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Country note****China***Summary*

The Executive Director presents the country note for China for a programme of cooperation for the period 2001 to 2005.

The situation of children and women

1. The child population in China is the world's second largest, although the numbers are declining due to reduced fertility and rapid economic and social development. In 1997, the total population was estimated at 1,236 million, including 380 million children. The child population is projected to continue declining to 359 million by 2005. China will need to take this demographic shift into account in its National Programme of Action (NPA) and other actions for children.

2. China has achieved or is on target to achieve 14 of the 24 goals of its NPA for children by 2000. Major

achievements include: the reduction of infant and under-five mortality; more than 90 per cent immunization coverage nationwide; markedly increased access to safe water (89 per cent of rural households with "improved" water supply in 1997); and primary school enrolment ratios of about 98 per cent for both boys and girls. Children with disabilities have improved access to basic services, prenatal care is more readily available to pregnant women, and services providing early childhood care and education in life skills have been greatly expanded. By 1998, 6,766 hospitals were certified as baby-friendly, about two thirds of the total; polio is close to eradication, with no cases since 1995; and measles and diarrhoea have been brought largely under control. However, there is still considerable local and regional variation due largely to differential success with poverty alleviation, communication and economic reform efforts, as well as to the quality of local government participation in NPA implementation. There has also been a decline in the coverage of primary health

* E/ICEF/2000/2.

** An addendum to the present report containing the final country programme recommendation will be submitted to the Executive Board for approval at its second regular session of 2000.

care, and weaker supervision, management and regulation of basic services in many locations.

3. Improving the quality of basic social services is a major challenge in many rural areas in the north, north-west and south-west, and in low coverage pockets in other locations, including some urban areas. Most low-income localities lack sufficient financing and programming capacity. Changes in lifestyle and patterns of internal migration are also affecting the status of children and women, requiring adjustments in basic service delivery approaches.

4. The Government is giving priority to reducing the number of maternal deaths (14,216 in 1997) and the number of infant deaths due to neonatal tetanus (7,400 in 1997), and to increasing access to rural sanitation (for 52 million people) by 2000. Longer-term challenges include arresting the spread of HIV/AIDS (estimated at 400,000 HIV cases in 1998); reducing protein-energy malnutrition, anaemia and vitamin A deficiency; eliminating trafficking of children and women; curbing tobacco use; and improving the quality of primary education. Even with accelerated Government efforts to promote female equality, Chinese girls are often at a disadvantage as compared with boys, particularly at three critical stages: soon after birth; during the primary school years; and at the time of first entry into the workforce.

Lessons learned from past cooperation

5. The mid-term review (MTR) in 1998 (see E/ICEF/1999/P/L.4) concluded that the current country programme strategy is largely on course to achieve its objectives. However, the cooperation needs to be more responsive to rapid changes in the country situation. One programme component that has been substantially strengthened following the MTR aims to eliminate trafficking of children and women.

6. Further major contributions of UNICEF cooperation to achievement of key national sectoral goals, such as increased access to sanitary latrines in rural areas, will depend on significant breakthroughs in the convergent delivery of basic social services addressing multiple causes of childhood deprivation. The child life cycle approach, with a clear focus on gender equality and empowerment, provides a foundation for such a convergent approach and will be used extensively during the new country programme cycle.

7. China's size and status give it a natural role as a "Good Neighbour for Children" regionally and globally, for example, in collaborative efforts for the eradication of polio with bordering countries. UNICEF will support this role more actively than has been the case to date, addressing subjects such as the prevention of HIV/AIDS.

8. The cooperation has responded selectively to the earthquakes and floods that have seriously affected children and women in recent years. This experience has made it clear that a provision for cooperation in times of emergency, and advance preparation for such a response, should be explicit features of the new country programme.

9. Interest in child rights-related issues is increasing within the public at large. In response, the cooperation will accelerate its initiatives to encourage government and civil society actions for improving the situation of children and women in the next country programme cycle.

Proposed country programme strategy

10. The Government of China-UNICEF programme of cooperation will be in harmony with the National Development Plan, the NPAs for children and women, and the programme cycles of the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Population Fund and the World Food Programme. The Government and UNICEF are engaged in dialogue on strategic directions for the NPAs for children and women for 2001-2010. Therefore, more specific objectives and a set of programmes for the new cooperation cycle will be identified in early 2000 in connection with the formulation of the two NPAs. With the involvement of the Government, United Nations system organizations in China are undertaking a Common Country Assessment, to be followed by the preparation of a United Nations Development Assistance Framework during 1999-2000. These exercises are linked with the preparation of the new programmes of cooperation of the key United Nations Development Group agencies. Consultations are also under way with other bilateral and multilateral organizations on strategies and programmes.

11. The Government continues to give priority to meeting the basic social service needs of millions of low-income and other at-risk families. A related priority is to strengthen family and community capabilities to use knowledge more effectively in realizing children's rights and needs, and to provide services to improve equity through the reduction of geographic and gender disparities. As noted above, the cooperation will be closely linked with the goals and principles of the forthcoming NPAs for

children and women. At the same time, the new country programme will take a more rights-oriented approach. Its main objectives will be: (a) to provide strategic support to the NPAs for children and women in key areas of advocacy and action such as the prevention of HIV/AIDS; (b) to expand partnerships and increase resource mobilization from domestic and international sources; (c) to improve national policies and operational mechanisms for financing and managing basic social services at local levels; and (d) to assist the development and dissemination of vital messages supporting programme interventions.

12. In the new programme of cooperation, five clusters of strategies will be interlinked and complementary. A cluster on *planning, advocacy, communication and knowledge* will occupy the central place within this framework, serving as a cross-cutting approach that links the other four clusters. For example, planning and advocacy will support child-focused policy development and monitoring systems with respect to equality for girls. Communication and knowledge components will focus on raising awareness of the rights specified in both the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. People and organizations will have increased access to knowledge that they can use to address prevention and protection issues related to problems such as malnutrition, poor hygiene, trafficking of children and women, HIV/AIDS and other threats.

13. The cluster of strategies for *sectoral policies and basic services* will assist in formulating and strengthening policies for national priorities in children's and women's health and nutrition, basic education and environmental sanitation; enhancing technical and managerial capacity; and developing demonstration models in selected low-income counties and provinces. Activities within this cluster will aim at increasing access and coverage, particularly for girls and women; reducing costs to low-income families; developing and using rights-based indicators appropriate for each sector; and increasing resources for sectoral services in the country.

14. The *unified basic services* cluster will aim to: (a) explore new means to address problems caused by multiple childhood deprivations; (b) develop improved models of effective county and community collaboration in multisectoral basic service initiatives; (c) use the knowledge gained to strengthen national approaches to social dimensions of poverty alleviation; and (d) promote increased community participation, including the participation of children, in selected rural and urban communities. UNICEF support will contribute to

strengthening local institutions and enhancing human resource capacities. Health facilities, schools and women's groups will serve as focal points for improving the convergent delivery of services in such areas as the management of common childhood illnesses, school attendance and the quality of learning, and gender awareness.

15. Key objectives for the strategy cluster on *protective services* are to: (a) reduce the risk to children, youth and women of social dangers such as HIV/AIDS, tobacco use, trafficking, abuse, neglect and discrimination related to disability, ethnicity and gender; (b) enable at-risk adolescents to choose healthier and safer lifestyles; and (c) demonstrate an improved approach to the protection of children and women through plans of action at national, provincial and county levels. Key strategies will be organized around unified basic services. Capacity-building will seek to improve the assessment and analysis of emerging risks, and participatory service initiatives tested in some locations.

16. The strategy for *emergency natural disaster services* will include a systematic assessment of the immediate and longer-term impacts of disasters, especially on children and women. The main objective is to promote wider use of good practices related mainly to prevention and, if necessary, to appropriate responses to serious health, sanitation and basic education consequences. This work will build on lessons learned, seeking a focused and strategic role in such areas as the prevention of epidemics.

17. Programme management priorities will include the development of appropriate monitoring and evaluation activities, both multisectoral and sectoral. Decentralized and participatory initiatives, capacity-building in basic services, and communication and advocacy activities will be among the main topics to be assessed. Within UNICEF, there will be increased use of office-wide teams to address programme-wide challenges such as initiatives for girls, support in emergencies and fund-raising.

Estimated programme budget

18. For the period 2001-2005, it is estimated that the country programme will have a total budget of \$60,349,000 in regular resources and \$40,000,000 in other resources. In light of the ongoing formulation of China's NPA for children, it was agreed that the budget breakdown by specific sectors or programme components should be made in early 2000 and presented in the country programme recommendation in September 2000. As prospects for

increased fund-raising are promising, the proposal for other resources funding may be increased accordingly. However, the basic strategy of the country programme as outlined above will remain unchanged.
