

INTER-AGENCY STANDING COMMITTEE WORKING GROUP

XXXIVth MEETING

Geneva, 19-20 November 1998

Item 10: Capacity Building

RESPONSE CAPACITY BUILDING AND UNICEF

UNICEF recently conducted a consultation of representatives and directors from some 40 emergency countries/regions in Martigny Switzerland in September 1998. This consultation initiated a process to consolidate the focus and profile of the organization in humanitarian work. Within a modality of the "rights based approach", the initial scope of recommendations, includes the development and affirmation of a "core corporate commitment" (CCC), of the organization in:

- Analysis of the fundamental political, economic and social causes of child problems;
- Advocacy of the rights of children and women in emergency situations, including those internally displaced, with emphasis on women/female and child headed households;
- Geographical focus on countries and areas from where displacement occurs (places of origin versus asylum locations);
- Interventions for protecting survival rights, targeted to those with highest levels of vulnerability (health/nutrition/water/education);
- Prevention and targeted advocacy and rehabilitation activities for children with special psycho-social and physical needs, particularly related to conflict, (e.g. child soldiers, landmine victims, and unaccompanied children);
- The commitment to participate proactively in the Consolidated Appeals Process, making it a more stringent, timely and coordinated humanitarian strategy.

During 1999, UNICEF will undertake to strengthening the clarity of the "core corporate commitments" as per above, as well as greater precision in its definition and role vis a vis partnerships with other key humanitarian actors.

One strategic manner in which UNICEF will aim to ensure that we can deliver the above, will be to strengthen our Regional Offices and the regional institutional support mechanisms. For example, UNICEF has a "regional management team" that meets twice a year and develops the needed communication, coordination and plans at regional level. UNICEF is currently strengthening this management structure to dialogue on humanitarian concerns. In this regard, we plan to undertake a process with which to develop greater preparedness, at regional level. However, UNICEF sees that the interagency aspect of this planning and contingency capacity is extremely important.

It is therefore proposed that the IASC begin a process of consultation within its members that could identify ways in which interagency collaboration might be

accomplished, including for natural disasters as well as humanitarian emergencies, with the view of greater synergy and efficiency in the interagency response capacity.

In this regard, it is observed that the UNHCR has recently made a proposal (in draft) for ways in which to approach interagency training in emergencies relative to a new potential strategy of "interagency rapid response teams". UNICEF invites UNHCR to elaborate on this proposal and the manner in which it could support an interagency strategy in collaborative methods of better preparedness and timely reaction when disasters/emergencies occur.

With regards to training, UNICEF is exploring ways in which to support a set of standard and useful interagency training modules, that could be of benefit to all agencies involved with emergencies. This process will begin with a review of existing modules existing in humanitarian agencies and examining ways in which they might be modified to become "interagency".

These are some examples of potential ways to strengthen a joint capacity building for more regional specific and strategically placed capacities for responding to emergencies. UNICEF would welcome a formal interagency dialogue and proposals for ways to develop this into practical actions in the future.