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Report of the field visit to China by members of the Bureau of the Executive Board

Introduction

1. Members of the Bureau of the UNICEF Executive Board — H.E. Dr. A. K. Abdul Momen, Permanent Representative of Bangladesh to the United Nations; H.E. Mr. Boniface G. Chidyausiku, Permanent Representative of Zimbabwe to the United Nations; H.E. Ms. Sanja Štiglic, Permanent Representative of Slovenia to the United Nations; Ms. Lilián Silveira, Minister Counsellor, Permanent Mission of Uruguay to the United Nations; Mr. Paul Klouman Bekken, Counsellor, Permanent Mission of Norway to the United Nations — and Mr. Nicolas Pron, Secretary of the Executive Board, visited China from 5 to 11 April 2010.

2. The field visit allowed the Bureau to gain a first-hand understanding of UNICEF work at the country level. More specifically, the visit aimed at demonstrating concrete examples of UNICEF cooperation with the Government and with other partners, including the United Nations country team. Furthermore, the visit provided an opportunity for the members of the Bureau to better understand the issues and challenges facing children and women in China.

3. The delegation would like to express its gratitude to the Government of China for the opportunities for substantive dialogue with senior members of the Government.

4. The delegation would like to thank the UNICEF country team in China for the very carefully prepared and well organized visit, and for staff being readily available throughout the visit. The Bureau was particularly impressed by the commitment and dedication of Chinese officials at every level and the UNICEF staff in China.

* E/ICEF/2010/8.

5. The programme of the visit consisted of two main components:

(a) Meetings in Beijing with the UNICEF China country office, senior-level government counterparts, members of the United Nations country team, as well as key donors.

(b) A field trip to Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region of China, where the Bureau had the opportunity to visit UNICEF projects in the counties of Tongxin and Haiyuan. The delegation met with local government representatives; civil society organizations; users of health facilities; health workers; teachers; school administrators; students; members of community groups; religious leaders and UNICEF staff.

6. The present report summarizes the briefings received by the Bureau members and concludes with the delegation's own observations.

Key issues facing children and women

7. China's population has more than doubled during the last five decades, from 587 million in 1953 to an estimated 1.32 billion people in 2008. Today, China is home to about 20 per cent of the world's population. With an estimated 342 million children — 17 per cent of the developing world's children — living in China, the country's remarkable progress towards the Millennium Development Goals has, in the process, helped to propel the whole world towards the Goals. China's achievements in child health and education are especially notable. Conversely, the world cannot achieve the Millennium Development Goals without progress in China.

8. With a growing and affluent educated middle class, China has been gaining considerable global influence on the political stage and as a significant aid donor. However, over the past three decades, improvements in human and social development outcomes have not kept pace with China's economic growth, leading to in-country disparities and health outcomes that in the poorest areas are similar to those in low-income countries. China's huge population means that it has over 100 million children living below the poverty level, as estimated by UNICEF using the World Bank poverty measure of per capita consumption of under \$2 per day.

9. The Bureau was informed that income disparities and the achievements of the Millennium Development Goals are quite uneven in China. While China may be doing well on many child indicators in aggregate national terms, this often masks major inequalities and disparities, particularly between urban and rural areas and between coastal, inland and remote regions. In the less developed areas, indicators are often far behind the national averages. In addition, a strong traditional preference for boys and the lack of an old-age security system has led to skewed sex ratios: 121 boys per 100 girls at birth (2008) — and increasing in early childhood. The China Academy of Social Sciences estimated that the next decade could see up to 60 million more men than women, with consequent impacts on socio-economic development.

10. During its visit to the Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region, the Bureau had an opportunity to gain a first-hand impression of the situation of children and women in the predominantly Muslim Hui ethnic minority.

Maternal and child health

11. Maternal and child health have significantly improved, but China is still among the top five countries in the number of under-five deaths (365,000 in 2008). In 2007, the under-five mortality rate and the maternal mortality ratio were both three to five times higher in remote rural areas than in coastal areas, due to poorer access to quality health services and financial means. Hospital delivery rates have increased, from 51 per cent in 1990 to 95 per cent in 2008, but still lag behind in China's western areas. Neonatal mortality accounts for about half of all under-five deaths, indicating the need for better antenatal, delivery and postnatal care. UNICEF China believes that over 75 per cent of all maternal deaths in China could be prevented with essential obstetric care. Vaccination coverage has risen since 2006, when the Government made routine immunization free of charge, but reaching poor rural populations presents significant challenges.

12. The uptake and quality of care and hospital delivery has improved through an innovative maternal and child health care (MCH) model developed with UNICEF support, which the Government is now expanding in three provinces, accounting for one-tenth of China's population. In 2009, the Government announced subsidized hospital delivery in all of China's 2,294 rural counties, consolidating its expansion of the approach attributed to the UNICEF safe motherhood model. From 2001 to 2008, in the 1,000 counties of the safe motherhood programme, UNICEF cooperation contributed to a 54 per cent reduction in the maternal mortality ratio, a 52 per cent reduction in neonatal mortality and a 54 per cent increase in hospital delivery rates. Key MCH policies and guidelines were developed, notably on care for urban migrants, and on integrating prevention of mother-to-child transmission (PMTCT) of HIV and paediatric AIDS into the MCH system.

13. UNICEF also contributed to China's health system reform, particularly the inclusion, costing and financing of the essential MCH service package. Support to the introduction of vaccination against hepatitis B led to a 90 per cent decrease of infection rates among children aged five. UNICEF advocacy based on evidence from UNICEF-supported surveys led to the integration of national child injury prevention standards into the next National Plan of Action for Children (2011-2020).

14. In the county of Haiyuan in Ningxia, the Bureau was able to see evidence of the positive impact of the MCH programme at all three levels of service delivery: county general hospital; township hospital and village clinic. Members of the Bureau heard from doctors and mothers how innovative approaches, such as setting up maternity waiting rooms for women living far from care or offering subsidies for hospital deliveries, had greatly contributed to improvements in the quality of obstetric and newborn care, and thereby reduced both maternal and infant deaths.

Child malnutrition

15. Underweight prevalence among children under five has declined by nearly two thirds since 1990, but stunting remains a problem in poor rural areas (18 per cent). Anaemia affects one in five children and one in ten children is vitamin A deficient. During the field visit, on enquiry, none of the patients at the hospitals and clinics the Bureau visited seemed to have severe anaemia. China increased its household iodized salt consumption, from 90 per cent in 2005 (up from 30 per cent only a decade earlier) to 97 per cent in 2009, but 33 million people remain at risk of iodine deficiency disorders. National policies on breastfeeding and infant formula

marketing are in line with international norms, but implementation remains weak, undermined by aggressive marketing of infant formula.

16. UNICEF cooperation contributed to the dramatic increases in the coverage of adequately iodized salt, from 30 per cent to 80 per cent in Tibet and from 80 per cent to 90 per cent in Xinjiang, and also led to the first ever issuance of national standards on complementary food nutrient supplements. Consumer groups in 30 cities were mobilized to monitor violations of the marketing code of breast milk substitutes, leading also to the passage of tougher legislative measures on advertising.

Water and sanitation

17. Access to improved water sources has increased. Nevertheless, water quality is of concern: the Government's 2008 Millennium Development Goals report notes that 251 million people lacked access to safe drinking water in 2007. Around 462 million population lacked access to improved sanitation facilities in 2006 (UNICEF and the World Health Organization). Continued efforts are needed to achieve the sanitation target of Goal 7.

18. The water, sanitation and hygiene in schools approach supported by UNICEF was adopted by the Ministry of Education as part of the national child-friendly school standards. Studies on disease and cost-benefit analyses of sanitation provided evidence for decision-making and contributed to the central Government's increased investment in rural household sanitation, from RMB 150 million in 2006 to RMB 1.6 billion for 2009-2011 — an over tenfold increase. National standards for water supply and water-quality testing were revised and adopted with UNICEF inputs.

19. At the Cao Wa township hospital in Haiyuan county, members of the Bureau had the opportunity to witness the integration of water, sanitation and hygiene activities along with MCH interventions. This kind of integration, which in the past had been neglected in China's health sector, is now being replicated by local authorities who are building dry latrines and water cisterns in other hospitals in this arid area.

Education

20. China has achieved Goal 2 on universal primary education for both boys and girls. China's compulsory education law requires free basic education for all children aged 6 to 14 years. The remaining challenges, especially in western areas, include disparities in the quality of and access to education; the numbers of children out of school; and lower enrolment and survival rates in junior secondary education. In 2008, China allocated 3.48 per cent of its gross domestic product to education, still below the national target of four per cent.

21. The adoption and promulgation by the Ministry of Education of child-friendly school (CFS) standards and the planned integration of CFS indicators in the national school monitoring and supervision guidelines was a concrete outcome of UNICEF cooperation, based on the introduction and testing of the CFS approach in 1,600 schools in very poor counties, emphasizing gender equity, safety, inclusiveness, participation and the quality of teaching and learning. Information management systems were strengthened and standards developed for education planning, school mapping and resource allocation for vulnerable populations. Early learning and

development guidelines were developed for nationwide use in monitoring pre-school quality and measuring school readiness. Innovations and approaches for reaching vulnerable groups were introduced and adopted:

(a) The “Parent to Child” early childhood education strategy for poor communities;

(b) Use of information and communication technologies to improve education quality in rural schools, now being scaled up by local governments; and

(c) Non-formal education approaches for out-of-school adolescents, also replicated by local governments.

22. In the village of Weiyi, part of Weizhou township in Tongxin county, the delegation visited a Hui ethnic minority early childhood development (ECD) center run by community members. Bureau members interacted with children and parents; they heard from the headmistress how important it is for the community to spread awareness about ECD through such innovative state-run and community-managed programmes. UNICEF has supported the whole approach of community-led ECD centres — in terms of norms, standards (developmental milestones), curriculum content (fairy tales), materials (fairy tale books) and ideas (basing activities on the books provided). This high quality and cost-effective pilot model is now expected to be widely adopted across the country.

HIV/AIDS

23. Although China has a low HIV prevalence, there are pockets of high infection rates among specific sub-populations, with some 50,000 new infections each year. An estimated 740,000 people are living with HIV, with only one in seven knowing his or her status. Cumulatively, 80 per cent of reported HIV cases are in six provinces. Females accounted for 30 per cent of reported cases in 2007 (15 per cent in 1993). Mother-to-child transmission has risen steadily as a percentage of all cases. At the end of 2007, only 41 per cent of young people aged 15 to 24 knew the correct concepts of HIV prevention.

24. The Government’s scale-up of the UNICEF-supported PMTCT model to make it a national PMTCT programme serving over 2 million women in high-prevalence counties and cities is another example of leveraging pilots to scale. Pilots for the care of women and children affected by AIDS demonstrated measurable improvements in anti-retroviral therapy adherence, household income and psychosocial well-being, and led to policies on cash subsidies, on orphans and on children affected by AIDS. UNICEF supported policy development for the national paediatric AIDS programme and for youth at risk. Under the coordination of the State Council AIDS Working Committee Office, UNICEF supported the launch of the “Campaign on Children, Young People and AIDS”. To engage the corporate sector, UNICEF and partners developed and launched ‘Eight Corporate Responses to Children and AIDS’. UNICEF is a member of the Country Coordination Mechanism for the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria. For 2006-2009, the Global Fund’s allocations for China totalled \$193 million.

25. In Tongxin county, the delegation visited the Honggangzi Arabic Girls’ School, a middle school for Muslim girls attached to Northern Mosque in the town of Yuhai. Bureau members experienced first-hand how the UNICEF project, by providing basic health information to young girls, encourages them to speak out about issues

concerning them and dispel myths about HIV and AIDS, with full support from the local government and religious leaders.

Child protection

26. A signatory to major international conventions for the protection of children, China has put laws in place to protect children from violence, abuse, trafficking, sexual exploitation and child labour. Effective implementation is a challenge, due to the lack of robust data, the sensitivity of issues and weak local capacities.

27. UNICEF cooperation contributed to improving the policy and legislative framework on child protection:

- (a) The revised Law on the Protection of Minors;
- (b) The 2007 National Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Women and Children;
- (c) New provisions on children in the revised Law on the Protection of Persons with Disabilities; and
- (d) National guidelines on community-based residential family care and foster care and on combating violence against children.

28. UNICEF also helped to establish a national monitoring system on children with disabilities. A system-based approach to child protection at the community level, successfully piloted in six cities, led to documented improvements.

Internal migrations

29. An estimated 200 million internal migrants (National Population and Family Planning Commission, 2008) contribute significantly to the country's development. Around 20 million children accompanying their migrant parents lack urban residence status and may lack access to basic social services. Some 55 million children have been left behind in rural areas with their extended family, often with inadequate care, profoundly affecting their development.

30. UNICEF has helped to develop a successful model for registration of some 650,000 migrant children in two cities. This model is now being replicated in the Government's Five-year Development Plan. Social support networks for children left behind have been set up with the involvement of communities, schools and families. Policy makers, local authorities, teachers, parents and children are trained in children's rights in order to create a better environment for these children left behind.

31. China faces frequent and chronic emergencies. Following the Sichuan earthquake, generous contributions from donors allowed UNICEF China to contribute effectively and rapidly to the emergency response. During meetings with government counterparts and donors in Beijing, the Bureau noted that UNICEF support in the recovery phase had been highly valued and much appreciated.

32. UNICEF response to the earthquake leveraged resources to help set up a government monitoring system for reconstruction funds. A new computerized child immunization registration system was developed, with the potential to be expanded nationwide. New national standards for school construction and retrofitting were established, as well as new standards for micronutrient food supplements.

UNICEF role in China

33. UNICEF engagement at the upstream policy level, supported by research, data and policy analysis, has led to a greater focus on children in national development planning and implementation, in poverty reduction and in social protection programmes. Government budget allocations have increased in education, health, poverty reduction and social protection. An emphasis on children was introduced into China's top strategic development frameworks, such as the 12th Five-year Plan, the Ten-year Poverty Reduction Programme, the National Post-Disaster Reconstruction Strategy and social protection legislation. Strategic partnerships have been established or strengthened with top government bodies, including the National Development and Reform Commission, the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of Civil Affairs, the State Council Leading Group of Poverty Alleviation and Development, and the National Working Committee for Children and Women under the State Council.

34. The Bureau members noted the strategic role UNICEF has played in developing norms and standards and in supporting policy formulation through the piloting of groundbreaking approaches. UNICEF continues to have a significant impact by leveraging resources for children through strategic partnerships with government bodies at the upstream policy level. China's current reforms across social sectors offer opportunities for UNICEF to contribute with high-quality analytical inputs and evidence-based advocacy. When meeting high-level government officials in Beijing, the Bureau members emphasized that China could be a role model for other developing countries and that sharing the country's great experience in reducing child mortality and ensuring universal primary education could benefit other parts of the world.

35. In Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region, the Bureau had the opportunity to meet with provincial and county governors, local officials and technical counterparts. In every instance, Bureau members were impressed by the excellent working relationship between UNICEF and its government counterparts, and by the strong commitment of the authorities to engage with local communities to take successful innovative projects to scale.

Observations

36. The Bureau welcomed the opportunity of witnessing the activities of UNICEF in China and, during the field visit, appreciated very much the dedication, hard work and efficiency of the office in areas such as mother and child health, education, child protection and HIV/AIDS.

37. The Bureau noted with satisfaction the excellent cooperation between UNICEF and the government institutions in the development of norms and standards and formulation of key policies affecting children. The Bureau was impressed with sharp focus of UNICEF on its comparative advantages, providing strategic policy advice in national programmes. Being a relevant partner for China was possible not least because UNICEF has attracted top-level international staff as well as dedicated and skilled local staff.

38. The Bureau appreciated the clear focus of UNICEF on the most vulnerable population groups and the most disadvantaged geographical areas. Furthermore, the

efforts made to strengthen disaggregation of data to reveal social disparities as a basis for advocacy and programme planning were found to be very important.

39. The Bureau welcomed, as an important strategy for achieving results for children, UNICEF efforts to influence policies, legislation and public spending towards the most disadvantaged.

40. While the Bureau was impressed by the capacity of UNICEF China to mobilize resources from corporate and private donors, members of the delegation also noted the importance of maintaining a minimum level of core programme resources in order to sustain UNICEF capacity to provide high-level technical advice and to influence policies.

41. The Bureau is of the view that the UNICEF programmes in China have had a very effective and meaningful impact in spite of minimal investment in terms of funding; a situation mainly due to strong country ownership of programmes and deep commitment of the Chinese Government. The Bureau welcomed the strong emphasis by UNICEF on national ownership, which was evident throughout the visit. Bureau members expressed some concern about the replicability of interventions in countries that are more donor dependant and do not have the level of China's national budget resources.

42. UNICEF engagement with partners, civil society, communities and faith-based organizations, as well as the private sector, were good examples of the added value and the multiplier effect UNICEF can bring by acting as a catalyst and bringing different partners together.

43. The members of the Bureau noted the good cooperation within the United Nations country team, as reflected in the large number of joint programmes. Nevertheless, UNICEF was the single agency for the field-level projects the Bureau observed. Participation of other relevant United Nations agencies could allow the United Nations to provide more comprehensive support in a cost-effective manner, building on the local know-how and networks already established by UNICEF. Nonetheless, the Bureau was informed by UNICEF staff that close cooperation among agencies on policies takes place at the central level. The delegation congratulates UNICEF for the partnerships established at all levels with the ministries and with the local authorities at provincial and community levels to achieve results for children through evidence-based advocacy and action.

44. The members of the Bureau appreciated the critical role UNICEF plays in support of the Government in achieving the Millennium Development Goals and in supporting the protection and fulfilment of the rights of children and women in China. The delegation observed that the Government is open to ideas and willing to commit resources for programmes and projects that could have positive impact and enrich children's lives. Therefore, UNICEF, given its credibility, has ample scope to continue its innovative work and act as a catalyst to initiate pertinent projects and programmes.

Annex**Summary of the programme of the field visit to China****Tuesday, 6 April (Beijing)**

1. Briefing by Representative and country management team
2. Meeting with Ministries of Commerce, Health and Education
3. Meeting with National Development and Reform Commission

Wednesday, 7 April (Beijing, Ningxia province)

1. Meeting with China United Nations country team
2. Meeting with key donors (CIDA; SIDA)
3. Field visit to Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region
4. Meeting with provincial and local government counterparts in Yinchuan, capital of Ningxia province
5. Briefing by government officials and local counterparts, Tongxin county

Thursday, 8 April (Tongxin and Haiyuan counties, Ningxia province)

1. Visit to Hui ethnic minority early childhood development centre in Weiyi village of Weizhou township, Tongxin county
2. Visit to Hongganzi Arabic Girls' School in Yuhai township, Tongxin county
3. Visit to Haiyuan County General Hospital, Haiyuan county

Friday, 9 April (Haiyuan county, Ningxia province)

1. Visit Cao Wa Township Hospital and Village Clinic, Cao Wa township, Haiyuan county
2. Visit to Mosque. Meeting with Imam and followers, Cao Wa township, Haiyuan county
3. Briefing by Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region Governor and provincial government counterparts, Yinchuan, Ningxia province

Saturday, 10 April (Beijing)

1. China cultural experience

Sunday, 11 April (Beijing)

1. Debriefing with UNICEF China country management team
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