

Planning the Needs of Children in the Global South: UNICEF's Contribution to the Development Debate during the 1960s

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Résumé

« *Planifier les besoins des enfants dans les pays du Sud : la contribution de l'UNICEF au débat sur le développement dans les années 1960* »

Cet article analyse pourquoi et comment, au cours des années 1960 et 1970, l'UNICEF contribua à souligner l'importance des services sociaux pour la maternité et l'enfance dans le cadre des programmes de développement nationaux et internationaux. Pendant la Première Décennie des Nations unies pour le développement, cette organisation devint en effet plus attentive aux dimensions économiques et sociales des politiques développementalistes, élargissant ses domaines d'intervention à de nouveaux champs, tels que l'éducation et la planification familiale. L'UNICEF réorienta ainsi définitivement sa mission originelle de secours humanitaire aux mères et aux enfants vers l'assistance technique aux pays du Sud, avec pour but de diffuser dans les pays bénéficiaires un certain modèle de protection sociale.

Mots clés : Unicef ; planification ; développement ; enfants ; protection sociale ; Sud global.

Abstract

“Planning the Needs of Children in the Global South: UNICEF's Contribution to the Development Debate during the 1960s”

The paper points out why and how UNICEF contributed to underlining the need for maternal and children's welfare services within national and international planning for development. This took place between the 1960s and the 1970s, matching the First UN Development Decade, when UNICEF updated its actions and perspectives linking the social and economic dimensions of development and giving room to new fields such as education and family planning. It definitively shifted its mission from the humanitarian rescue of children and mothers, to the technical assistance of developing countries, conveying a certain model of social welfare in recipient countries.



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Keywords: UNICEF; Planning; Development; Children; Social Welfare; Global South.

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Among the paradigms of development, the need for planning economic and social modernization of post-colonial societies occupied an important place in the development discourse. Although its roots go back to the 1930s, it became an essential tool for reconstruction of industrialized societies after 1945, and a key instrument to pursue the modernization of developing countries. There is ample literature on its importance in post-WWII that refers above all to the use of planning in industrialized countries, both by East and West, during the Cold War confrontation, and on the UN role in shaping and channelling the theories of economic and social development.¹

While it entered the UN official strategy for development during the 1970s, planning indeed became one of the paradigms that had arisen since its establishment. It was consistent with a specific model the UN had sponsored and that was not controversial until the success of neo-liberal theories. The model emphasized the role of the State in managing and driving its own economic growth, and in detecting priorities and goals according to a long-term plan for economic and social development. Moreover, according to the main analysis of development economics of that time, social and cultural factors deserved a special place in the modernization process.²

This contribution came from the UN development system on the whole and, in particular, from the network of social scientists working in the various UN bodies. In this framework, the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) represented a special actor, which contributed in an unusual way to the debate.

Initially, the UNICEF mission consisted of the humanitarian rescue of children and mothers. Then, in the early 1950s the focus shifted, and it became an agency for development. It aimed at helping recipient countries to establish a welfare system and, more broadly, at shaping a "capacity building strategy".³

Dealing with fields such as food and health, its approach interlinked social and economic questions. The nexus between the two dimensions was a sort of trademark for UNICEF. As early as 1947, UNICEF Executive Director, Maurice Pate, had sponsored a study on the importance of children's welfare for economic development. That report, prepared by the British economist Hans Singer, established a relationship between economic performance and conditions of childhood in developing countries. He argued that hunger, disease, ignorance and the absence of welfare facilities for mothers and children were all barriers to wealth and growth. The final recommendation to UNICEF – to invest in human capital when planning national development and to consider the needs of children as a top priority in long-term economic programs – became a sort of blueprint of UNICEF action throughout the decades⁴. The importance given to the social and cultural dimension of development therefore widened the importance of some fields of action, such as education and

¹ For a synthesis of the more recent literature see: Michael Christian, Sandrine Kott, Ondřej Matějka, "Planning in Cold War Europe: Introduction", in *Id.* (eds.), *Planning in Cold War Europe. Competition, Cooperation, circulations (1950s-1970s)*, Oldenbourg, De Gruyter, 2018, p. 1-5.

² On the UN's role in development discourse, see: Richard Jolly *et al.*, *UN Contributions to Development Thinking and Practice*, 2004; Olav Stokke, *The UN and Development. From Aid to Cooperation*, 2009.

³ Richard Jolly, *UNICEF (United Nations Children's Fund). Global governance that works*, London- New York, Routledge, 2014, p. 26.

⁴ John Shaw, *Sir Hans Singer. The Life and Work of a Development Economist*, Basingstoke-New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2002, p. 144-145. See also: Richard Jolly, "UNICEF, Economists and Economic Policy: Bringing Children into Development Strategies", in Isabel Ortiz *et al.* (eds.), *Child Poverty and Inequality: New Perspectives*, New York, UNICEF, 2012, p. 79-88.

training and led to dealing with topics like women’s emancipation and family planning⁵.

Starting from these remarks, this article aims at analysing the contribution that UNICEF made to the development debate during the 1960s, trying to highlight elements of continuity or discontinuity with the debate of the following decade, with special reference to the attempt of giving space to child care in planning for economic and social development. The 1960s, matching the First UN Development Decade, can be definitively considered as a period of turmoil, as decolonization brought a rising number of newly independent countries into the UN, asking for a fairer international order. Moreover, during the 1960s, the notion of planning gained importance due to the success of the theory of modernization and, more broadly, to the importance it had in both Eastern and Western foreign aid policy⁶.

Finally, the article aims at providing a reflection on UNICEF’s work at a central level, trying to go beyond the analysis of technicians or officers who had worked for it – such as the above-mentioned Singer and then Richard Jolly and Maggie Black⁷ –, while considering new possible documental sources, despite their limited availability,⁸ to evaluate the actual role UNICEF played in the development process.

“A Potent Tool” for Development: Planning the Needs of Children for the First UN Development Decade

Some months before the General Assembly (GA) launched the First UN Development Decade, Pate submitted the *Report on the needs of children* to the Executive Board of UNICEF (ExBoard). The document and related debate represented the final step of a general appraisal of UNICEF’s action during the 1950s. The starting interest in European rescue was definitively replaced by new attention toward technical assistance to Afro-Asian and Latin American countries. Increased requests arriving from the developing countries, and the special needs they had, all challenged the UNICEF mission.⁹

Besides specific training programs or the supply of medical products, UNICEF action for health was mainly designed to support World Health Organization (WHO) campaigns, which had had very good outcomes in some domains – like in the mass

⁵ Herbert Phillips, *UNICEF in Education: a Historical Perspective*, Unicef History Series (UHS), Monograph IX, New York, UNICEF, October 1987. Virginia Hazzard, *Women, the Long Voyage. A Historical Perspective*, UHS, Monograph VII, New York, UNICEF, March 1987. Matthew Connelly, *Fatal Misconception. The Struggle to Control World Population*, Cambridge-London, The Belknap Press, 2008.

⁶ On development politics during the Cold War see the reflection of and the references cited in: David C. Engerman, “Development Politics and the Cold War”, *Diplomatic History*, vol. 41, n° 1, 2017, p. 1-19. On UN action during the First UN development decade see: O. Stokke, *The UN and Development...*, *op. cit.*, p. 137-156.

⁷ See: Maggie Black, *The Children and the Nations. The Story of Unicef*, New York, UNICEF, 1986; Ead., *Children First. The Story of UNICEF, Past and Present*, New York, Oxford University Press, 1996; and R. Jolly, *UNICEF...*, *op. cit.*

⁸ A UNICEF history project started some years ago with the contribution of retired officers, who published online some documents, both official and unpublished (<http://www.cf-hst.net/index.htm>), that are used for this paper. Since 2017, a new project (the UNICEF Enterprise Content Management Project) has been managing all the records, now moved to the UNICEF Headquarter in New York, though they are not available yet to external researchers.

⁹ United Nations, Economic and Social Council, Official Records (UNOR, ESC), UNICEF, ExBoard, *Report of the Executive Board, 1-11 September 1959*, E/ICEF/391, Rev.1.

vaccination campaigns – while registering poorer results in other high-cost programs – such as the eradication of malaria.

UNICEF assistance in nutrition had been concerned up to then with three main domains: milk conservation programs, expanded aid to nutrition, and child feeding through dried milk distribution. Regarding this latter domain, UNICEF had gradually lowered the allocation provided for the first ten years. One of the main reasons for giving up the blueprint of UNICEF action worldwide was the reduced availability of milk, as global production was then more destined to commercial outcomes. Moreover, UNICEF had to revise its first humanitarian intervention also due to the bad reception it had received in some countries. In Latin America, for example, there was strong resistance to the use of milk in the daily diet and, in any case, conditions were not adequate to process and distribute safe milk. Finally, WHO and the Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) themselves expressed many reservations on the social and economic impact of milk distribution in developing countries, which, according to them, would make them too dependent on this product and would therefore discourage breastfeeding or building plants for national self-sufficiency in production.¹⁰

In December 1959, UNICEF Secretariat started an analysis of the shortcomings and weaknesses of the action pursued up to then. It involved both headquarters' and local staff to help find some possible ways to shift the early policy.¹¹ It argued that, so far, UNICEF had failed to convince recipients to build a welfare system for children and that, in many situations, they preferred to have supplies rather than advice. They were more worried about the short-term and immediate problems of allocating resources and dealing with financial problems than in pursuing systematic planning for the needs of children as an economic and social goal. Planning implied skilled and trained personnel and local funds, which developing countries lacked, as well as proper planning machinery. Moreover, UNICEF assistance was "too small and too diffuse" to be really significant and, though some programs had an explicit economic value and impact on the recipients, others did not have short-term outcomes in terms of governmental budget in the receiving countries.¹² More broadly, the receiving countries had failed up to then to choose an integrated and cross-sectorial approach and tended to ignore the human dimension of development, starting what Singer was to define some years later as "myopic" planning.¹³ They expressed a kind of conservative mind-set and a lack of actual participation and interest in the UNICEF mission as they usually had no professional interest or link to the issues on the agenda. While the representatives in UNESCO or WHO governing bodies were often professionals with a very high qualification in the field, in UNICEF as well as in FAO they were usually government officials who had no real competence in the core issues.¹⁴ On the UNICEF side, some points had to be reconsidered. It had to shape more effective procedures and clearer tasks consistent with their specific requests.¹⁵ Furthermore, the UNICEF Secretariat highlighted the need to increase support of the

¹⁰ UNICEF Archives online (UA), CF/HST/1985-034/Anx.03/01, *The real problems of UNICEF*, 15 December 1959, p. 2. On UNICEF milk policy in Latin America see: Corinne A. Pernet, « L'Unicef et la lutte contre la malnutrition en Amérique centrale dans les années 1950: entre coopération et compétition », *Relations internationales*, n° 161, 2015, p. 27-42.

¹¹ UA, *The real problems of UNICEF*; and *ivi*, CF/HST/1985-034/Anx.03/02, "Quo Vadis" Appraisal Report, 1 April 1960. On UNICEF early years see: Jennifer M. Morris, *The Origins of UNICEF, 1946-1953*, Lanham, Lexington Books, 2015.

¹² UA, *The real problems of UNICEF*, p. 16.

¹³ Hans Singer, *Children in the Strategy of Development*, New York, UN, 1972, p. 56.

¹⁴ UA, *The real problems of UNICEF*, p. 15

¹⁵ *Ivi*, p. 14.

costs of the projects, at least at the beginning, and to widen the fields of action, especially in terms of education, training and basic social services. An emphasis on expanding nutritional programs and milk distribution, underlined by the representatives of Brazil as well as Ceylon, Pakistan, Burma and some African countries, had to be taken into account.¹⁶ Closer cooperation between headquarters and field officers and some educational appointments for country representatives could spread a more active participation for UNICEF work. Finally, the lack of common principles and guidelines within the UN system of technical assistance led to some difficulty in decision-making processes. UN agencies had usually imposed their own policies and tasks on UNICEF, asking for a wide allocation of funds – as in the case of the malaria eradication program – or using the technical approval of a single project to impose their individual view. Besides conditioning UNICEF in selecting its fields of operation, this mood caused the delay or the dropping of certain projects. Thus, the real conditions for guiding the planning process in the developing countries had to start from a broad revision of the UN system of aid, which lacked real coordination.¹⁷ In April 1960, all these analyses merged in the debate of the ExBoard, which finally decided to submit a survey to member states on the needs of children, to understand the priorities to be addressed.¹⁸ The outcome of that work was the report on *Children of the Developing Countries*, submitted by Pate to the ExBoard one year later,¹⁹ and prepared with a strong contribution on the part of Georges Sicault and Dick Heyward, UNICEF Deputy Executive Directors²⁰ and the input of private organizations, like the International Union for Child Welfare (IUCW).²¹ Katherine F. Lenroot, consultant paediatrician for the IUCW with long-term experience at the US Children's Bureau, prepared a document outlining many of the elements the UNICEF report had assumed. It highlighted a wider interest by the US government, who supported planning for children in developing countries and asked for better coordination between the US Administration and the UN. Lenroot spoke about sending more expert and motivated personnel, strengthening the US Food for Peace program to encourage nutritional education and protein-food production at a local level. As she wrote, "A concern for children [...] and a dynamic and creative leadership effectively pursued, would present the United States to the world in a new light. It would be, moreover, a true reflection of the deep interest of the American people and their Government in all children."²² In other words, endowing UNICEF with stronger policies for children in the Third World could be a great way to conquer the "hearts and minds" of recipients. The report on *Children of Developing Countries* started by analysing the factors affecting the environment and the needs of the child: poverty, diseases, chronic hunger, ignorance, and population growth were shown as the main obstacles to

¹⁶ UA, "Quo Vadis" Appraisal Report, p. 8.

¹⁷ UA, *The real problems of UNICEF*, p. 11.

¹⁸ UNICEF, Report of the ExBoard, Extract, *Survey of Children's Needs*, E/ICEF/398, 6 April 1960, in Columbia University, Rare Book and Manuscript Library (CU, RBML), Katherine Lenroot Papers 1909-1974 (KLP), Series (S.) IV, Sub. Series (Ss) 2, box (b.) 32, folder (f.) UNICEF National Social Welfare Assembly.

¹⁹ The report was then published in 1963. See: Georges P. Sicault (ed.), *The Needs of Children: A Survey of the Needs of Children in the Developing Countries*, New York, UNICEF, 1963.

²⁰ On the role of Sicault and Heywards see: UA, CF/HST/1985-045/Rev.01, *Main Trends in UNICEF's Policy: 1947-1980. A review by Charles A. Egger, former UNICEF Deputy Executive Director for Programmed*, 1 January 1986.

²¹ Katherine F. Lenroot, *UN Aid to the developing countries for extending and improving their services for children and youth*, in CU, RBML, KLP, S. IV, SS IV.2, b. 32, f. 3.

²² Ivi, p. 23-25.

planning investments for children's welfare. It proposed a sort of inventory of needs and established two main goals: strengthening social services and preparing children for adult life. Support for families through the building of maternal and child basic services – in both urban and rural areas – was formalized; specialized training activities were flanked by the education of personnel with basic and polyvalent skills. Moreover, it suggested supporting the local cost of projects (such as training local staff) and assisting recipients in planning, if needed. What the report suggested was the adoption of the whole child approach, a global and integrated vision to plan subsequent interventions, insisting on the human dimension of development and on careful long-term planning, defined according to the country approach. With the same task, it proposed to cooperate with the UN Regional Commissions and to contribute to training future planners. Finally, the report gave the Executive Director and member states greater flexibility in proposing new types of assistance in whatever field of action, so long as it simply dealt with mother and childcare.²³

The slogan « children first » passed into *The UN Development Decade. Proposals for Action* and was approved by the GA in December 1962. The strategy considered planning as "a potent tool for the mobilization of existing and latent resources (...) available to countries for the achievement of their development aims."²⁴ The human factor was focused on giving value to the education and training of the younger generation. Following the GA proposal, the UNICEF ExBoard endorsed the *Declaration on a Long-Term Policy for Children in Relation to the Development Decade*,²⁵ deciding to orientate its work towards the economic and social development efforts of the UN system. In this perspective, it recommended that member states place the needs of children and youths at the core of national economic and social development policies, thus connecting their action for children and young people "to the improvement of conditions in the family, the community, the nation."²⁶

Pate and his colleagues at the UNICEF Secretariat were aware of the big challenges they were to face. The country approach, as well as the planning process, required great preparation, specialized personnel and proper machinery to coordinate the action of different ministries and policies.²⁷ Moreover, the precise way in which UNICEF would assist the recipients was unclear, nor was there a definitive consensus on methods and principles among the member states. Some of them still questioned whether UNICEF had to deal with projects directed to the families or communities rather than specifically to children and mothers (for example, the fight against endemic diseases or support to food production), fearing to waste UNICEF resources; others raised the problem of how much UNICEF had to spend in education and training activities to fill the gap of skilled personnel and planners in developing countries, in addition to the question of cooperation with other agencies and programs, which often required a high undertaking by UNICEF (for example the mass health campaigns).²⁸ Finally, the attention devoted to education as well as to the population theme was also disputed. It

²³ UNOR, ESC, UNICEF, ExBoard, *Survey on the Needs of Children. Preliminary Review by the Executive Director*, E/ICEF/410, 4 May 1961. Ivi, *UNICEF, Report of the Executive Board, 8-19 June 1961*, E/ICEF/431.

²⁴ UN, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, *The United Nations Development Decade. Proposals for Action, Report of the Secretary-General*, E/3613, p. VII.

²⁵ UNOR, ESC, UNICEF, *Report of the Executive Board, June 1962*, E/ICEF/454/rev.1.

²⁶ UNOR, GA, 1187th Plenary Meeting, A/Res.1773/XVII, *United Nations Children's Fund*, 7 December 1962 (cit. p. 12).

²⁷ UA, CF/HST/1985-034/Anx.03/11, D. Heyward, *Notes on History of UNICEF "Policy"*, 17 March 1965, p. 16.

²⁸ UNOR, ESC, UNICEF, *Report of the Executive Board (20-21 June 1963)*, E/ICEF/469/Rev.1.

dealt with two questions whose importance Pate and the Secretariat staff recognized in addressing the needs of children, while many developing countries did not accept to devote resources and take responsibility for issues that lay with parents, national governments or other organizations, or seemed to concern sensitive cultural and religious matters. The pro-natalist Latin American countries, such as Brazil and Argentina, were hostile to the idea of dealing with these questions, while Asian members, like India, Pakistan and Ceylon, supported that view as they had already implemented population policies. On the one hand, UNICEF had, up to that point, succeeded in focusing on recruiting and training teachers, and not on educating children, all over the world. It had started supporting programs of education in the nutritional and health fields, with the aim of spreading a specific model of consumption and production – that was consistent with the main Green revolution paradigms – among the populations of developing countries. On the other hand, notwithstanding the supportive stance of the Secretariat, the ExBoard did not agree to include the population issue within the UNICEF agenda nor did it accept to play any role at that stage.²⁹

To pursue this "new look" policy, UNICEF decided to strengthen its planning division, and in October 1962 asked Edward Iwaskiewicz, a Polish economist who had worked for his country's planning commission, to start working for the UNICEF Secretariat³⁰. Subsequently, it began collaborating with the UN Regional Commissions as well as with the Planning Institutes working in different regional areas, aiming at holding a series of conferences on this issue between 1964 and 1966: a Round Table, plus three regional conferences in Latin America, Asia and Africa.³¹ The message was clear: as Heyward argued, planning was not important in itself, rather it was a chance to find a proper place for the care of children and youths in the national effort on development.³²

Changing the View on Children's Needs: UNICEF Round Table in Bellagio

Pate and Heyward decided to hold the first conference on children's needs in planning for development in 1964, involving the Rockefeller Foundation and asking its president, Jacob George Harrar, to host the meeting at Villa Serbelloni in Bellagio.³³ Harrar accepted the request as it dealt with issues very close to the Foundation's interests, such as "nutrition, education, the implication of population growth, and health," and in accordance with the view of the most prominent world economists and planners.³⁴ As it expected strong support for improving children's needs in development strategies,³⁵ UNICEF involved some of the high-ranking officials representing African, Asian and Latin American countries: Indian economist

²⁹ UA, CF-RAI-USAA-DB01-HS-2006-00007, G. Sicault, *Scope of UNICEF Aid*, E/ICEF/485, 11 November 1963.

³⁰ M. Black, *The Children and the Nations...*, *op. cit.*, p. 209-210.

³¹ Blanche Bernstein, *The United Nation Children's Fund*, Department of State Bulletin, reproduced in UN, June 1966, p. 9.

³² UA, D. Heyward, *Notes on History of UNICEF "Policy"*, p. 16-17.

³³ Rockefeller Archive Center (RAC), Rockefeller Foundation Records, Project (RFRP), Record Group (RG) 1.2, S. 100, b. 21, f. 140, Pate to Harrar, letter 12 July 1963. Hermann Stein, *UNICEF in Bellagio. A Memoir*, UNICEF History Paper, October 2007, p. 8.

³⁴ RAC, RFRP, RG 1.2, S. 100, b. 21, f. 140. Pomerat to Maier, letter 1 November 1963.

³⁵ RAC, RFRP, RG 1.2, S. 100, b. 21, f. 140. UNICEF, *A List of Questions Suggested for Discussion. Note Prepared by the Secretariat of UNICEF*, 31 March 1964.

V. K. R. V. Rao, the Venezuelan Hector Hurtado, the Tunisian Ahmed Ben Salaha, A. Z. N. Swai from Tanganyika, and Helena Iracy Junqueira from Brazil. The Socialist and Western's block representatives were academics as well as the other prominent scholars such as Jan Tinbergen, Robert Debré, Alfred Sauvy, Eugen Pusic, and Hans Singer. Besides Pate and Heyward, UNICEF was represented by Sicault, Iwaszkiewicz, Mamoudou Touré, G. V. Subba-Rao. Herman Stein, from Columbia University School of Social Work,³⁶ was rapporteur for the Conference.

The starting points were the importance of considering children's need for pursuing long term goals of national development policies in economic and social fields, what priorities these policies had to include, which value system had to be pursued and what kind of society was to be shaped.³⁷ A general consensus arose among the UN staff and the economists on the importance of social values like social justice, loyalty and honesty in rearing children.³⁸

The same general agreement was reached on the most frequent problems to be faced in planning for children and youths in developing countries: the lack of quantitative data on different age-groups, the deficiency of an administrative apparatus available for children's services and for the setting of priorities, the need for an inter-sectoral approach. Though UNICEF representatives considered it unfeasible to transfer the experience it had had in developed countries to the Global South, it was obvious that the model of planning UNICEF was sponsoring seemed very similar to the industrialized countries' view – more to the Western one rather than to Socialist central-planning – and to the idea to build societies according to the engineering approach marking the modernization theory.³⁹

Some issues arose from the discussion to become priority sectors in planning for children in developing countries. The focus on traditional fields such as health and nutrition was considered consistent with new or emerging fields of action, like basic social services and education and training, with an unprecedented focus on women's emancipation, as they were seen as fields which necessitated investment in a context of rapid industrialization and urbanization. A special consensus was also reached on the crucial role of education programs in nutrition and health, considering them as tools to spread a certain model of nutrition but also of living and consumption. Moreover, measures for family planning – a choice some Asian countries like India and Pakistan had already made – were well supported, considering them as a way to improve child and family well-being. Finally, much consideration was given to public awareness of children and youths' needs among the general public and a general agreement was obtained on promotional initiatives to sponsor in partnership with UNESCO. In that perspective, UNICEF representatives proposed a World Conference

³⁶ For the Socialist block: Georgi A. Miterev, from the Soviet Red Cross, the Soviet paediatrician M. J. Studenikin, and from Poland, Czeslaw Brobowski. For the US and UK governments respectively: Charles I. Schottland, Professor at the Brandeis University, and Eileen L. Younghusband, from the National Institute for Social Work Training. RAC, RFR, Projects, RG1.2, S 1.2, SS 100, b. 21, f. 140, UNICEF, *Round Table Conference on Planning for the Needs of Children in Developing Countries, Revised Information*, 25 March 1964.

³⁷ RAC, RFR, Projects, RG 1.2, S. 100, b. 21, f. 140, *A List of Questions Suggested for Discussion. Note Prepared by the Secretariat of UNICEF*, 31 March 1964.

³⁸ *Ibidem*. UA, CF-RAI-USAA-DB01-HS-2006-00012, G. Sicault, *The Objectives of a Development Policy for Children*.

³⁹ UA, G. Sicault, *The Objectives of a Development Policy for Children*. H. Stein, *UNICEF in Bellagio...*, *op. cit.*, p. 5, 15-16.

on Children and Youth in economic and social development, involving UN member states as well as all the UN development system.⁴⁰

The Round Table succeeded in finally bringing to the fore the role of children in economic development strategies. The presence of prominent economists as well as some of the more representative among the developing countries gave a special place to its outcomes in subsequent government action as well as in the UN system.

As far as UNICEF was concerned, it started the definitive updating of its structure and strategy. After Bellagio, it confirmed the decision to help countries in the whole planning process and thus increased the number of personnel from developing countries in both local and headquarter positions. Moreover, it established an annual seminar for regional staff to be held in a developing country and decided to forge stronger links with NGOs.⁴¹ Above all, UNICEF acquired a sort of independence within the UN development system, especially from the Specialized Agencies.⁴²

After the conference, Sicault presented the two main actions for UNICEF to pursue to the Programme Committee and the ExBoard: to make the real needs of children in developing nations known everywhere in Europe and to spread the message on how important it was to meet their needs; to definitively shift the focus of the UNICEF mission from humanitarian to development aims⁴³. Sicault's speech represented an attempt to consolidate and channel the Bellagio results, as member states were raising questions and concerns about them⁴⁴. Finally, the ExBoard decided to confirm the three regional conferences in Santiago, Bangkok and Addis Ababa between 1965 and 1966, to further study the question of planning for children's needs in development policies.

From Santiago to Addis Ababa: Regional Voices on Children's role in National Planning

In the UNICEF view, the three meetings were to provide an in-depth analysis of policies for children and youth in different regional experiences.⁴⁵ Though sharing a common agenda, each meeting showed the footprint of the related UN Regional Commission, which had considered planning as a long-established paradigm for development.⁴⁶ The Economic Commission for Latin America (ECLA) especially had much experience in studying this issue, with a strong social justice perspective, supported by the Latin American Institute for Economic and Social Planning (ILPES) since 1962.⁴⁷ ECLA prepared the background report that opened the *Latin American Conference on Children and Youth in National Development*, held in Santiago from 28 November to 11 December 1965. The report underlined the social phenomena common to all countries in the region, highlighting the high level of inequalities within the region,

⁴⁰ RAC, RFR, Projects, RG 1.2, S 100, b. 21, f. 140, UNICEF, *Conclusions of the Round Table Conference on Planning for the Needs of Children in Developing Countries, Bellagio, Italy – 1-7 April 1964*. J. D. Shaw, *Sir Hans Singer...*, *op. cit.*, p. 146. H. Stein, *UNICEF in Bellagio...*, *op. cit.*, p. 12, 14, 17.

⁴¹ H. Stein, *UNICEF in Bellagio...*, *op. cit.*, p. 18.

⁴² UA, D. Heyward, *Notes on History of UNICEF "Policy"*.

⁴³ UA, CF-RAI-USAA-DB01-HS-2006-00008G, G. Sicault, *Statement to the Executive Board*, CRP/1964-B/17, June 1964.

⁴⁴ UA, D. Heyward, *Notes on History of UNICEF "Policy"*, p. 17.

⁴⁵ UN Archives, Executive Office of the Secretary-General, Office of the Chef de Cabinet, Subsidiary bodies, UNICEF Correspondences 1962-1965, S-0290-0022-02, Labouisse to U Thant, letter 26 August 1965.

⁴⁶ Y. Berthelot, *Unity and Diversity in Development Ideas...*, *op. cit.*, p. 34.

⁴⁷ Gert Rosenthal, « *ECLAC: A Commitment to a Latin American Way toward Development* », in Y. Berthelot (ed.), *Unity and Diversity in Development Ideas...*, *op. cit.*, p. 189, 200-201.

and the lack of national integration and of social policies for children and youths. Emphasis was put on the importance of social measures, such as land reform, the consequent increase in food production and income level, and the importance of education of families to spread a different concept of development with both economic and social dimensions.⁴⁸

Also in Santiago, the population problem was discussed starting from a broad document prepared by ECLA on the effect of population growth on youth and development:⁴⁹ the needs for investments in education, nutrition, housing and social services were to increase to such an extent as to hamper the development process. Thus, it asked for birth control, suggesting promoting the use of contraceptives and supporting programs of health education among families and local centres. The topic was disputed, as was the role that UNICEF had to play, as the previous debate within the ExBoard had shown. Heyward, Sicault and the other member of the Secretariat had explicitly favoured this kind of undertaking, as did Labouisse. Soon after his appointment as Executive Director, he had indeed sponsored two projects submitted by India and Pakistan recommending the ExBoard accept dealing with this issue and make it part of UNICEF aid for basic health services.⁵⁰ In his opening statement to the Santiago meeting, Labouisse expressed, more explicitly than Pate, UNICEF support for population policies.⁵¹ During the debate, two main visions were dealt with on this topic: some countries supported the ECLA and UNICEF philosophy by accepting the need to adopt a population policy; while others thought that the problem could be faced "by stepping up the development rate and transforming the socio-economic structures."⁵² On the one hand, UNICEF aid was seen as a contribution to population growth, while on the other hand its help to health services, through education programs for girls and women, was already an indirect help to family planning. Finally, UNICEF did not choose to officially support any measure at that stage, so as to avoid criticism from member states.⁵³

The population question received a better reception at the Bangkok conference on *Children and Youth in National Planning and Development*, 8-15 March 1966, with the main sponsorship of UNICEF, the UN Economic Commission for Asia and the Far East (ECAFE) and the Asian Institute for Economic Development and Planning. As for the Santiago meeting, ECAFE prepared the background paper of the conference outlining the poor condition of mothers and children in Asia, showing a more economic-focused approach and a greater emphasis on economic growth with a state-leading approach. Social policies shaped to meet the needs of children and youth were however presented as a means of social justice and the human factor was hugely focused on, as the need for skilled manpower was underlined.⁵⁴

⁴⁸ UNOR, ESC, *Latin American Conference on Children and Youth in national development, Santiago, Chile, 28 November to 11 December 1965*, ST/ECLA/Conf.20/L.20, 11 December 1965, p. 8-11, 55-59.

⁴⁹ ECLA, *Population Growth and the First Stages on Population Policy in Latin America: effect on problems of youth and development*, ST/ECLA/Conf.20/L.10.

⁵⁰ E/ICEF/L.1259.

⁵¹ Opening Statement by Henry Labouisse in UNOR, ESC, *Latin American Conference on Children and Youth in national development, Santiago*, p. 70-73.

⁵² Ivi, p. 29-30.

⁵³ UA, D. Heyward, *Notes on History of UNICEF "Policy"*, p. 17.

⁵⁴ UNICEF, *Children and Youth in National Planning and Development in Asia. Report of Conference, 8-11 March 1966, Bangkok, Thailand*, New York, UNICEF, 1966, p. 5-9.

In Bangkok the question of population growth was endorsed⁵⁵. As a sign of this interest, a representative of the Population Council (PC), a body of the Rockefeller Foundation that was very active in promoting population policy and in carrying on related programs, was invited to Bangkok by Labouisse. The representative of the PC was Spurgeon Keeny, an old member of UNICEF staff, who, after his retirement, accepted the post of the Council's Resident Representative for East Asia.⁵⁶ In Bangkok, UNICEF representatives succeeded in putting the issue on the agenda of the following session of the ExBoard, when the US delegation asked to study UNICEF's role in family planning as part of its commitment to maternal and child welfare. The point, supported by Sweden and the UK as well as India and Pakistan, was approved as a limited aid to maternal and child welfare services.⁵⁷

The last of the regional conferences on planning for children in national development was held on 16-19 May 1966 in Addis Ababa, where the representatives of 22 countries debated the "Needs of African Children". As usual, the sponsors were UNICEF, the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) and the African Institute for Economic Development and Planning (IEDP).⁵⁸

UNICEF turned its attention to Africa only after a long period of oversight toward the continent. This was partly because most African countries only gained independence during the 1960s, and partly due to the difficulties of dealing with a complex framework of conflict and underdevelopment in a context of East-West rivalry. Up to then, UNICEF had assisted four African countries (Dahomey, Niger, Upper Volta, Togo) in considering children's needs in national planning.⁵⁹ Moreover, the meeting in Addis Ababa was preceded by a seminar held in Paris at the International Children's Centre (ICC), directed by Robert Debré, which had a long tradition in training specialized personnel, especially in health and paediatrics, in African countries.⁶⁰ The preliminary seminars were initiatives of the UNICEF Secretariat, supported by the ExBoard, which financed training for planners from twenty African and Eastern Mediterranean countries. The collaboration was fruitful as the IEPD was to introduce planning for children as a topic of its training courses for African planners,⁶¹ though a great part of work on the field was to be carried out by the ICC, which aimed at maintaining a French leading role in the field.⁶²

The Addis Ababa conference started with a broad evaluation of the demographic data: 40% of the African population was under 15 years of age and a high rate of infant mortality was still present; it showed the same weakness as other continents, such as a lack of infrastructure, of suitable data and institutions for planning, of financial and human resources; and the same sectors to value (basic services in health and social welfare, protein-rich food production and consumption, education and training). As in

⁵⁵ Ivi, p. 11, 22. See also: Leelananda de Silva, "From ECAFE to ESCAP: Pioneering a Regional Perspective", in Y. Berthelot, *Unity and Diversity in Development Ideas...*, op. cit., p. 163-164.

⁵⁶ RAC, Population Council Records, RG 2. Access 2, S. 2, b. 174, f. 1672, Notestein to Labouisse, letter 1 December 1965; ivi, Keeny to Notestein, letter 17 March 1961.

⁵⁷ B. Bernstein, *The United Nation Children's Fund...*, op. cit., p. 8.

⁵⁸ On ECA's view on planning see: Adebayo Adedeji, "The ECA: Forging a Future for Africa", in Y. Berthelot, *Unity and Diversity in Development Ideas...*, op. cit., p. 248-249.

⁵⁹ UNOR, ESC, *UNICEF, Report of the Executive Board, 19-27 May 1966*, E/ICEF/548/Rev.1, p. 39.

⁶⁰ On ICC's action see: Yves Denéchère, Patrice Marcilloux (dir.), *Le Centre international de l'enfance (1949-1997). Des archives à l'histoire*, Rennes, Presses universitaires de Rennes, 2016, p. 141-154.

⁶¹ UNOR, ESC, XVII Session, Suppl. 13, *UNICEF, Report of the Executive Board, 19-27 May 1966*, E/ICEF/548/Rev.1, p. 40. M. Black, *The Children and the Nations...*, op. cit., p. 212.

⁶² See: Jessica L. Pearson, *The Colonial Politics of Global Health. France and the United Nations in Postwar Africa*, Cambridge-London, Harvard University Press, 2018 (chapter five).

Bangkok, the importance of economic growth was highlighted more than any other social measure to be adopted.⁶³ Unlike the other regions, great focus was put on the role of NGOs in the planning process.⁶⁴

From 19 to 27 May, the ExBoard held a regular session in Addis Ababa, starting from evaluating what UNICEF could do to spread the importance of planning. Some inputs were made: disseminate reports and proceeding of conferences to government and academic centres; help recipients in elaborating national policy and establishing priorities; hold workshops and seminars in different regional areas; training courses for national planners; and strengthen cooperation among UNICEF, UN Statistical Office and UN Regional Commissions to develop data on children's problems and their causes.⁶⁵

Conclusions

After the three regional conferences, UNICEF continued supporting planning for children in development processes at a global level, strengthening its links with planning institutes, financing seminars at Universities in those regions, channelling its view through academic professionals working at a national level to give prominence to this topic in both academic and political discourse. By 1969, in Asia, planning for children's development had become a "standard practice" when those countries were discussing their five-year plans of development; while in Africa a fruitful collaboration continued between UNICEF and the IEDP, as the Institute was to introduce planning for children as a topic of its training courses for planners throughout the following decade. In 1972, UNICEF launched the last conference on planning in Lomé, dealing with the area – i.e. the African continent – that actually needed closer attention from the UN system.⁶⁶

Though some main promoters of this kind of strategy, such as Iwaszkiewicz and Sicault, retired at the end of the 1960s, and the small group of planners they led went to other posts both at headquarter and at regional offices, the season of enthusiasm for planning in developing countries went on to deeply mark UNICEF's future course and the entire development debate.⁶⁷ Studying the condition of children in the Global South contributed to highlighting a catalogue of basic needs, shaping systematic approaches and methods to meet them. Countries had to definitively take into account that children were citizens of the future and thus subjects with fundamental rights.

The UNICEF Secretariat emphasised the importance of going beyond the traditional role of humanitarian assistance to build an actual agency for development, with a strong social and cultural dimension, albeit fighting against the reluctance that many member states showed toward this new strategy. Involving prominent scholars as well as planners from the developing countries, it pointed out how children's care was a crucial question in the development process and started considering or valuing some

⁶³ UNOR, ESC, Fonds des Nations Unies pour l'Enfance, Conseil d'Administration, *Intégration des problèmes de l'enfance et de la jeunesse dans le cadre des plans de développement économique et social, Rapport de la réunion tenue à Addis-Abéba, Ethiopie, les 16, 17, 18 et 19 mai 1966*, E/ICEF/549, 30 juillet 1966.

⁶⁴ On the same days, a group of NGOs operating on the field organized a parallel workshop on *Reaching the Growing Child in Africa*. Summary records of the meeting in UNOR, ESC, *UNICEF, Report of the Executive Board, 19-27 May 1966*, p. 18.

⁶⁵ Ivi, p. 40.

⁶⁶ UNOR, ESC, *UNICEF, Report of the Executive Board, 19-27 May 1966*, p. 40. M. Black, *The Children and the Nations...* op. cit., p. 212.

⁶⁷ M. Black, *The Children and the Nations...*, op. cit., p. 212-213.

issues which were to become key topics during the following decades, such as the status of women or the population problem. In so doing, UNICEF succeeded in spreading a specific model of nutrition, conditioning both production and consumption in recipients, that was to be disputed further for its impact on the environment as well as for its pro-Western approach. Education became a crucial tool to convey UNICEF's view on health and nutrition, arguing that the supply of food and equipment was conclusively consistent with the education of families on nutrition and health habits. This trend was also influenced by the Declaration of the Rights of the Child, which in 1959 stated that children had the right to grow and develop in health and to have adequate nutrition, housing, recreation, medical services, education, moral and material security.⁶⁸ Thus, human rights too landed on UNICEF ground, contributing to enhancing the nexus between the economic and social dimensions of development as the main legacy to the future debate on children's welfare but also showing the broad conditioning it could exert on the way to modernize developing countries.

⁶⁸ Y. Beigbeder, *New Challenges for UNICEF...*, *op. cit.*, p. 22.