XUNICEF NEWS & VIEWS

A Quarterly Newsletter written by and for former UNICEF staff - December 2018



In this edition - December 14, 2018

Note that this newsletter uses links and is intended for online reading. If you choose to print it for reading, the links will not work. In this issue: (Click on any line to go directly to that page).

FROM THE EDITORS

Thanks

End of the Year

This Quarter

Errata - Ronald

RECENT NEWS

Updates

Carl Tinstman

Baquer Namazi

XUNICEF and UNICEF - a formal agreement?

UNICEF and Migrant Children

UNICEF operations banned in Northeast Nigeria

Polio

PHOTOS OF THE QUARTER

The Reunion

Yemen

Syria

The US Mexico Border

READERS' CORNER

The Ties that Bind - the XUNICEF Bibliography

What We're Reading and Rereading

Recognition

New & Notable Publications

POLICY CORNER

UNICEF's Role in Monitoring the SDGs

Recent Policy Announcements

Strategic Plan 2018 - 2021

Adolescents: Programming for the Second Decade

Evaluations

Ending Child Marriage

Gender: Action Plan and UNICEF / ILO

LIFE AFTER UNICEF

Thorndale - Jim Mayrides

Kolkata - Magdalene Chand

Toronto - Niloufar Pourzand

Guatemala City - Juan & Ines Aguilar

Kathmandu - Nigel Fisher

FEATURE ARTICLES

The 2018 XUNICEF Reunion in Mysore

Report of the 2018 Reunion

The Charge of the Elephants

My Three C's

A Reunion Limerick

Next Stop, Armenia?

Yemen

Memories of Yemen

Cultural Sensitivity and UNICEF

The DNA of Cultural Sensitivity

Comments on the DNA of Cultural Sensitivity

WE ARE MISSING YOU

Mohamed Rafiq
Brood of Brothers
Somewhere Along the Road

Maria Diamanti

Kate Fleming

OVERHEARD ON XUNICEF

Mega Companies - The Century of Dominance

Women Leaders
Jacinda Arden
Sahle-Work Zewde

Can We Save Ourselves from Plastics?

Fundraising

BITS AND PIECES

Happiness

Limericking the EXDIRs

The SDGs

Education - or Lack of

Elder History

From the Editorial Team

End of the Year

This has been a challenging year for UNICEF, for XUNICEF, and for the world as a whole. Sadly, the end of 2018 has not seen an end to the terrible wars in Yemen and Syria, nor an end to fighting in Iraq and Afghanistan, nor to the crisis facing the Rohingya, nor to the suffering of refugee and migrant children in many other parts of the world, including the US Mexico border.

For XUNICEF, however, we end the year on a few brighter notes:

- The 2018 Reunion in Mysore went off beautifully, and, according to all reports, was much enjoyed by all who participated.
- A small steering group opened discussions with UNICEF on a possible formal agreement between UNICEF and XUNICEF.
- Our bibliography of works published by UNICEF staff and retirees continued to grow with a new book by Habib Hammam and articles and six of our members.

This is our fourth quarterly edition, and for News & Views the end of year also signals the end of our first year of publication. We want to thank everyone who contributed articles and comments this year. We hope for even more such contributions in 2019.

You may recall that after our first edition, we circulated a survey questionnaire to all members. We learned a lot from the results, and so we plan another survey early in 2019. We hope you will participate, and that you will give us frank and honest feedback - what did you like, what did you not, and how can we improve in the future?

This Quarter

Among this quarter's Features we include several reports on the Reunion. In case you were not able to participate this year, we have included a link to the album of photos contributed by those who did attend. Also, we have advance information on the likely destination for the 2019 Reunion.

By the way, there will be at least one more retiree reunion in 2019. Gopi Menon has organized a reunion of the UNICEF India retirees in February in Kochi, Kerala. So far, there are a total of 71 members planning to attend.

Also in Features - Victor Karunan and Ronald van Dijk continue last quarter's discussion on how to strengthen cultural sensitivity skills in UNICEF. Habib Hammam provides us a memoire of the

first days of the UNICEF offices in Yemen. Finally, we report on the sad loss of a number of colleagues and fellow-retirees who left us during the quarter.

In the Policy Corner Leila Bisharat reports on UNICEF's role in monitoring the SDGs and brings us up to date on various new policy documents issued in recent months.

In Life After UNICEF Nuzhat Shahzadi presents articles contributed by JIm Mayrides, Magdalene Chand, Niloufar Pourzand, Juan Aguilar, and Nigel Fisher.

In Overheard on the XUNICEF Channel and in Bits and Pieces we include articles and discussions kicked off by Kul Gautam, Habib Hammam, Ramesh Shrestha, and Fouad Kronfol.

Warm Holiday Greetings

To all who are celebrating Christmas and New Year's we send you and your loved ones our very best wishes for a wonderful set of holidays. And to everyone we wish a safer, saner, and happier 2019.

Errata

In the 'From the Editors' introduction to our last edition we mixed up two quite separate contributions. We wrongly stated there that Kristian Laubjerg and Patrick Hennessy had contributed articles on Anthropology and Cultural Skills. In fact, it was Ronald van Dijk and Patrick who penned contributions for the anthropology discussion. Kristian Lauberg's article was part of our "Life After UNICEF" section. Apologies for the mix-up and any confusion we caused.

RECENT NEWS

Updates on Our Colleagues

Carl Tinstman

Carl and his wife, Tinbet, are at home in Boulder, Colorado, where Carl continues to recover from the stroke he suffered in July. Tom McDermott reports HERE and on his recent visit to see Carl and Tinbet, and offers us a couple photos.

Baquer Namazi

Baquer turned 82 on December 3rd. Baquer remains at home in Tehran on 'temporary medical parole' from prison. The 'parole' followed a series of severe 'cardiac events' while in prison at the beginning of this year. In addition to the cardiac issues that led to his release from prison, Baquer now suffers epilepsy.

We recently received word through his elder son, Babak, that Baquer's latest 2 month extension of parole has expired and a medical review panel is once again considering whether or not to further extend it. See Babak' s update HERE. We should note that the medical review panel is not the only authority deciding whether or not Baquer should return to prison. On previous occasions judicial authorities overruled the medical panel and returned him to prison against medical advice.

Baquer's younger son, Siamak, remains in Evin Prison. Like Baquer, Siamak is serving a 10 year sentence on charges of 'relations with an enemy state'.

Since February we have maintained a low profile with regard to public statements on Baquer's situation out of concern that any publicity might result in him being sent back to prison. Nonetheless, Baquer's family has continued a low profile campaign aimed at getting the authorities to allow him to leave Iran for medical treatment.

XUNICEF and UNICEF - a formal agreement?

In the last quarterly newsletter we reported that Nicolas Pron had been appointed by the Executive Director to act as liaison with UNICEF retirees. In addition, Nicolas, is handling a number of other special assignments.

An informal XUNICEF steering group consisting of Sheila Barry, Malika Abrous, Adhiratha Keefe, Fouad Kronfol and Tom McDermott formed in August to carry forward discussions with Nicolas on a number of needs expressed by XUNICEF members:

- The need for a firm point of contact within UNICEF and identifying key contacts in relevant divisions (e.g. DHR, ITD, DOC)

- Being able to feed back to UNICEF the views of XUNICEF members on important issues affecting children and UNICEF's work.

- Ensuring that UNICEF (DHR) is aware of the views and issues of XUNICEF members on matters directly relevant to retirees such as pension and ASHI, even if these matters are handled directly with the concerned UN units.

- Restarting and continuing work on the UNICEF history project
- Ensuring that UNICEF (DHR and GSA) inform staff about to leave the organization of the opportunity to join XUNICEF
- Gaining access to UNICEF learning resources such as those available on the intranet
- Ensuring a more regular flow of information from UNICEF on policies, staff announcements, and developments.
- Providing UNICEF for use in their public information outlets, stories of the work carried on by retirees in the areas of child development, protection, and welfare.

In a conference call with the group Nicolas said that the Executive Director was open to taking action in all these areas, but that XUNICEF and UNICEF needed first to establish a more formal relationship. He felt that a formal agreement was needed between XUNICEF and UNICEF, clarifying that XUNICEF would be UNICEF's global retiree network. He suggested that such an agreement be along the lines of those between other UN agencies and their respective retiree organizations, including WFP, WHO, FAO, UNESCO, and the World Bank. Nicolas proposed the WFP retiree agreement as one possible model.

Based on this conference call, the steering group drafted a possible text for the agreement and asked the XUNICEF members attending the Bangalore Reunion to consider:

- Should we establish an agreement?
- Was the draft agreement okay, and if not, how should it be modified?
- If so, how can we best maintain the current informal XUNICEF structure?
- Should a new and more formal committee be appointed to carry forward discussions?
- Who should sign such an agreement on behalf of XUNICEF?

News & Views has not yet received a final report of the views expressed by the reunion participants. A draft report, however, is being circulated among the participants for comment. As soon as we receive a final version, we plan to poll all XUNICEF members on their views.

Once we have a full picture of member views, we can decide whether or not the steering group should proceed with further discussions on an agreement.

UNICEF and Migrant Children

UNICEF has recently strengthened its public position on refugee and migrant children. At the end of November UNICEF issued a strong statement regarding the situation of migrant children at the US Mexico border and urged governments of the region to keep families together and

avoid detention of minors, while at the same time addressing the root causes for such migration, including poverty, violence and lack of opportunity.

> "UNICEF also urges governments in the region to keep families together and to use proven alternatives to immigration detention, such as community-based case management for families. Detention and family separation are deeply traumatic experiences that can leave children more vulnerable to exploitation and abuse and can create toxic stress with devastating long-term consequences.

Earlier in November UNICEF announced that it was providing in Mexico psychosocial counselling and providing tents and safe play spaces for the migrants.

In advance of the Summit on the Global Compact for Migration held earlier this month in Marrakech, UNICEF released a report titled, *'A Right to be Heard: Listening to children and young people on the move'* presenting the results of a survey of 4,000 migrant and refugee children and youth.

UNICEF sent a delegation of five members to the Marrakech Summit, including Laurence Chandy, Director of Research and Policy, Verena Knaus, Senior Migration Advisor and Marta Arias, Advocacy and Policy Specialist. Also included in the delegation were youth delegates representing Canada and Germany. The Global Compact was formally adopted on December 10th. UNICEF issued this statement welcoming the agreement.

Sadly, the Global Compact was not universally accepted. The US, Australia, and Israel opposed the compact. The positions of a number of other western governments remains uncertain.

UNICEF Operations Banned in North-east Nigeria

As we go to press reports have come in saying that the Nigerian Army has banned all UNICEF operations in the troubled northeast of Nigeria. The astounding charge? - that UNICEF is training "clandestine agents and spies for Boko Haram jihadists". The case apparently relates to a training course supported by UNICEF on December 12th and 13th in Maiduguri. UNICEF is investigating the charges. Stay tuned.

UNICEF and the Private Sector

As we have reported in previous editions of News & Views the Executive Director has set out to strengthen UNICEF cooperation with the private sector. The 2018 - 2021 Strategic Plan goes beyond earlier private sector fundraising efforts, and calls for harnessing the core business and innovation of companies, influencing global and local markets, pursuing the research and development of vaccines, medicines and technologies for achieving the SDGs.

The first outputs of this new strategy have begun to appear.

UNICEF - A Venture Capital Fund? a Blockchain developer?

Back in 2106 UNICEF established a $16 million innovation fund, which today has grown to nearly $18 million. The fund is designed to operate just like other venture capital funds, but dedicated to funding innovations for children and primarily situated in developing countries. Using capital from the innovation fund, UNICEF recently announced investments in six 'blockchain' projects, following on from its first blockchain investment in South Africa in 2016.

These six companies will get up to $100,000 each to build prototypes for improved vaccine supply chain management, affordable off-line connectivity for migrant populations, and strengthened management systems for funding social-impact projects. They join 20 other technology startup companies working on data science, machine learning and drones.

So what is blockchain? Blockchains are simply electronic structures of linked 'blocks' of data, allowing records to be built into a 'distributed ledger' and managed by users in a 'peer-to-peer' structure without the need for a central 'bank' or administration. Each block is protected from others by cryptographic keys. In theory this structure can lead to a more secure, yet transparent, system without the burdens of central administration or control. Given recent happenings with the 'crypto-currency' markets such as bitcoin, though, we wonder.

An Atlas of Child Rights and Business

UNICEF recently launched an 'atlas' showing how child rights and business intersect. The atlas is built around three child rights indices: In the Workplace, In the Marketplace, and in the Community and Environment.

Polio

Thanks to Geeta Athreya and John Gilmartin for pointing us to recent article in the Economist raising concern that progress on eradication of polio has stalled. This follows reports of new outbreaks in Afghanistan and Niger, and a report by the Global Polio Eradication Initiative. An earlier article in the Lancet in July expressed similar concerns about a slowing of eradication efforts and the fact that polio vaccination workers in several countries have not been paid their salaries for long periods.

WHO, the CDC, and CIRPEP have issued statements of concern on the issue, but so far no word has been heard from UNICEF. We hope to hear something soon, given that so many UNICEF

colleagues have worked hard on polio eradication. As Geeta says, " This is so worrying after all the hard work of millions of people."

PHOTOS OF THE QUARTER

The Reunion



Those who were lucky enough to attend this year's reunion have been busy building an extensive master album of photos of the reunion. Photos are still coming in. If you attended and have photos you would like to add, please contribute. Meanwhile the rest of us can browse the MEGA-ALBUM HERE. Be sure to save the link, as this is a project in progress as participants continue to add their snapshots.

Yemen



The horrific photos of this terrible war and its consequences for the children of Yemen arrive almost daily. One of the best collections of recent photos appeared in a recent NY Times article.



Syria

The news of the war in Syria has been somewhat eclipsed in recent weeks by the war in Yemen. Yet the war in Syria continues, and there is a growing threat of renewed fighting for Idlib Province. The AP has assembled a photo archive of children caught up in the war. See HERE UNICEF's Situation Report of October 2018.



The US Mexico Border

Today the number of children detained at the US border has grown to over 16,000. Some 175 additional unaccompanied child migrants arrive at the border each day. Last week a 7-year old girl died while in US custody, apparently because authorities failed to notice her urgent need for water and food until nearly 8 hours after her father and her were arrested.

Those still in detention represent only part of the over 50,000 unaccompanied child refugees who have been detained at the border so far in 2018. Most of those forcibly separated from their families under earlier US policy have now been reunited, so the focus is now on the unaccompanied children who remain in custody of the US Office of Refugee Resettlement while waiting for host families.

See also Our Concentration Camps : An Open Letter appearing in the current NY Review of Books.

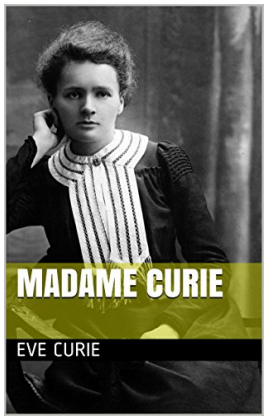
The READERS' CORNER

Fouad Kronfol edits Readers' Corner. In each edition we try to keep you up to date on recent works by UNICEF authors or about subjects relevant to UNICEF. Have your recently written, read or viewed something of interest to your fellow retirees? If so, please let us know.

Our Bibliography - The Ties that Bind Us

The Ties That Bind Us has been updated to include many new publications by UNICEF staff, retirees, and our partners. If you know of others, please let us know so that we can keep building our XUNICEF library collection. Click HERE to view and download the updated "Ties that Bind US"

What We Are Reading Or Rereading



++ **Madame Curie, A Biography,** Eve Curie; originally published in 1938 and republished several times, most recently in 2014.

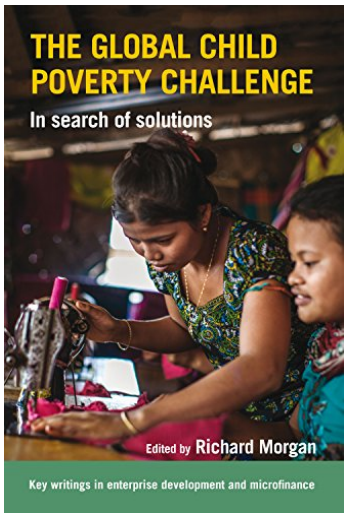
This very personal and human story of the famed scientist, Marie Curie, by her younger daughter Eve Curie is considered by critics as one of the best biographies written. Unicef staff mostly knew Eve Curie as the wife of Henry Labouisse, the second Executive Director 1965-1979. She was an accomplished journalist and wrote her book as a tribute to her mother, who was the first woman to win the Nobel Prize for two disciplines, physics and chemistry. Eve is famously known as saying, "*I am the only one in my immediate family who has not won a Nobel Prize* !". That is because her mother Marie, her father Pierre, her sister Irene won Nobel Prizes, and her husband Henry Labouisse. (Labouisse accepted the 1965 Peace Prize on behalf of UNICEF).

Many older staffers remember Eve as the "Grande Dame"of Unicef, during her husband's tenure. She continued her involvement with the XUNICEF network and attended a number of Reunions. She passed away at the age of 104.



++ **"Shweiriyyat", People Affairs in a Lebanese Village; A Collection of Historical Documents, Letters, Photos and Writings from Ottoman Times to 1970's;** edited and published by Habib Hammam, 2018, in Arabic, Dar El Kutub, Lebanon.

Habib has collected, developed and concluded the considerable work initiated by his late father, Dr. Nasib Hammam, about life and people in the mountain village of Shweir. The book is currently only available in the Arabic version. Proceeds from the sale of the publication will benefit a school in the village. More photos of Shweir are HERE

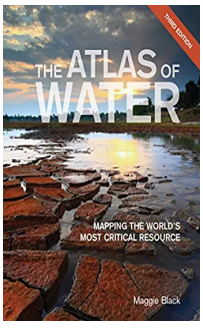


The Global Child Poverty Challenge: In search of Solutions - edited by Richard Morgan and published by Practical Action (March 2017) An analysis of an issue that most of Unicef staff have faced and worked towards over the years, but also some ideas to go forward.

Review by Sir Richard Jolly - "Practical Action Publishing has done it again, this time by producing an up-to-date briefing on what works - or doesn't - for reducing child poverty. About half of the world's poor are children, with higher rates of poverty among children than among adults in both developing and better off countries. Richard Morgan and supporters have reviewed a list of actions at the top of today's thinking about what can be done, with professional assessments in everyday language of the lessons for mobilizing more action in the future. Most useful and an important read for all concerned."

Recognition

We recognize here two of the most prolific authors among our Group:



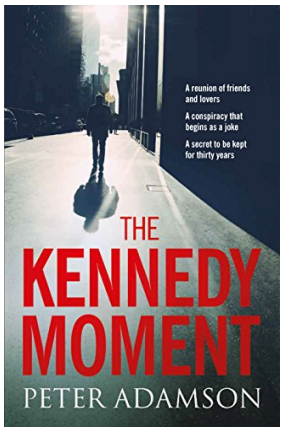
Maggie Black; her two seminal histories of Unicef from inception to its 40th anniversary are the best known of Maggie's publication. She has however written much more in the field of development, as we can attest here below with an albeit very incomplete listing of her oeuvres:

** A Cause for our Times, OXFAM, the First 50 Years; 1992, OUP*

** Water, Life Force; 2004, New Internationalist*

** Water; A Matter of Life & Death; 2005, OUP, India*

** The No Nonsense Guide to the UN; 2008, New Internationalist*
** The Last Taboo: Opening the Door on the Global Sanitation Crisis ; 2008, Earthscan*
** The Atlas of Water; 2009, EarthScan*
** No Nonsense, International Development Illusions & Realities; 2015, New Internationalist*



Peter Adamson; most of us know Peter from his considerable work on the" *State of the World's Children*" reports and the "*Progress of Nations*" which Unicef published starting from the Jim Grant tenure. Peter is also a prolific novelist so we list here some of his publications;
** Facing Out to Sea*
** The Tuscan Master*
** Sahel, a Short Story*
** The Kennedy Moment*
Comment by Malikkamadon Rajan " Have read your book on UCI "Kennedy Moments" and wanted to let you know that I immensely enjoyed reading it; the ending was really surprising and pleasant. Even in fiction you did not want to chance harming any person. Such a gentle soul you are, as most UNICEFers are always are."

Published Articles - New & Notable

We are pleased and impressed by the large number of articles that XUNICEF members have published in various journals and magazines on a variety of subjects of current interest to our Network . The articles and their links follow:

Kul Gautam: " *The UN in a Nationalist World*" ,published in the UK-UNA Magazine, makes a case for the relevance of the United Nations and its work in the world of today.

Jan Vandemoortele: "*'From the Simple-Minded MDG's to the Muddle-Headed SDGs*", published in Development Studies Research Journal, makes a critique of the evolution and effects of the UN-sponsored development goals.

Halim Antonio Girade: *"Crianca Feliz"* **;** article published in Early Child Matters- Advances in Early Childhood Development, by the Bernard van Leer Foundation, describes activities and results from a field perspective.

Bodewijn Mohr: ***"Is Excessive Sovereign Debt a Threat to Security?";*** published by UN Bureau of InterPress Services. Mohr's talk was delivered at the Annual Conference of European Center for Peace & Development at the 6th Global ECPD Youth Forum on "A Human Concept of Security".

Niloufar Pourzand:" *UN Life and Work in Iran, Afghanistan & Tajikistan, 1982-2006"*, a talk given at the University of Toronto's Initiative for Iranian Studies, and published on their Facebook. Niloufar describes the similarities in the cultures and especially the use of the Farsi language in these three countries.

Peter Adamson: *"The Long Read: The Merit Trap "*; published in the Sept. 2018 New Internationalist , Peter makes a critical analysis of the subject of "meritocracy" and its relationship with human advancement.

THE POLICY CORNER

The Policy Corner is edited by Leila Bisharat. This 'corner' is your space for discussing policy developments at UNICEF. With each issue we will offer links to recent papers on the table at UNICEF. We hope you will share your views on policies both on the XUNICEF email network and here in future editions of The Policy Corner. Do you have concerns about recent UNICEF policies or know of new ones in the works? If so, please contact Leila.

UNICEF's Role in Monitoring the SDGs - Leila Bisharat

Do you find the Sustainable Development Goals difficult to grasp, or overwhelming in number? Count on UNICEF to have taken this in hand. UNICEF's 2018 publication Progress for Every Child in the SDG clarifies and demystifies. Here it is. Just 5 dimensions of children's rights tell the story of many goals, and even more indicators.

- Every child survives and thrives
- Every child learns
- Every child is protected from violence, exploitation and harmful practices
- Every child lives in a safe and clean environment
- Every child has a fair chance in life.

UNICEF claims on its webpage to be the world's leading source of credible data and analysis about the situation of children. This responsibility is not taken lightly. There is no better testament to how serious this is than the UN system's dependence on UNICEF when it comes to monitoring progress on the SDGs.



I recently chatted with Mark Hereward, UNICEF's Associate Director of Data and Analytics, who heads up the group in New York at UNICEF Headquarters that produced this report. They are responsible for monitoring the SDGs with all UNICEF's 130 country offices and 35 National Committees, covering some 1690 countries. Mark has had a long career in UNICEF headquarters and in the field. He is not given to exaggeration. When this soft-spoken fellow told me that the UN system depends on UNICEF's monitoring capacity for reporting on the SDGs I knew that I had found the credible mother lode for the big data reporting we see today on progress around the world on the SDGs, not just at the UN but in the private sector and academic institutions.

This is no small operation. Some may remember Leo Goldstone, who single handedly managed "UNICEF statistics", or perhaps Gareth Jones who had a small set of dynamo staff members on the 13th floor in the Planning Office. Today, the core alone on the 4th Floor at UNICEF House counts some 70 staff, working in four different groups:

- The Data Collection Unit, mainly responsible for supporting and continuing to innovate with the Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys – the UNICEF innovation that has proven to be remarkably successful at helping Governments keeping its a finger on the pulse of key indicators;
- Data Analysis and Innovation – the UNICEF team of specialists in key areas, such as child protection and those working on pushing the envelope to incorporate new ideas and technology for more rapid, personal reporting from on the ground;
- Data Architecture and Communication – the source for the way UNICEF maintains quality and transparency in its reporting but also makes it meaningful to the world at large.
- "Data for Action" supporting implementation of the Strategic Framework fo Data for Children including Strategy with a Help Desk – the link to countries around the world through UNICEF country offices, National Committees and those working in humanitarian crises, where the real work takes places. The principle of national responsibility and ownership for progress towards the goals remains the bedrock of UNICEF's approach.

Enjoy UNICEF's new release and keep checking the UNICEF homepage for innovations in monitoring progress towards the goals.

Recent Policy Announcements

This was a busy quarter it seems for the UNICEF policy wonks. In case you missed those already circulated in emails, here is a collection of what seem to be the most important developments.

Strategic Plan 2018 - 2021

This key document, first shared in the September Newsletter, charts UNICEF's course toward attaining the SDGs. It gives the underpinning for the simplified SDG goal clusters, and their indicators, that you have in first Progress Report shared above. This will be the touchstone not only through 2021 but, with possible modifications, until final reporting in 2030.



Adolescents: Programming for the Second Decade and Update on Generation Unlimited

Check out these links to see how UNICEF has defined its strategic direction on the second decade of a child's life.

With many more children surviving beyond the age of 5, this is an important shift in emphasis and in programming. These are exciting developments that should provoke a lively exchange.
Click HERE and HERE

Evaluations

Click HERE and HERE

Gender

Action Plan and Joint ILO / UNICEF initiative on education and training for girls



Ending Child Marriage

Click HERE

LIFE AFTER UNICEF

Life After UNICEF is edited by Nuzhat Shahzadi. Share with your colleagues something interesting about your life and work after leaving UNICEF. Just contact Nuzhat who will be most willing to help you in editing and finalizing the story.

Thorndale - Jim Mayrides

After 27 and half years with Unicef, in May 2000 Jim Mayrides took early retirement ending his "global nomad" life of 36 years.

Jim was born in 1942 in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, USA. At the time the steel city was the true melting pot of second generation Americans. The first six years of his life he was surrounded by German, Spanish, Greek and Slovak conversations besides English which possibly was the "seeding" point of his later global journey… while pursuing due academic achievements, he spent 29 hours per week as a supermarket grocery clerk and cashier as well as a summer hire for the US Army Signal Corps. Most summers involved mowing lawns, washing cars, babysitting as an apprentice to an electrician and a house painter. He also helped at home looking after four younger siblings.

In 1966 at age 23 he became the youngest country director of Catholic Relief Services. His zest for working with the grassroots population germinated into an unquenchable passion to make change happen in their lives- from then onwards.

In 1973 he joined as the Desk officer for Unicef Latin America in NYHQ. Inspired by James P Grant, Jim offered his best as he worked in various capacities in Asia, Africa and Latin America. Click HERE read about Jim's astounding journey as a development professional and discover the new meaning of life he found in retirement that opened up an entire new world…

Kolkata - Magdalene Chand

Magdalene joined Unicef Kolkata in Oct 1984. She worked with the agency for 24 years and finally retired as a Programme Assistant in July 2008. Currently she lives in Bangalore, close to her family. At 70 Magdalene is fully active and leads an immensely interesting life- singing and dancing with fellow age mates as well as assisting to craft soul searching support systems that encourage to accept the purpose of life- at all times. To her, life as a "silver surfer" brings many shades which are meaningful and to be lived to the hilt!

Magdalene is a mother of five, and grandmother to four... read her story HERE to follow her feisty life after retirement. It's inspiring!

Toronto - Niloufar Pourzand

Niloufar took early retirement in 2016 at the age of 56 after 34 years of working with the UN and UNICEF. Amidst her UNICEF career and raising a family, she also completed her PhD in 2003. She currently lives in Toronto, Canada close to her family.



A native of Iran, she joined the UNICEF Iran Country Office in 1982 at the age of 23. She has worked in many challenging duty stations subsequently including Afghanistan, Tajikistan, the Eastern Caribbean, Indonesia and India. She began as a Programme Assistant, and gradually held positions in various development fields-gender, education, child protection, social policy, M&E as well as in management. Even though technically "retired" she follows her dreams with an immense zeal and keeps contributing to the cause of the most underprivileged…through various channels and in many different ways.

Click HERE to discover Niloufar, and read about her unique life story that holds many surprises, and is inspirational …



Guatemala City - Juan Aguilar

Juan Aguilar *is a Guatemalan medical doctor, and a PhD in International Nutrition from Cornell University. He joined UNICEF in 1984, as the first Regional Advisor for Health and Nutrition in the Regional Office, TACRO. He worked in groundbreaking initiatives for betterment of children's lives across the globe in countries in the Americas, Asia and Africa till he retired in 2000 at the age of 60. He continued to work with UNICEF a few more years even after retirement.*

At present he lives in Guatemala City with Ines, his loving wife of 47 years, enjoying its beautiful landscapes, many flowers and birds and animals. Both are avid collectors of miniature nativities and have shared their passion with others in several exhibitions they held to display their collections. Their lives are surrounded by three loving children and seven grandkids. Juan still volunteers in public services.

Click HERE to learn more about the astounding work Juan has done and the amazing life he leads now- post retirement!

No Fixed Address - Nigel Fisher

Nigel Fisher *is a Canadian. His first UNICEF post was Laos, where he worked for four years (1977-81). Of course, we don't doubt his noble motivation to serve the most under privileged but there was an additional (but not limited to) underlying aim as well for heading off there at that point in his life…in his own words - "because it (Laos) was further away from Canada than the alternative offer, Honduras".*

Nigel's career took him from one region to another, made him an international nomad (roping in a very brave woman, Patsy, who happens to be his wife and "co-pilot" in the adventures that embroiled their lives). He has witnessed the splendor of the Himalayas and Kilimanjaro, Tauras and Tabwemasana… as well as navigated the many waters of many oceans - the Pacific, Atlantic, Indian, Southern…Arctic…(he didn't specifically name the last two, though…) working with UNICEF and the UN in countless cultures, duty stations - with millions of faces, trying to make a difference. He left his footsteps in Nigeria, India, Mozambique, Yemen, Jordan, Syria, Rwanda, Nepal, Afghanistan, Haiti and more (not all with UNICEF!)… the list is very long and exciting, actually. In line of duty, he has experienced wonders that few can boast of, as well as steered his teams through times of heartbreaking tragedies and human miseries that come with the kind of challenging assignments he had been involved in…

Nigel actually never retired. He seems to be our "trump card (no pun intended) " in a game of Bridge, and continues even today with full vigor, unwavering commitment to create good in the face of hopelessness. Want to guess his age? Don't even try…

Click HERE to read about his amazing life's journey and discover what drives him even after almost four decades…

FEATURE ARTICLES

The 2018 XUNICEF Reunion in Mysore



Report of the 2018 Reunion - Sree Gururaja and Gautam Banerji

The Charge of the Elephants - Doreen Lobo

My Three C's - Doreen Lobo

A Reunion Limerick - Adrian Lobo

Next Stop - Armenia? - Gautam Banerji



Yemen

Memories of Yemen - Habib Hamam

Cultural Sensitivity and UNICEF

The DNA of Cultural Sensitivity - Victor Karunan

Comments on the DNA of Cultural Sensitivity - Ronald Van Dijk

We're Missing You Already

Mohamed Rafiq

Brood of Brothers - Nuzhat Shahzadi

Somewhere Along the Road - Angela Raven Roberts



Maria Diamanti

A Woman of Strong Character - Fouad Kronfol



Kate Fleming

In Search of Memories - Leila Bisharat

Nextdoor Neighbor - Karin Sham Poo

OVERHEARD ON THE XUNICEF CHANNEL

In each edition we hope to cover a few of the issues discussed on the XUNICEF email network. We need an editor for this section, someone able to capture and summarize discussions, and able to recruit those who make the best contributions to write short articles. Are you willing?

Fundraising

Kul Gautam kicked off an interesting discussion on fundraising by citing the progress made by Thailand. As Kul noted, " The whole UNICEF country programme in Thailand is now fully funded from funds raised in Thailand. Indeed the private sector fundraising in Thailand now surpasses what UNICEF raises in China, India, the Philippines, Indonesia and Malaysia, and outshines such early success stories of UNICEF private sector fund-raising in developing countries like Brazil, Mexico, Argentina, Chile, etc. " Kul went on to point to the key role played by Khun Anand, former Prime Minister of Thailand, as well as UNICEF Goodwill Ambassador.

Kul's message opened a debate over the value and role of 'celebrities', as well as calls for other 'programme' countries to step up their fundraising efforts. There were many interesting comments. We have excerpted a few we considered key HERE.

Want to jump into this discussion? Just comment on the XUNICEF email channel. As we did with the discussion on anthropology and cultural sensitivity skills, if enough people want to continue the discussion, we can create a subgroup.

Mega Companies

The Century of Dominance - Habib Hammam

The world seems to be heading into an era when governments do not control companies but become a tool of mega companies that control them.

The big question is how will this shift affect the way we live. Can we assume that this is all to the worse? Or can "people governments" and companies get together and agree on shared values and rules or codes of conduct that favour and improve people's lives and prevent despotism or chaos.

Read Habib's full article HERE.

Women Leaders

NZ Prime Minister Jacinda Arden - Kul Gautam

Much attention was paid to the fact that the New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Arden became the first head of state in history to bring a breastfeeding baby to the UNGA. But equally important was her remarkable speech at UNGA - a powerful counterpoint to Donald Trump's boastful unilateralist bravado. This is the kind of leader the world needs in the 21st century. I highly recommend you watch this inspiring speech.

Ethiopian President Sahle-Work Zewde, First Woman to serve as President of Ethiopia

Many members commented on the appointment of Sahle-Work Zewde, Director General of the UN Offices in Nairobi as the first woman to serve as President of Ethiopia. In addition, half of the country's cabinet ministerial posts are now filled by women.

Environment

Can We Save Ourselves from Plastics? - Ramesh Shrestha

Can we as an ex-UNICEF retiree community commit ourselves (including our families) to abstain from using plastic shopping bags and disposable water bottles?

Plastic is one of the best inventions of all times. Its versatility – flexibility, light weight, insularity, capacity to absorb shock and long shelf life found it's use everywhere from cosmetics to aerodynamic industry. In fact plastic has become an indispensable element in our society. We find plastic everywhere in our household. In recent months there have been a lot of focus globally on plastic pollution – land, sea and air. It has become an eyesore from deep seas to the trails of the highest mountain, Mt. Everest. It has now become a health hazard.

Continue reading HERE the reasons we might need to take action.

BITS AND PIECES

Share something light, funny, or irreverent. With all the glum news around us these days, we all will welcome a moment to laugh and smile.

Happiness

I think the very purpose of our existence is for happiness. ...You see, happiness comes not come from sky, but we must make a happy life. So we have a responsibility. ….Happiness must be created within ourselves and our family. So ultimately, our own responsibility, isn't it?

- HH the 14th Dalai Lama

Grant me, O Lord,
good digestion, and something good to digest.
Grant me a healthy body,
and the necessary good humor to maintain it.
Grant me a simple soul
that knows to treasure all that is good
and that doesn't frighten
easily at the sight of evil,
but rather finds the means
to put things back in their place.
Give me a soul that knows not
boredom, grumblings, sighs and laments,
nor excess of stress,
by that obstructing thing called "I."
Grant me, O Lord,
a sense of good humor.
Allow me the grace to be able
to take a joke to discover in life a bit of joy,
and to be able to share it with others.

- St. Thomas More as quoted by HH Pope Francis as among his daily prayers

Limericking Our ExDIRs

A (slightly) irreverent description of those who led us.

The first ExDir in 1946 was Maurice Pate,
His task was to prolong and ensure Unicef's fate,
While it's good to aid Europe's children affected by the War,
He knew that other children had more pressing needs by far,
And the nations and Unicef should not be late,
Nor any longer wait.

Our second ExDir was the patrician Henry Labouisse,
He and his wife ,Eve Marie Curie, one could not miss.
Seasoned diplomat, his tenure saw Unicef expand,

From health to education to basic services and,
In the process he picked up the Nobel prize for Peace.

Jim Grant turned the UN and Unicef upside down,
There was clearly a "new" agency in town !
From GOBI to CSDR to social mobilizations,
His signature event was a Summit of Nations,
And he made child survival an acceptable noun.

After three EXDIRS who all were males
Came Carol Bellamy, a woman hard as nails
To counter Booz-Allen, Nairobi and other fractures
She tightened financial controls and all those structures
And computer systems that brought some wails...

The second female ExDir was Venneman, Ann,
Everyone was happy for another woman.
But she saw Unicef as an agricultural firm
And so was not extended a second term,
Sadly, after only five years, she had but a single fan.

Our sixth and oldest ExDir was Tony Lake,
He certainly did not want Unicef to forsake,
Its previous policies and programs and decided to take,
The difficult avenue of equity, so as to make
Child development, and the cycle of poverty to break.

Which brings us to the seventh and current Henrietta Fore.
In her first year she brought to the 13th floor,
New ideas, approaches and XUNICEFERS galore.
Her concerns for adolescents, private sector and more,
May yet shake up the Organization from its core.

Most XUNICEFers and staff may not recall
But we also had two interim EXDIRS in all
Earlier, Mr. E J R Heyward, better known as Dick
As well as Sir Richard Jolly, the UK Govt pick
Short periods they served, but their impacts were not small
As both were intellectually impressive and oh so tall

Contributed by Fouad Kronfol

The SDGs

SDGs or STDs

Overheard at a Singapore event for business leaders titled “Will Business drive the SDGs¨
"99 percent of businesses think the SDGs are a type of sexually transmitted disease."

- Assaad Razzouk

Pineapple-Apple-Pen-Paper

In one the its endless attempts to ‘popularize’ the SDGs, the UN struck up a partnership with Japanese comedian Kazuhito Kosaka to produce what one critic calls the “Arguably the most irritating, nonsensical viral video in the history of the internet.” Not satisfied with the straightforward title Pineapple-Apple-Pen-Paper, the UN media folks titled it - what else - Public-Private-Action-for-Partnership and gave it the acronym PPAP. Crazy as it seems, thousands viewed it, though what they understood from it is anyone’s guess. Mission accomplished.

Education - or lack of

A New Technological Miracle...

Just announced, the new Built-in Orderly Organized Knowledge device, henceforth known as the B.O.O.K. It's a revolutionary breakthrough in technology; no wire, no electric circuits, no batteries, nothing to be connected or switched on !!!

It is so easy to use even a child or a technologically-challenged senior can operate it. Just lift its cover.Compact and portable, it can be used anywhere- even sitting in an armchair by the fireplace- yet it is powerful enough to hold as much information as a CD-ROM disk.

Here's how it works: each BOOK is constructed of sequentially numbered sheets of paper called "pages" (recyclable), each page is capable of holding thousands of bits of information. These pages are locked together with a custom-fit device called a "binder" which keeps the sheets in their correct sequence. By using both sides of each sheet, manufacturers are able to cut costs in half. Each sheet is scanned optically by the user, registering information directly into one's brain. A flick of the finger takes you to the next sheet. The BOOK may be taken up at any time and used everywhere by merely opening it. The "browse" feature allows you to move instantly to any sheet, and move forward or backward as you wish, as many times as you want. Most BOOKs

come with an "index" feature which pinpoints the exact location of any selected information for instant retrieval.

An optional "Bookmark" accessory allows you to open the BOOK to the exact place you left it in a previous session, even if the BOOK has been closed. Bookmarks fit universal design standards; thus a single Bookmark can be used in BOOKs by various manufacturers.

Portable, durable and affordable, the BOOK is the entertainment wave of the future, and many titles are expected soon, due to the dramatic surge in popularity of its programming tools, the Portable Erasable Nib Cryptic Intercommunication Language Stylus, also known as P.E.N.C.I.L.S.

Contributed by Fouad Kronfol

(UNICEF) History

Perhaps as seen from the view of our younger colleagues, hearing ‘advice’ from us old-timers.



Well yes, as a matter of fact we were.

- contributed by Sheldon Shaffer via David Parker

Roman Numerals

Theodore "Dutch" Van Kirk was the navigator on the 'Enola Gay' when it dropped the bomb at Hiroshima, Japan and is the last surviving member of the crew.

Dutch was asked to speak at a grammar school and the young teacher introduced him by saying the speaker was a Veteran of World War Eleven (as in WWII) . Dutch stood up and walked out of the school without saying a word.

End of Story. GOD HELP US!

- Contributed by Fouad Kronfol

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