels:

A. At Headquarters' Level

34. More support should be provided to field offices in:
- (i) Programme planning, preparation, monitoring and evaluation.
 - (ii) Preparation and analysis of study on situation of children, research and identification of sectoral problem areas.
 - (iii) Dissemination of information on planning and programming experiences between field offices.
 - (iv) Collection and analysis of statistical data.
 - (v) Advisory assistance in specific priority areas such as PHC, preschool education, urban development, community participation, etc.

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- (vi) Staff training.
- (vii) Administration and management.
- (viii) Last, but not least, a basic understanding of the environment within which field offices are operating; more support and encouragement and less criticism of field offices' activities.

35. Most of the time field offices turn to sections or divisions at Headquarters for such support services; but in the majority of cases, the assistance cannot be provided mainly because of lack of expertise or unavailability of staff. Correction is required in order to improve effectiveness of UNICEF activities in the field.

B. At Regional Offices' Level

36. As you are aware, the functions and responsibilities of the Regional Offices were reviewed again last year, and were officially confirmed by EXD 2780. The Regional Office then has a service function vis-a-vis the field offices of this region in relation to country programme and management including administration and finance. The professional staff of the Regional Director's Office should be prepared to assist field offices in respective areas of their competence. Does the Regional Office have the capacity to respond to the needs of field offices, comply with the requirements of EXD 2780, and provide the services expected from it?

37. In spite of the willingness and good intentions of the Regional Director, to provide the field offices with the support services they need, I doubt that the Regional Office, given its prevailing depleted staff, can really assist at this moment. I can only hope that there will be a structural reorganization involving staffing patterns according to the type and nature of services expected by field offices, thus enabling the Regional Office to perform its functions efficiently.

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C. At Field Offices' Level

38. They will need to be strengthened with the required professional and supporting staff to meet the new challenges of the 80s. In addition, professional staff should be in a position to respond with imagination, and conceptual skills to changing situations and demands of the countries as well as to the new dimensions and requirements of the programme of cooperation. As I said earlier, it is important for field staff to have sufficient insight into the problems and needs of children, the socio-economic and political context, the local constraints in the countries where we work. This will certainly help to improve programming and its execution, and make it more related to the needs and realities of the countries. Consequently, among other measures that need to be taken are better recruitment of professional staff, and training in order to enhance the staff capacity. It should also be added that from a management point of view, an ideal work situation where accomplishments are possible, should be created in field offices, thus making it possible for staff members to work cooperatively and effectively. Also, field staff should be more concerned with the effective delivery of UNICEF assistance.

39. In conclusion, I would like to say that only with a change of attitude towards Latin America and the Caribbean, resulting in greatly increased financial resources and staff, and combining, firstly, imaginative and dedicated effort on our part, and secondly, the necessary institutional and structural changes in the countries themselves, will we be able to face the challenge of the 80's with optimism.