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METHODS OF PLANNING FOR THE NEEDS OF CHILDREN AND YOUTH

SUMMARY

of

the Paper prepared by Prof. H.W. Singer*

Planning for children and youth

1. Even though plans are ostensibly concerned with production of commodities and services, foreign exchange, employment, taxes and expenditures, industrialization, etc. - which are merely policy instruments, - the ultimate target of all planning is a better life for the people of a country. However, in the reports and treatises on planning, the objective of planning, namely, a better life, is generally submerged whereas the policy techniques or instruments are highlighted; consequently, planning recommendations derived from them lack the proper perspective. Thus, by relating planning to the needs and conditions of people, which necessarily belong to different age-groups, we are merely restoring planning from the upside-down position in which it is too often presented.

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2. In the poorer countries, children and young people up to, say 18 or 19 years, constitute about 50 per cent of all people, and at least one-quarter of all resources of a country are in any case, planning or no planning, directed toward their improvement. To neglect these young and preoccupy oneself with instruments constituting perhaps five to eight per cent of total resources is to neglect the purpose of the whole operation of planning.

3. Planning is specially concerned with investment - which is future consumption, future welfare; by the same token, planners should also be concerned with children, for these also, as much as investment, point to the future. Planning for development is concerned not only with growth, but with change - change from old ways to new ways. It is natural that it is to children and young that we must look to be primary agents of such changes. Preparing for change, therefore, means primarily preparing the children and the young. Thus, the planner should be interested in the young not only as the objectives of his endeavours but also as policy instruments (human investment) - the agents of necessary change. The concern of planners is not merely production but rather the capacity to produce which is inherent in people and in that sense human investment cannot be labelled as unproductive.

4. People are not only the purpose and end of all planning, but they are also instruments by which the end can be achieved. Better health, better education, better food, better housing, greater security, etc. are all elements and aspects of the better life - but at the same time the healthier man, the better educated, fed, housed man, the more secure man also usually is the better producer, i.e. better able to contribute to further betterments. This "feedback effect" or "cumulative process" is an essential part of development planning.

5. In the development process, children are a vital element, but in fact and policy formulation, they are vulnerable and inarticulate. The level of living of children may be surmised to be below the national average in the poorer countries, since almost by definition most children are members of large families where per capita incomes evidently tend to be below average. Thus, the planner in addition to all other reasons already given, has also simple, but compelling reason to devote special attention to children and youth.

Steps required relating to planning for children and youth

6. (a) The first essential step is to gain a picture of the main orders of magnitude such as the number of children, their age distribution, places of dwelling, education, special problems, etc.
- (b) The second step is to assess their present condition, their level of living, state of nutrition, health, housing, education and training, etc.

(c) Thirdly,

- (c) Thirdly, planners will have to form ideas of where the major problems and troubles lie. The identification of problem areas, of uneven development, of specific deficiencies in relation to general development and available resources, is a vital step in applying the planning process to the conditions of children and people.
- (d) One special problem is the neglect of measures in which the best approach is by the combined use of instruments in different sectors, such as health, education, nutrition, etc. This is apparent when we consider, for example, the problems of the pre-school child, the unemployed school leaver, etc. which do not fall within the purview of any single traditional sector.
- (e) In under-developed countries often the genuine surplus of current consumption which can be diverted to future provision without harmful effects on productivity is often very limited. Thus, the planner has to compromise between the claims of the present and the claims of the future all the time. Children are of the present and the future and planning for them should cover a long time-horizon. But, yet, they would be the first to suffer if the present were penalized for the sake of the future.
- (f) The whole point of planning lies in its implementation which depends ultimately and essentially upon the actions of the people. The people have to be persuaded to accept and adopt new ways. In the first place, concern for the welfare and future for their children can be a very powerful motive for people in the acceptance of change. In the second place, it is often the young who are the ones ready to accept change and innovation.

7. The development of children cuts across typical sectoral lines. Health, education and social welfare programmes all affect the needs of children. The importance of the planning approach, therefore, lies in that the various actions affecting the condition and development of children are being weighted and decided upon simultaneously and in relation to each other.

Approaches to planning for children and youth

8. There are two approaches to this question. One is to treat it as an individual planning sector or to handle different aspects of planning through different sectors. The other is to approach children directly or through measures affecting the entire family and community.

9. The appropriate approach would appear to be functioning of programmes through respective sectors, and planning and analysis of programmes on a unified level, utilizing representatives of the sectoral agencies somewhere in the planning process. Toward this end, it is important to have some official or extra-governmental means of evolving a unified approach toward children at the planning and evaluation levels.

10. Children form an important part of the family, "nucleus" or "extended", and it is through the family that the strongest impact is made on a child. Any development plan aimed at children should be carried out through the family.

11. In operational terms, it would be most desirable to have a co-ordinating organ that could recommend the best ways to serve the needs of children, evaluate the effectiveness of policies toward children in regard to the future development of the nation and call attention to areas of concern which are neglected by individual sectoral programmes.