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"Minutes of a special meeting of PC/Information Officers" taken by Janet Nelson, UNICEF, Geneva at UNICEF's Social Communication and Marketing Workshop, Nairobi, 10-17 Feb 1985.

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The meeting discussed training and staff development strategies in programme communications for PC officers, information officers and Programme officers; the role of and recruitment criteria for PC officers at Hq and in the field; and how to make the communications system work worldwide.

Print Name of Person Submit Image

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FONDS DES NATIONS UNIES POUR L'ENFANCE
SIÈGE DE GENÈVE

UNICEF

UNITED NATIONS CHILDREN'S FUND
GENEVA HEADQUARTERS

4 March 1985

Dear Harald,

Enclosed are the minutes of the special meeting of PC/Information Officers on which I took notes. I'm sorry I didn't get them out sooner, but I had both my back-log as well as Peter's to deal with once I got back to the Office.

You will notice that on page 2 there is a blank that will need to be filled in. I carefully took a copy of the DCI minutes that Revy used for his summary of trends in New York, but once back in Geneva I discovered that it had disappeared from my papers - since no one had seen it before, I imagine someone borrowed it! Could you please be so kind as to send us a copy of these minutes and any future copies of the minutes of other DCI meetings when available? We used to receive them regularly, but don't any more for some reason.

It was good to see you in Nairobi and hopefully we will be seeing you soon in Geneva for further discussions on servicing the national committees!

With my best regards.

Yours sincerely,

Janet

Janet Nelson

Mr. H. Munthe-Kaas
UNICEF
DCI
New York

Special Meeting of PC/Information Officers
attending the Programme Communication and
Marketing Workshop in Nairobi - 14 Feb. 1985

Present : T. Vittachi
H. Munthe-Kaas
R. Tuluhungwa
PC/Info Officers attending the Workshop

This special meeting was called as a result of the desire of the PC/Information Officers to discuss with the staff from HQ certain trends and issues within UNICEF that were of concern to them. The meeting was chaired by Gary Gleason, Project Officer, from Nigeria.

The following items were requested by those present to be put on the agenda:

1. Self-assessment questionnaire
2. Training/staff development strategies in programme communications for
 - Programme Officers
 - PC Officers
 - Information Officers
3. Recruitment criteria for PC Officers
4. Trends at HQ vis-à-vis communications.

Self-assessment questionnaire

G. Gleason suggested that should an organization-wide agreement be reached within UNICEF that Programme Communications is a central component of country programming and advocacy, it would be important to know what PC staff feel are their strengths and weaknesses, and to assess UNICEF's internal capacity to provide the necessary training. This could serve as an input into decisions on the following:

1. Areas where training is required most
2. Choice of internal or external resources for training
3. Modalities of training and other methods for improving skills (workshops, exchanges of country expertise, use of outside consultants for training, networking, regional PC training capacity, country-specific training).

A questionnaire was distributed in which all PC Officers were requested to indicate for 19 different programmes and communications areas whether they (1) saw them as relevant to PC; (2) needed further training to be effective; (3) felt sufficiently trained to be effective; (4) felt capable of training others in the area. The questionnaires would be tabulated and the results announced in the course of the meeting the next day.

In many of the areas, it was felt that the best training would be to work closely with a Programme Officer in a complementary way. This workshop was felt to be a further step towards a better integration of programming and PC.

Trends at HQ in communications

It was agreed that the latest trends in HQ should be the next item on the agenda to be taken up. R. Tuluhungwa summarized the results of the last DCI meeting in New York, as recorded in the minutes of the meeting on *10 January 85*. He announced that in the restructuring of the DCI, a post will be transferred to his unit - which will no doubt be changed from Programme Support Communications to Programme Communications - to increase the unit's capacity to support the field, coordinate with UNICEF's allies, provide training to promote the better use of marketing techniques, and carry out a general advocacy of programme communications within HQ. Senior management had in fact suggested that a week be spent looking into ways to strengthen UNICEF's information work, and that one afternoon be spent on Programme Communications.

Harald Munthe-Kaas then explained the new information exchange system that is going to be instituted. As communications are becoming more important in UNICEF, the roles of the different sections will be changing. The Film Section in New York is to be reduced to two professionals, and the only films produced will be co-productions.

As for publications, all productions will be stopped except for the SOWC, the Annual Report and Assignment Children. In their place, a new way of communicating will be initiated, which will increase the quantity of information made available and speed up its delivery. All those who have access to telephone lines and computers will have access through electronic mail to a computerized information exchange, whose primary role will be to service the national committees. Those committees or field offices without access to an electronic mail system will receive the materials in the same way as they do now. Obviously, the exchange will greatly depend on the cooperation of PC and Information Officers to feed New York with information.

The major concern expressed by the PC and Information officers present was the practicality of making such a system work on a world-wide basis. Some felt that rather than all information being centralized in New York, field offices with wide experience in a specific field, should also serve as depositories of information in that field. H. Munthe-Kaas reassured the group that, although the material will be stored in one central location, it will be easily accessible. It will not be up to New York to decide what to send out, but instead all offices will have access to whatever information they wish to have.

Two staff members are being assigned to feed information into the system full-time. Those countries with poor communications systems can request their regional offices to obtain the information for them.

T. Vittachi invited all those present to feed their comments and feedback to H. Munthe-Kaas. The new Information Exchange system is one result of the four-year battle that he had been waging to win a more important place for information and communications in the organization. As the Executive Board is no longer adamant on zero growth in terms of staffing, it may be possible to obtain additional staff if needed to make the new approach work.

In addition to the computerized Information Exchange, dossiers will be produced approximately every two months consisting of articles, newsworthy information, sketches, graphs, etc. Prototype dossiers will be pre-tested. Eventually it is hoped that they will become monthly.

Assignment Children will continue as before, as it has now become a "textbook" on issues important to UNICEF. Field publications will of course also continue unchanged.

H. Munthe-Kaas emphasized that the move towards an information exchange was in fact aimed at decentralizing publications, so they could be tailored to specific countries.

Although the participants realized that getting information to the public was a priority, they also stressed the need for better communication between UNICEF offices on successful projects, techniques, materials produced, etc., as well as on policy changes. It was regretted, for example, that in this instance there had not been any consultations with the field before the changes in DCI were finalized in New York. It was requested that an advisory board be constituted for the Information Exchange that would include people from the field - who after all will bear a large part of the onus for feeding information into the system - and which would meet every six months.

Due to the late hour, it was suggested that all those interested in continuing the discussion meet the next day over lunch, and that any suggestions or comments on the other items on the agenda be submitted in writing.