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CHILDREN AND YOUTH IN HUMAN RESOURCES
DEVELOPMENT AND PLANNING

Paper presented by UNICEF

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Development planning aims at the efficient use of scarce resources - material and human - in order to raise the level of living of a population. This development process entails growth and change - growth in the goods and services at the disposal of the individual and change in the institutions and environment of the society. Man can therefore be considered as the object and subject of development. As a matter of fact, economic activities, to lead to self-sustaining growth, should be based on and supported by one primordial factor, the factor of human resources. The task that will usually face economic planners is to orient the minds, hands and skills of men so that, combined with other factors, they can lead to development.

One of the pre-requisites of development, it should be stressed, is change in the social and environmental set up of society but this change can only come about through the promotion of development oriented elements in the society. The function of development should thus be to transform society's social heritage: the state of health and nutrition of the population, the system of education and training, employment, production and productivity. In other words planning should endeavour to transform and utilize human resources. Ignorance, superstition, apathy and lack of adequate entreprising and innovating minds have been the root cause of the slow rate of change and growth of the now developing societies.

Human resources have thus become a strategic factor in development and cannot be ignored or treated lightly. Since planning must be done for and through human beings, human resources should in itself be the subject of improvement and change. It is our view then that for planning itself to make any headway in the present circumstances of African societies it must first of all lay the foundation on which it will ultimately subsist and that foundation is human resources.

The Formation of human resources

Human resource formation should mean the preservation and increase of the human capital especially that segment which constitutes the core of replacement of the population - children and youth who are vital agents of growth and change. To prepare them for life is to prepare them for change and UNICEF for this reason, fully conscious that development is the main object of planning, gives particular attention to highlighting one important priority which is the formation of human resources through its world wide programmes of health, education, training and community development. UNICEF is ever convinced that through human resource formation can result an improvement of that aspect of human heritage - health, nutrition, education, training, production

and techniques of production without which progress is impossible or if at all, will be slow.

In the light of these considerations, it becomes needful that larger and larger proportions of the population should be trained or developed. It has been observed in certain quarters that in newly developing countries, the ratio of annual increase in strategic human resources to the annual increase in the national income may need be as high as 3 to 1 or even higher.

Human resource development must start with the child. It is not possible to conceive the formation of man without preparing him from childhood. Indeed, it seems that childhood is a special period of life. "Maturity, middle-age and old age together do not outweigh childhood and adolescence. When growth ceases, internal duration of life has been half spent". (Jean Rostand). The capital of health, intelligence and ethical values of an individual is built up during the period of growth and the dividends on that capital will be paid throughout the rest of his life.

Basically it can be said that the requirements in economic perspective applied to the formation of man are: not to let the individual die before he has produced at least as much as the cost of his production, to feed him and protect him from the evils of his environment and to impart to him the knowledge and professional know-how which are indispensable in the accomplishment of skills useful to the nation.

Recognition of these basic facts has led Governments in recent years, UNICEF since its inception and other specialized agencies of the United Nations to pay particular attention to the development of the manpower potential. UNICEF has always been dedicated to the cause of improving the welfare of children and youth and through its programmes stressing the inestimable value of human resources, helps Governments to achieve the objective of rapid economic growth.

The needs of children

As the real process of human resource formation takes place before the age of 20, children and youth can be regarded as the privileged vectors of change and progress. It goes without saying that planning should not bypass or treat lightly the needs of this segment of the population. Three main phases emerge in the cycle of formation of the child and youth and these phases correspond approximately to the age groups 0-5/6, 6/7-12/13, 13/14-20 years. The requirements of the child must, therefore, be met in accordance with the exigencies of these phases. Much mis-allocation and mis-use of resources usually occur for lack of recognition of the particular problems of each phase in the process of development of the child. For example, a child may have already suffered great harm or damage due to neglect of his needs in the pre-school age and some of the harm cannot be remedied at a later age. Malnourished children of 6-12 months are most likely to suffer

impairment of intellectual and personality development for life. In the planning the needs of children, care must be taken that action programmes follow their proper sequence and are well co-ordinated. The plan must also make available resources for meeting such needs.

Planning and policy for children

The exigencies of accelerated economic growth have led to the importance attached to consistent and comprehensive development planning. If it is agreed that in this comprehensive approach to planning human resources constitute an important parameter and if children and youth form the basis of human resources, then planning should take account of the needs of children and youth. A study of many a development plan in Africa reveals the insufficient place accorded this important factor. This is partly explained by the fact that the notion of human resources is relatively new to many planners and partly by the fact that such plans have been left in the hands of experts in the so-called economic sector. There is often little collaboration with people who deal with social programmes. Quite often in development plans, matters concerning the social services in general and those relating to children and youth in particular are treated as residual. Where policies for children exist, they lack in firmness of targets and show no direction of social progress.

The needs of children cannot be considered outside the framework of a development plan. Planners interested in the welfare of the population of which children and youth form an integral part should constantly bear in mind the requirements of children and make provisions for meeting them.

It is rather sad that many Governments have not yet realized the importance of this group as having special contribution to make in the process of development and this accounts for the lack of policy for children. For reasons we have already noted above and for the simple distributive welfare consideration (based on the gap between the importance of children and their present condition) Governments and planners should endeavour to frame appropriate policies for the development of children and youth.

Such policy (and programmes to match them) must be based on a full knowledge of the situation of children. This assessment of needs requires two things - determination of what the existing situation is (actual level of health, education, nutrition) and a determination of what the situation ought to be. The difference between what is and what ought to be should serve as a useful basis for the formulation of policies and targets of expected achievements within a development plan period.

It is recognized that without enough and reliable statistics not much can be accomplished in this direction. The collection of data on the situation and needs of children and youth for the purpose of planning is of prime importance. Unfortunately too few countries in

Africa have paid attention to this great need. This is a matter of special concern to UNICEF, an Agency devoted to the welfare of children. In order to remedy the situation, UNICEF in collaboration with ECA, has taken steps to encourage and help Governments gather relevant information on children for effective planning. This is in line with UNICEF's policy of "the country approach", the essence of which is to provide aid for key programmes of benefit to children and youth and which have recognized priorities within the context of the developmental efforts of individual countries.

Allocation of resources for human resource development

The availability of limited resources and the competing claims of other priorities are unavoidable constraints in development programmes for children and youth. Planners must, however, avoid the temptation of treating social needs as residual. The confusion between general growth and social development must be sorted out. Development still to some planners is thought of in terms of improvement and increase of the physical plant and material wealth denoted by the GNP. In the allocation of resources therefore, too much emphasis should not be laid on the accumulation of physical capital on the assumption that this will lead to accelerated growth and increased consumption. This is true by and large, but it is evident by the same token that investment in children and youth, as much as investment in plants, also points to the future. Economic growth can hardly be achieved with an illiterate, apathetic, undernourished and disease-ridden population. Planners should thus look for and take advantage of, the feed back effect between better education, better health and higher skills and physical capital in the process of development.

Special needs of children and youth

An important factor in development, we have already observed, is an adequate but well trained human capital and the formation of this capital must not be left to chance. The formation of human resources must begin from the beginning and be consistently maintained from the age of birth to adulthood. It follows therefore that a development plan must take account of the needs of the pre-school child, the school-going child and the youth as an integrated whole. Policy and needs for children and youth must go together and measures to meet such needs must flow from one to the other along the full cycle of growth.

The pre-school child must be protected from the hazards of disease and malnutrition and therefore stands in need of health and protection. The provision of healthy conditions of the child through adequate network of maternal and child health services should receive due attention of planners. Malnutrition, especially at the weaning period is a major problem that confronts many a country to-day. The effects of malnutrition can be disastrous to the intellectual and personality formation of the child and nothing is more inhibiting to human resource development than this menace. A national development plan should be so designed

as to mobilize resources for the production and preparation of rich foods in such quantities and at such prices as to reach the mass of the people. Community development projects have an useful role to play in this respect. Such projects must be involved in agricultural development schemes not only to make available enough food stuffs but also to increase the incomes of rural families.

The school-age child

The essential basis for development lies in the strengthening of education. Nearly 45 per cent of the total population of most African countries are under fifteen years of age and it is the youth who can and must be prepared to take the lead in the future development of their country. A system of education must thus be planned to meet the requirements of society, enabling children to be absorbed into the productive system of the economy. Several problems will be encountered in the pursuit of this objective, some of which are: the need to get larger proportion of children into school while at the sametime reducing the cost of education; need to adapt curriculum to local and national requirements and the need to educate those who do not attend school, especially youths.

Courageous efforts are being made by many African countries to enrol as many of their school-going children as possible. Something like half the countries on the continent are able to enrol, on the average, some 40 per cent of their children. But the problem is how to develop sufficient secondary schools on which higher manpower so much depends.

Youth

The preparation of the youth for absorption into society as full contributing members has become a great challenge to all African countries, more so to planners. It is this age group, as part of the overall available human resources, that must shoulder the tasks of tomorrow with access to all the technological knowledge and scientific progress that is producing change in our modern world.

Many of our youth lack basic skills or training and those in the rural areas tend to migrate to towns to seek employment which is hardly available. Appropriate planning for the training of the youth must be actively pursued so as to render him capable of playing his role in the taks of nation building. Less promising lads could be helped to find alternative outlets for their natural abilities or manual skills. The youth in rural settings should be encouraged to apply his energies where he is for the up-lifting of his family and community through the improvement of conditions of living and also industrial or agricultural potential. The needs for apprenticeship or vocational training is self-evident.

We have mentioned just a few of the needs of children and youth but they are sufficient, we hope, to highlight the importance of a policy and programme for children in national planning. It is believed that delegates will leave this conference ever more convinced of the vital role that human resources have to play in national development.

The role of UNICEF

UNICEF for its part has not relaxed its efforts, in collaboration with other United Nations Agencies, to foster the building of human resources through the strengthening of the family, emancipation of the mother, care of the health of millions of children throughout the most vulnerable years and the opening up of the young minds to skills of the contemporary world. The Fund endeavours to bring to world attention the needs of children in developing countries and possibilities of action for them in the light of the Development Decades.

Development efforts of Governments are encouraged and assisted by UNICEF. In programmes of value to human resources and leadership, UNICEF has helped to equip teacher training colleges, pre-vocational training schools, mothers' clubs and health centres and hospitals.

As much as possible assistance programmes are conceived in such a way as to fit into national development plans. In the past these programmes followed strictly sectoral lines of health, education, nutrition and community development. This was inevitable under conditions in which national intersectoral planning was non-existent or weak. With the creation and improvement of planning institutions it is now possible for UNICEF to help develop human resources in an integrated fashion. The inter-relationship among needs have to be respected so that action programmes can be made mutually reinforcing.

For advantage to be taken of external economics and to foster an optimal balance and proportion among programmes of benefit to children and youth, UNICEF assistance is being oriented gradually towards comprehensive and integrated services within overall programmes of development with emphasis on rural development. This approach is based on the fact that the growth of social services is intimately dependent upon the level of wealth in the community in which such services are provided. While UNICEF will continue to offer assistance to cater for projects of national interest, there will be focus of this assistance on selected wealth producing communities on which self-sustaining economic growth may depend. An example of this is the development of integrated health, education, agricultural extension and nutrition services in areas of intensive agricultural potential e.g. some parts of Rwanda. Each year thousands of children leave school and without any further education, return to their rural environment with little interest in what they can obtain from or contribute to the rural community. This is a great wastage of human resources in terms of what has been spent in rearing and educating them and in terms of the potential contribution they can make in the future. UNICEF, in collaboration with other Agencies, is helping Governments to set up

demonstration farms to show the rural youth that agriculture can be interesting, scientific and profitable.

These are but modest contributions that UNICEF offer in the efforts of Governments to mobilize their resources, especially human capital, for the building of a happy future. This third session of the conference of African Planners will no doubt be concerned with strategies for long term economic development with special reference to policies and objectives of the Second Development Decade. The lessons of development efforts during the past decades have shown that the human factor is very essential and that its low quality in terms of health and skills has been responsible, to a large measure, for the slow progress that has been achieved. It is hoped that human resource development that has its root in children and youth, will be given greater emphasis in national economic planning than has been the case.