



**Economic and Social
Council**

Distr.
LIMITED

E/ICEF/1994/L.12
14 April 1994

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

UNITED NATIONS CHILDREN'S FUND
Executive Board
Second regular session 1994
25-29 April 1994

FOR ACTION

THE UNICEF POLICY FOR CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE, THE COMMONWEALTH
OF INDEPENDENT STATES AND THE BALTIC STATES

SUMMARY

The present report provides an overview of the UNICEF policy for Central and Eastern Europe, the Commonwealth of Independent States and the Baltic States. Section I provides a brief introduction and section II discusses the main thrusts of UNICEF policy in the region. Section III describes current UNICEF programme support and section IV the sources of funding for these activities.

The Executive Director recommends that the Executive Board endorse the policy outlined in the present report.

I. INTRODUCTION

1. UNICEF involvement in Central and Eastern Europe, and more recently in the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) and the Baltic States, has intensified since 1990, when the Executive Board first approved programme support for this region. In the context of the rapidly evolving economic, social and political transformations of these countries, the Board expressed serious concern about the plight of children in the region. Subsequently, UNICEF was authorized to undertake activities on behalf of children, focusing on (a) advocacy for the development of social policies and legislation in favour of children; (b) initiation of programmes in countries satisfying criteria for UNICEF assistance; and (c) emergency assistance. In addition, the Board urged UNICEF to work closely with other United Nations organizations active in these countries and to draw on UNICEF experience with low-cost technologies and approaches to health, nutrition, early childhood education and other sectors (E/ICEF/1990/13, decision 1990/5; E/ICEF/1991/15, decision 1991/20; and E/ICEF/1992/14, decision 1992/19).

2. Within the framework of this mandate, UNICEF has provided modest but rapid and responsive assistance to children in the region, largely from supplementary funds. Some \$12.2 million was expended in 1993, of which \$10.4 million was for emergency assistance, in addition to \$19.4 million for emergency assistance to the republics of the former Yugoslavia.

3. The economic and social transitions in Central and Eastern Europe, CIS and the Baltic States since 1989 have been more difficult than was anticipated at the time. While varying in degree from country to country, the repercussions of the economic, social and political changes on large segments of the population generally have been severe, in some cases reaching crisis proportions. As documented in a UNICEF regional monitoring report issued in January 1994 entitled, "Central and Eastern Europe in transition: public policy and social conditions", unemployment and poverty are increasing as previously guaranteed access to work and social welfare services disappear. The quality and quantity of health and social services are declining, there have been epidemics of vaccine-preventable diseases, and child and adult morbidity and mortality have increased. The Russian Federation alone has experienced a rise in overall mortality of 500,000 additional deaths per year. Rapid social transitions and associated uncertainties are reflected in declining school enrolment, increases in delinquency and juvenile crime and marked decreases in birth rates across the region, including in countries that already had low birth rates. The rise in nationalism, ethnic intolerance and political instability, as well as the escalation of armed conflict among and within the countries of the region, has exacerbated the situation further. The consequences of all these changes affect children and women most, although the elderly and ethnic minorities also are affected.

4. On-the-ground experience in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro), Romania and, more recently, in Central Asia, Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia, coupled with frequent contacts in other countries of the region, have made it clear that serious problems for children are likely to continue for a number of years to

come. Emergency conditions prevail in quite a few of these countries and for the region as a whole, more attention urgently needs to be paid to accomplishing the economic transition with a human face.

II. MAIN POLICY THRUSTS

5. The broad policy directions set by the Executive Board have proven to be appropriate to the transitional needs of the 27 countries of the region. Despite the difficulties inherent in creating a constituency for children in a period of such intense change, experience in the region has shown that UNICEF can be a successful and helpful advocate for children and women with Governments, civil society and with the donor community.

6. Through the integration of emergency responses and longer-term planning, flexibility in facilitating the roles of others and the use of its own technical capacities, UNICEF has been able to play a catalytic role without requiring large resource transfers. The data collection and analysis being supported by UNICEF are providing telling evidence, important for all partners, of the deteriorating social situation in these countries and have drawn attention to the need for a strengthened social safety net and coherent social policies.

7. In many countries, the transfer and exchange of knowledge has proven to be a welcome intervention for population groups that have been isolated from relevant development experiences of other countries and that are eager to absorb new ideas. Through a variety of country, intercountry and regional activities, UNICEF also has played an important role in promoting intersectoral approaches to the identification and solution of children's problems and in encouraging dialogue between Governments, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), the media and other parties, including major donors.

8. As the gravity of the region's problems has become more apparent, there is now a clear need to accelerate programme components and advocacy and to reinforce the UNICEF capacity to respond to the needs of children and women. Given the number of countries involved and the magnitude of the problems they are facing, UNICEF will need to enhance significantly its capacity, both at headquarters and in the field, if it is to respond more adequately to their needs. In all countries of the region, intensified approaches are needed to enable UNICEF to influence social policy for children at this critical time.

9. The new challenges in these countries also have offered new opportunities to ensure strong inter-agency collaboration. UNICEF has established good working relations with other United Nations agencies already active in the region. In a number of countries in transition (Baltic States, Belarus, Republic of Moldova, Ukraine and the Russian Federation), UNICEF has initiated a dialogue with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) representative and the resident coordinators on how to move forward on the social agenda for women and children. Cooperation with the World Health Organization in the health sector, particularly regarding vaccines and essential drugs, continues to be a critical element in country programmes. Increasing attention by the World Bank to social sector issues also provides opportunities for UNICEF collaboration at many points during project development and implementation. Similarly, the

/...

United Nations Population Fund, the World Food Programme, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and bilateral donor agencies have collaborated with UNICEF in a number of countries in responding to emergency needs and in undertaking assessments and programme planning. Numerous NGOs have collaborated closely with UNICEF particularly in the areas of information exchange and technology transfer.

III. PROGRAMME SUPPORT

A. Country programmes

10. There is currently no uniform approach on the part of the donor community, and even within the United Nations system, to the classification of countries in transition for development assistance based on their levels of economic and/or human development. As a result, for the countries of this region, the categorization of countries for eligibility for programme cooperation and technical assistance and for establishing appropriate levels of aid allocation varies considerably from one agency to another. For example, UNDP, the World Bank, the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development and UNICEF each have different criteria. Because of the fluctuating values of individual statistical indicators (e.g., gross national product (GNP)) for these countries and the rapidly changing conditions in the region, formal criteria of eligibility for assistance have been established by agencies on a case-by-case basis. This is perhaps the most practical approach during this period of transition.

11. In this region, eligibility for UNICEF programme assistance has been and will continue to be assessed on the basis of the criteria that UNICEF normally uses for the allocation of general resources: per capita GNP; under-five mortality rate; and child population. On this basis, the Executive Board in 1993 approved short-term "bridging" country programmes for Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan, as well as a supplementary-funded programme for Romania. These programmes will continue through 1994 and five-year programme recommendations for these countries will be presented to the Executive Board in 1995. Two-year "bridging" recommendations, mostly for supplementary funding for Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro), the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Georgia, are being presented to the Board at its second regular session of 1994. Programmes for other countries may be presented to the Board in 1995. These will be financed from both general resources and supplementary funds. Other countries in the region will be considered for transitional or emergency assistance as part of a proposed regional strategy (see paras. 13 and 14 below).

B. Emergency support

12. UNICEF has participated in consolidated inter-agency appeals launched by the United Nations Department of Humanitarian Affairs for Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia and Tajikistan. Emergency activities of this nature will continue to be undertaken in close collaboration with other United Nations agencies. Advances

/...

from the Emergency Programme Fund also will enable UNICEF to respond quickly to urgent health and other needs in these countries. In addition, UNICEF will continue to provide assistance to help to meet the urgent needs of women and children in various republics of the former Yugoslavia.

C. Regional strategy

13. A regional approach will be required to complement the country programmes and support staff working at the country level. In consultation with government leaders and experts in the areas of child health and welfare, many high-priority problems and themes common to the region have been identified. These relate especially to the rapidity of the transition, the erosion of earlier safety nets and social service structures and, more generally, the consequences of the economic severity of the process. Within this context are many priority areas for UNICEF action, including assistance in the development of new social policies and legislation using the Convention on the Rights of the Child as a framework; the development of national programmes of action as priority agendas for children and as follow-up to the World Summit for Children; special measures for the protection of children in the current very difficult circumstances; monitoring of social indicators; and building on existing services and infrastructures and the region's well-developed human resources to design more effective interventions in health and to develop promotive and preventive health approaches. In the light of these commonalities and the need to maximize the limited resources of UNICEF, the Executive Director proposes that UNICEF develop a regional strategy and a programme of regional technical support to complement country-level action.

14. To facilitate this task, especially at this critical transition stage, and to promote greater efficiency in the use of existing resources, the Executive Director plans to create a regional support team headed by a director. Temporarily, until an appropriate regional field structure in line with UNICEF operations in other regions can be put in place, the regional team will operate from New York headquarters. This will enable the Executive Director and the deputies to provide close guidance to the team, in consultation with the Secretary-General, the Department of Humanitarian Affairs and UNDP, as it develops and executes UNICEF cooperation in the region. Staff for the regional support team would, for the time being, be redeployed from existing resources. Being in New York, the team will be able to draw upon the existing staff and resources of various headquarters divisions and thus avoid having to establish significant new operations at another location which could not be done without substantial additional budgetary allocations.

IV. SOURCES OF FUNDING

15. While UNICEF will require additional capacity and resources to help meet the needs of the countries concerned, the Executive Director believes that this can be done without any significant diversion of resources. Although a higher funding level for the region is clearly essential, supplementary funding should be the main source for an increased level of activities. The supplementary funding to be requested, however, will not be in direct competition with funds

/...

for other countries, as many donors have funds set aside expressly for countries of this region.

16. A detailed proposal for both administrative and programme requirements will be presented to the Executive Board in 1995 as part of the administrative and programme support budget for 1996-1997, the global funds programme budgets and relevant country programme recommendations.

V. RECOMMENDATION

17. The Executive Director recommends that the Executive Board adopt the following draft recommendation:

The Executive Board

Endorses the UNICEF policy for Central and Eastern Europe, the Commonwealth of Independent States and the Baltic States as outlined in document E/ICEF/1994/L.12.
