

**Children in peril**, *H. R. Labouisse, Assignment Children, UNICEF, Geneva, 1975.*

... The 1976 World Food Conference documentation has suggested that UNICEF might take a lead in formulating a concrete programme for supplementary feeding of children. If the Conference should desire it, we would be prepared to do so along the lines discussed above, in close cooperation with our colleagues from WHO, FAO, WFP and the several voluntary agencies who have done so much good work in this field over the years.

There are, however, to my mind three essential prerequisites:

1. In each country, the programme, to be successful, must have the active participation and support of the governing authorities, from the planning stage onward. Those authorities should encourage and help foster local participation at the community level. There must be a willingness on the part of the local communities concerned to participate in a mutual help undertaking. This means that, apart from emergency relief, all other services need to be placed in a development context. They should be of a type that the country can later continue to operate, perhaps with a progressively smaller component of food distribution. The new programmes should promote both national and family self-reliance, not the contrary.

Support from the national government concerned should also include a degree of financial participation, particularly in meeting local costs. In my judgement it is probably not possible to expect, in the initial stages, that developing countries will be able to support half of the general cost as envisaged in the documentation. However, we may reasonably expect that, over a period of time, they can assume a larger share of the cost of these services.

2. The success of any plan will of course be essentially dependent on the tangible and prolonged support it receives from countries in a position to contribute money and food. And here, I should like to draw attention to the last two sentences of paragraph 482 of document E/CONF.65/4, which read: *A programme covering 50 million children at an annual cost of \$20 per head would cost \$1000 million, and perhaps half this sum could be met by the Governments of the recipient countries. The remainder could provide a bold challenge to the vigour and inventiveness of UNICEF, WFP and the many voluntary agencies in raising the funds, helping to establish the administrative machinery and monitoring the efficacy of these programmes.*

I feel very strongly that the full responsibility for providing the funding must rest with governments. I do not believe that this added burden and responsibility should be placed on the United Nations organizations and the voluntary agencies. It is simply not realistic to believe that the "vigour and inventiveness" of any of us are capable of raising such sums unless the governments in a position to do so are prepared to make firm and adequate commitments.

## BOOKS AND REVIEWS

3. The commitments of support from both the donor and the recipient countries must be for a sufficiently long term to enable the programmes to get under way and to continue for a reasonable length of time once they have started. I believe we must envisage at least five years to start with. Unless there can be some assurance of continuity, few developing countries will be willing, I think, to assume the risk of the possible traumatic experiences that a premature termination or dwindling down of programmes could bring.

*To sum up* : we know enough of the extent of the needs to make a start. We know what the millions of children in peril must get soon : a network of services to reach them with food and health care, and concrete encouragement to their families and communities to engage in increased endeavours of self-help. We have made tentative estimates of the cost of the undertaking. The cost will be large in relation to what has been done in recent years. But we can also say that one billion dollars is small, in relation to existing global resources.

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