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Information note about the current situation with regard to UNICEF's work in the area, prepared in April 1983 for the Abu Dhabi workshop April 1983. Observations were based on a week's consultations in Abu Dhabi with government officials, media and NGOs, as well as regional TV and radio stations. UNICEF was perceived by some officials as a charitable organization geared at children in Africa and Asia, seeking funds in the Gulf States, but with no intention or potential for assisting children there. However, some officials and NGOs as well as information media expressed need for UNICEF's assistance to educate the public on improved nutrition, health and child care. There was also a need for health education and communication techniques.

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INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION SUPPORT FOR PROGRAMMES  
IN THE UNITED ARAB EMIRATES

1.0 PRESENT SITUATION

The following observations and suggestions are based upon consultations held over the period of one week with officials from government, media and non-governmental organizations in Abu Dhabi and the regional TV and radio production institution in Kuwait. A list of individuals contacted is contained in Appendix I.

- 1.1 In general, UNICEF is perceived as a charitable organization which is primarily concerned with the welfare of children in the poor countries of Asia and Africa, and as such, seeking funds from all sources - but especially from this region - to finance programmes for children in those countries. The Organization's development nature is not perceived, nor is UNICEF seen as having either the will or the potential to contribute to programmes for the well-being of children in the Gulf States. Nonetheless, certain officials such as the Assistant Under Secretary for the Department of Preventive Medicine, MOH, and the Director-General of the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, in different ways expressed awareness of UNICEF potential, but stressed insufficient attention to a well-targeted and realistic approach to meeting children's needs in the Gulf States. One official in particular articulated a felt need for UNICEF assistance at the practical level, especially in the area of health education. This need was echoed by others who went on to specify a shortage of sufficient and appropriate health education materials, which appear to be all the more essential given the dearth of trained personnel working in the communities.
- 1.2 Most of the personnel working in MCH and Social Development Centres require not only support, but orientation in health education and communication techniques.
- 1.3 There is a serious scarcity of personnel at all levels trained in health education and communication techniques.
- 1.4 There is a severe shortage of in-service training, particularly in the field of health education, for MCH staff and social development workers. At the same time, available social and health services are being underutilized.
- 1.5 There is a paucity of educational materials - both visual and print - on maternal and child health and nutrition, especially for children 0-5 and women of reproductive age.

1.6. The mass media, particularly TV, enjoy virtually mass coverage. This presents an ideal vehicle for the introduction of health education across a broad spectrum of the population. However, present programme content requires considerable re-direction towards the inclusion of messages on community and family health in a dramatically compelling and acceptable format, as opposed to the dry presentation of professional and technical information.

1.7. Various government officials and NGOs (particularly the powerful and active Federation of Women's Associations), as well as information and television officials, voiced an immediate need for assistance in the design and development of mass media programmes to educate the public at large on improved nutrition, health practices and child care, as well as on the availability and the utilization of social and health services.

## 2.0 ENTRY POINTS

### 2.1 The Formal School System

There are over 350 primary schools in the United Arab Emirates which offer tremendous opportunities for the diffusion of health education messages, both directly to the school children and indirectly to the parents. Appropriately designed materials for teachers and pupils are lacking.

2.2. The Federation of Women's Associations, under the leadership of the wife of Sheikh Zayed, has branches in all but one Emirate, and is extremely important because it represents a mechanism which reaches the grass-roots women's population. It also disposes of an ample network to extend basic services to supplement the efforts of insufficiently staffed MCH and Social Development Centres. In addition, it serves as an instrument to influence policies on maternal and child health at the highest level.

2.3. The Arabian Gulf States Joint Program Production Institution in Kuwait is an invaluable entry point on a regional level for the development and diffusion of the type of educational television and radio programmes referred to above. Over and above its technical expertise and capacity, this institution enjoys great credibility and popularity not only throughout the Gulf States, but in other countries of the Middle East and Maghreb. Three of its programmes in particular have proved to be unanimously well-received and effective: a. The adapted Arabic version of Sesame street, which is currently being continued with a new series which is expanding its audience age group to nine years, b. Your Health, c. a highly

popular serialized drama called the "Family of Abu Khalid". Underway is the production of another series on literacy. All of these provide ideal vehicles for the incorporation of a variety of educational messages.

2.4 Mobile Film Teams visit communities and some Social Development Centres on a weekly basis. These teams need and can make good use of well targeted audio-visual materials.

2.5 The Ministry of Information is receptive to technical support for public education programmes.

2.6 MCH and Social Development Centres conduct health and nutrition education activities.

2.7 The Khaleej Times, with a circulation of 50,000 throughout the UAE, Oman, Bahrain, and Qatar is the most widely-read English-language daily. Its regional Managing Director has enthusiastically offered to co-operate with UNICEF on a continuous basis. He made it clear that the newspaper's management looks to UNICEF not only as a source of news items, but also to initiate in-depth articles on development issues related to children and the family.

2.8 The Khaleej Times Women's Association is extremely active in organizing special events to benefit UNICEF. This Association could be very productively used if UNICEF makes the effort to dispel its current charitable image, to familiarize it with UNICEF's role and potential, and to maintain continuous contact with its membership as an instrument to disseminate information on Gulf children and UNICEF-related issues and activities in the area.

2.9 Mass Media. Discussions with various officials point to a distinct need for technical assistance in the development of better targeted mass media programmes. It should be noted that financial resources and physical facilities are adequate and that professional goodwill is great and genuine.

### 3.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

The following actions should be undertaken to demystify UNICEF's image in most of the Gulf States and to increase the understanding of UNICEF's potential and competence to provide technical assistance to the Gulf States in the formulation and implementation of programmes and activities to enhance the development of children. This is essential to promote an understanding in the Area of the

magnitude of problems facing children in poor Third World countries; and it will justify assistance from the Gulf States to such countries through UNICEF.

### 3.1. Support for Advocacy

a. A booklet should be produced on UNICEF's mandate, the way it functions and its experiences in working with governments to meet the needs of children. The country experiences selected should be relevant to and compatible with the needs and possibilities for action which prevail in the Gulf States, e.g. child malnutrition, poor maternal nutrition, poor sanitation, related diseases and morbidity, consequences of the decline of breastfeeding, risks of immunisable diseases etc.

b. The same information could be amplified and adopted for presentation on television and in slide-set packages. An expose on specific programmes from Arab countries would strengthen the impact.

c. Single-concept materials such as a slide-set analysing the problems of and opportunities for the protection and the promotion of breastfeeding, diarrhoeal management through ORT, etc. should be prepared to sensitize selected policy-makers and professionals. This is essential, particularly when the action envisaged is one which might create a controversy such as the adoption of the International Code of Marketing of Breastfeeding Substitutes.

Such materials must be based upon national realities and priorities.

d. There is a wealth of solid information on the nutritional and health status of children in the U.A.E. buried in the various studies financed by UNICEF and in government statistical publications. This information needs to be brought up-to-date and synthesized. The end product would be an extremely useful advocacy tool as it would help to dramatize the actual situation in a concrete manner.

e. The Regional Manager of the Khaleej Times - with journalists or stringers in Bahrain, Oman and Qatar - is keen to run analytical development-oriented articles on the situation and needs of children in the Gulf on a regular basis.

Collaboration of this nature needs to be worked out between UNICEF and the paper as soon as possible and should incorporate the elements described in 2.7 and 3.4. Similar negotiations should be initiated with Arabic papers as well.

(The above materials are important aids which are essential to get messages across to policy-makers and their advisory groups such as the High Committees of Health and Environment, NGO's, professionals and private corporation leaders in the Gulf States and beyond.)

### 3.2 Orientation of Personnel in MCH and Social Development Centres

These Centres offer tremendous opportunities for health education and the introduction of home-based health care technologies, e.g. ORT and home preparation of weaning foods. Since such activities call for experience in communication and community development skills it is essential that the staff in these Centres be adequately trained.

a. Short seminars and workshops, to cover the following areas are recommended:

- the role of communication and of health education in the learning process;
- the inter-relationship between culture, communication and behavioural change;
- methods and techniques of presenting messages to induce social change;
- utilization of mass media, especially television programmes, to induce behavioural change;
- Social and cultural aspects of health and child care in the U.A.E.; role of group dynamics in the introduction of simple technologies in communities, e.g. ORT;
- message design and utilization of educational materials.

b. Materials in the form of charts, video and booklets should be produced to support these orientation activities. Such materials, as well as workshop notes, can be developed into an orientation/reference manual and audio-visual materials.

### 3.3 Mass Media

Present health-related television and radio programmes should be re-oriented to provide more and better targeted educational content. This should include the adoption of more human interest formats such as soap opera, serialized dramas, and interviews with peers in their own environments. The Kuwait-based

Arabian Gulf States Joint Programme Production Institution's productions "Open Sesame", "The Family of Abu Khalid" and "Your Health" are popular and efforts should be made to infuse educational elements in similar future productions. The Director General is most receptive to such collaboration.

An audience analysis is required to study learning needs and to establish media and format preference. The Director of TV and the Adviser in the Ministry of Information and Culture in Abu Dhabi both expressed interest in exploring ways to improve the content and approach of programmes. The main constraint appears to be lack of trained manpower.

### 3.4 Sensitization of Mass Media

A concerted effort should be undertaken to sensitize the mass media on development issues related to children and to stimulate awareness of the Gulf child's needs, opportunities for action and UNICEF's potential role in assisting governments to meet these needs.

An intensive one-day seminar joining UNICEF staff with representatives of television, radio and print media could serve as a starting point to establish and maintain a continuing relationship between UNICEF and the mass media, as well as to encourage journalists to initiate in-depth analyses of development issues.

### 3.5 Pre-service Training

UNICEF can and should encourage the inclusion of communication for health education in the curriculum of training institutions for development personnel such as nurses, midwives, community development workers, sanitation workers, etc.

### 3.6 Support to the Department of Preventive Medicine, Ministry of Health

There is a pressing need and a great opportunity for UNICEF to assist the Ministry of Health to institutionalize the Training and Health Education Unit in the Department of Preventive Medicine so as to provide professional support (such as the production of print and audio-visual material).

ABU DHABI, Aug. 1983

New York  
Information Officer  
H. Kittani

New York  
Chief, PSC Service  
R. Tulinungwa

In attempting to take advantage of the  
above opportunities, it may be advisable first  
for UNICEF to obtain the explicit support for  
such initiatives from the highest level of the  
ministries and organizations involved.

orientation of new staff, and monitoring and evaluation of health  
education programmes) to the health education activities of MCH and  
Social Development Centres.



PERSONS CONSULTED

APPENDIX I

(a)

ABU DHABI

1. Mr. Ibrahim El Abed  
Adviser, Ministry of Information and Culture  
and Director, Emirates News Agency (WAM)
2. Mr. Arshad Sami Khan  
Regional Manager, Khaleej Times
3. Mrs. Hoda Shaheen, Services Co-ordinator  
Ministry of Health
4. Dr. Abdul Wahab Al Muheideb,  
Assistant Under Secretary, Department of Preventive  
Medicine, Ministry of Health
5. Mrs. Naureen Sami Khan  
Representative, Khaleej Times' Women's Association
6. Mr. Ahmed Moosa, Director TV, UAE
7. Mr. Ibrahim Sabagh  
Director General, Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs
8. Dr. Karima Abu Hashish  
Director, Al Nahyan MCH Center

(b)

KUWAIT

1. Mr. Ibrahim Al-Yusuf  
Director-General, The Arabian Gulf States  
Joint Program Production Institution
2. Mr. Osman Hashim, UNDP Resident Representative
3. Mr. Zatar, Programme Officer, UNDP.

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