

### **III. Volunteer Training: The UNICEF Program**

UNICEF Canada is a voluntary organization whose main purpose is fund raising to support UNICEF projects in the developing world. Through the fund-raising efforts of 36,000 adult volunteers and 1,000,000 school children across Canada, and through donations which are matched by grants from the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) and/or provincial governments, the lives of hundreds of thousands of children are improved. Through its combination of fund raising and matched grants, in 1982/83, the Canadian UNICEF Committee was able to support 32 projects with a total budget of over \$8 million.

UNICEF succeeds or fails on the basis of its volunteer support. It is volunteers who take the message of global interdependence to the schools and who carry out the school program; it is volunteers who sell greeting cards; and it is volunteers who carry UNICEF coin boxes on Hallowe'en night during their trick-or-treat festivities. Volunteers in national, provincial and local committees not only mobilize the volunteer resources for all our fund-raising campaigns but also direct and encourage growth and expansion of the programs of UNICEF Canada.

Without this broadly based volunteer network there would be no UNICEF Canada. It is therefore not surprising that UNICEF Canada has a volunteer support program. The Volunteer Services Committee, whose chairman is a member of the Executive Committee, and whose past chairman is a member of the Board of Directors, advises the Canadian UNICEF Committee on the programs needed to encourage growth and development of the volunteer resource. The Volunteer Services Program has an operating budget, a full-time co-ordinator, and secretarial support and works with the UNICEF provincial committees to meet their needs for the recruitment, placement, orientation and training of volunteers.

While recent trends indicate that growing numbers of volunteers have professional skills, it is still necessary for voluntary organizations to identify and address the gaps between their needs and the skills of the volunteer labour force, a particularly sensitive and difficult task. To overcome some of these difficulties, UNICEF Canada uses a subjective survey to identify the areas where training programs are needed. Depending on the results of the survey, these programs can deal with a skill as basic as "conducting an effective meeting" or as complex as leadership development.

#### **Annual Program Seminar**

Volunteer training is given priority throughout the UNICEF Canada organization. At the national level an annual Program Seminar is held to train volunteer leaders from each province. The training emphasizes the leadership skills required to carry out effective programs and program seminars serve as a national forum for "networking" and the sharing of regional problems and information among provincial committees.

However, the major purpose of the National Program Seminars is to review the strengths and weaknesses of UNICEF Canada's fund-raising campaigns and, based on this review, to expand and strengthen programs for the future. It is of vital

importance, therefore, that delegates from each provincial committee participate and that they are prepared to assume leadership responsibilities within their own provincial UNICEF committees when they return home.

The three-day training seminars are demanding and delegates are kept busy with workshops, discussion groups, program seminars and presentations by keynote speakers from dawn (we begin at 8:30 a.m. sharp) to dusk (training events often do not conclude until 9:30-10:30 p.m.). Because the provincial UNICEF delegates are now asking for more opportunities to share experiences and resources among themselves (networking) consideration is being given to adding roundtable breakfast discussion groups each morning. This will mean delegates begin work at 7:00 a.m. each day. The hectic and demanding pace is welcomed by both the provincial and national volunteers who believe in strengthening the volunteer skills required for building effective fund-raising programs.

### **Regional Training**

Regional volunteer training events are scheduled throughout the year. The Co-ordinator of Volunteer Services works in close co-operation with provincial committees to identify and meet the training needs of regional volunteers. The training focus is often specific and unique, reflecting regional characteristics. An example: how to start a local committee in a rural community which has had little contact with UNICEF activities. Areas addressed would include identifying community contacts, starting a committee and building a volunteer team. The regional seminars, as the name suggests, are tailored to meet the training needs of a specific volunteer group. They can be designed to address the training needs of one provincial UNICEF committee or a specific region, for example, all Atlantic UNICEF committees. The common emphasis in all regional seminars is “hands-on” workshops.

As noted, volunteer participation begins in the early planning stages of all training programs. The provincial committee (or committees) uses a training-needs survey prepared by the Volunteer Services Program, to identify the skill gaps they wish to see addressed. Emphasis is on volunteer participation throughout all stages of planning and volunteers assist with decisions on the agenda, resources, facilities, dates and delegate selection. Often a skills exchange format is incorporated into the training seminar—delegates lead workshops dealing with areas in which they are highly skilled.

Many of the provincial UNICEF committees, through their own Volunteer Services Committees, address the training needs of local volunteers. The national office assists by providing resource materials. The training focus is often on building the fund-raising campaigns.

Training workshops which are organized and conducted by the provincial UNICEF committees for local volunteers are held throughout each province with the designated “trainers” going to the local groups. Each provincial committee has its own design methods and procedures. Each UNICEF training event — national seminar, regional seminar, local workshop — is seen as an important component in the overall skill-development program.

Because UNICEF Canada is very aware of its financial responsibilities to the many Canadians who support its campaigns, its administrative costs are not allowed to exceed 18 per cent of revenues generated and are often held below that figure through careful consideration by the Executive Committee. Thus budgeting for training can be tight at times and is always a no-frills expenditure. The co-operation and participation of provincial committees makes it possible to develop training events at a reasonable cost.

### **Looking Ahead**

There is still considerable room for growth and development of our training programs. The training needs of senior-level volunteers, for example, require more attention. We are also always aware of the need to balance centralized and decentralized training to ensure both co-ordinated, and far-reaching training programs.

UNICEF Canada's belief in the strength, abilities and potential of its volunteer resource lies behind all of its volunteer programs as well as its campaign slogan, "Get Involved With UNICEF . . . You'll Be In Good Company"

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