



*executive committee of
the directing council*

PAN AMERICAN
HEALTH
ORGANIZATION

*working party of
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INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF THE CHILD, 1979

The Economic and Social Council of the United Nations, in Resolution 1962 (LIX) of 30 July 1975, requested the Secretary General to prepare a report on a proposal for an international year of the child in 1979, to coincide with the twentieth anniversary of the Declaration of the Rights of the Child and to be submitted to the General Assembly of the United Nations at its Thirty-first Session, through the Economic and Social Council.

On 5 August 1976, the Economic and Social Council, bearing in mind the above-mentioned report of the Secretary General, decided, in the resolution cited, to recommend to the General Assembly that it proclaim 1979 as International Year of the Child, bearing in mind the objectives mentioned.

On 21 December 1976, the United Nations General Assembly, bearing in mind the above-mentioned report of the Economic and Social Council, adopted the resolution cited relating to the proclamation of 1979 as International Year of the Child. Among other considerations, it took into account the fact that that event would encourage the countries to strengthen their child welfare programs, geared to national conditions, needs and priorities, and emphasized that, to that end, the provision of basic services for children is a vital component of economic and social development.

The General Assembly thus requested the governments, non-governmental organizations, the community at large, and United Nations agencies to assist in the preparation and implementation of the International Year of the Child, and assigned to the United Nations Children's Fund, and in particular to its Executive Director, overall responsibility for the pertinent coordination activities.

To this end, the following objectives and plan of action are envisaged:

1. Objectives

The general objectives of the International Year of the Child, 1979, are to provide a forum for advocacy on behalf of children and to enhance awareness of children's needs among decision-makers and the public; to promote recognition of the link between investment in programs for children and development; and to give an impetus to specific, attainable actions for children at the national level in both the short and the long term.

Specifically, the International Year of the Child, 1979, will take into account the following considerations:

- It should be a means of emphasizing the relationship between child health, education and welfare, and socioeconomic development, and should highlight the role of children, not only as beneficiaries of the development process, but also as future contributors to it as youths and adults;

- It should include not only the physical well-being of children, but also their intellectual, psychological and social development;

- The human rights and legal status of children should be given special consideration, with a view to protecting them against all forms of neglect, cruelty or exploitation; and

- Special attention should be given to particularly disadvantaged children and to those in the most vulnerable groups.

2. Plan of Action (1977-1980)

To achieve these objectives, it was deemed advisable for the following operational lines to be borne in mind in the period 1977-1980:

The activities of the Year should lead to concrete action and should be primarily nationally oriented. This does not, of course, preclude regional or subregional collaboration, where that approach can contribute to the solution of particular problems.

In line with this approach, it has been suggested that the best overall strategy for meeting children's long-term needs in developing countries could be encompassed in simple, low-cost, mutually supportive services to meet basic needs at the community level.

Since the bulk of the underserved or unserved population with regard to health, nutrition and education resides in the poorer rural areas and urban slums, many activities of the Year should concentrate on such areas.

In preparation for the activities of the Year, participating countries should be encouraged to review their ongoing programs that promote the well-being of children. The purpose of the reviews would be to identify remaining problems and gaps in existing activities and to analyze what should be done, in order of priority. While this would take place in the context of national programs and activities, the Year could also provide a framework for international review and exchange of experiences which could help find ways to meet certain of the needs of children.

The ultimate and primary focus for action in support of the International Year of the Child must be at the national level. Of course, it will be for participating countries to determine the nature and extent of their participation. On the basis of experience, it would appear useful for participating countries to organize meetings and seminars and other activities in preparation for action programs at the national and possibly local levels. The sequence would vary in different countries or regions. In any case, these meetings and the studies and analyses on which they would be based could be key elements in drawing attention to children's needs, in helping to shift the emphasis in national and local programs to meet them, and in ensuring widespread interest and participation at the national and local levels. They should involve all who are concerned with child welfare-- governments, non-governmental organizations, and United Nations agencies.

In the light of the foregoing, the Director of the Pan American Sanitary Bureau has deemed it appropriate to submit this report to the 78th Meeting of the Executive Committee for consideration. The results of its analysis will make it possible to establish, in close coordination with the World Health Organization in its area of jurisdiction, the conditions for collaboration between the Pan American Health Organization and other international agencies, in particular the United Nations Children's Fund, in the preparation and implementation of the International Year of the Child. This should be done in close coordination with the WHO Sixth Program of Work and the pertinent recommendations of the Ten-Year Health Plan for the Americas (1971-1980).