



## TOWARDS A SUSTAINABLE SOCIAL POLICY\*

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## I. THE CONTEXT FOR SOCIAL POLICY AT THE TURN OF THE CENTURY

In the years ahead, social policies will continue to be framed by the prospects of a dramatic worsening of the social situation in the world.

Africa will have 300 million additional poor. Latin America, one of the most developed and urbanized developing regions, will have half of its urban population below the poverty line. The economy of the industrialized countries will remain under the constant menace of a world-wide financial crisis due to the highly speculative content of economic transactions in the recent past. The pressure to alleviate the unrest among its own impoverished urban masses, is likely to leave the North little political margin to significantly assist the South.

Three hundred consortiums --in control of a quarter of the global productive assets as well as of the industries producing goods and services-- will tend to integrate and homogenize the world, conflicting with local cultures. However, the new technologies and the free market will effectively exclude from modern work and consumption roughly two thirds of the world population. The global workplace will have an estimated one billion excess workers.

In an open world economy, most of the national states of developing countries will be deprived of resources and tools, unable to promote an independent national development nor to provide enough social security to sustain citizenship and democracy. National societies and local communities will be subject to disintegration forces. The World Bank's 1990 World Development Report foresees urban poverty as "the most significant and politically explosive problem in the next century", something that will take forms still unknown in the 17 megacities located in the developing world.

### "Poverty Alleviation" and "Human Development"

Currently there is much rhetoric about *poverty alleviation*. However, if it means to merely target the same resources earmarked for social policies to the extremely poor, poverty will continue to grow. As a matter of fact, the newly opened lines of lending for social policies are insufficient to insure the achievement of the internationally agreed goals (together with external aid, those resources do not exceed 5% of the shrinking budgets for social sectors in the developing world). Besides, they are tightening the foreign debt's rope. At the same time, a large share of the responsibility for providing basic social services is being passed to inexperienced local governments or to the needy groups themselves.

In the realm of ideas, the context is marked by the emergence of the new development paradigm put forward by the UN --*Human Development*--, which attempts to set in motion a process equivalent to that initiated in the 50s with the paradigm of Economic Development. Its main thrust is investing in the people to widen the range of people's choices. However, it remains unclear who will assume such a task. The internationalization of the economies as well as the worldwide weakening of progressive political forces, make it unlikely that an alliance among native political forces and industrialists will commit to such paradigm, as they did once with Economic Development. Besides, the globalization process debilitates

the national State, the legitimacy of the political intelligentsia (unable to control the national economy) and the significance of a *national* capitalist class.

The current globalization process imposes technologies based on information and knowledge, thus giving renewed relevance to the quality of human resources. However, under the command of world capital, those technologies will only integrate a third of the world population in its modern, global pole. Therefore, and being a top-down proposal, the Human Development paradigm claims that only a worldwide alliance assuming the role of a world State --an alliance among reformed global governance institutions and national governments-- could support the long-term policies required. But such an alliance is still out of sight. In any case, the philosophical basis of the Human Development paradigm is a meaningful contribution, likely to last and influence social policies all over the world.

## **II. TOWARDS A SOCIAL POLICY THAT EFFECTIVELY TACKLES POVERTY**

The preceding contextual projections cannot be taken as an inevitable evolution. The globalization process is a contradictory one, and its unfolding can produce counterbalancing forces. New theories can fade away without ever becoming paradigmatic, as happened with Basic Human Needs in the 80s.

However, even if the most optimistic estimates of growth for the industrialized world were obtained, they would not trickle-down enough resources to significantly change the bleak picture of increasing polarization in the world. On the other hand, except for some well-known and too-late-to-replicate Asian exceptions, the modern sectors of developing nations are expected to care more for the whereabouts of the world market than for the needs of their societies.

With these grim prospects and with the Human Development paradigm in mind, *it seems wise to work with the hypothesis that the wellbeing of the deprived majorities will mainly depend on their own capacities and initiatives. Therefore, all resources channeled towards those sectors should be efficiently used to enhance those capacities and widen their options, which means thinking beyond sheer survival.* Education plays here a key role in building those capacities and widening those options.

### **Addressing the Economy with a Developmental Perspective**

For many societies or for large sectors of them, it would be sound investing in another kind of development, oriented by an enlarged reproduction of life rather than of capital, based on a bottom-up rather than a top-down approach. As neither the developing nations' own private capital nor the aid from the North could provide for the satisfaction of the basic needs of all, *it is imperative to pool the resources spent under the heading of "social policy", because they are the main non-profit-oriented source.*

This pool of resources should be seen not merely as a means to alleviate poverty but as *the main available source of investment to build a third economic pole, a self-sustained popular economy*, capable of catering for the basic needs of the majorities and contributing at the same time to national development in interaction with the capitalist and the public economies.

This requires a relative self-centering and networking of those economic agents structurally excluded from the modern economy by the current globalization process. As it stands now, in and by themselves, those agents make an inorganic aggregation, poorly articulated, unnoticed or undervalued by official statistics, used as a mass for maneuvers by politicians.

The term "informal sector" has been used to describe this aggregation, as a negation of what prevails (the "formal"), rather than as a recognition of the possibilities of a different economic logic. It is imperative to progress from this "informal sector" vision to an alternative view of a *popular economy*, if poverty is to be eradicated (see APPENDIX A).

It would be naive to ask what prevents socially sensitive agencies' interventions from attacking the causes (economic, social and political) of inequity and deprivation instead of placating the symptoms (alleviating poverty). Instead, more specific questions must be posed:

- Can these agencies do better in order to obtain self-sustainable improvements in the quality of life of those excluded by the new globalization dynamics?
- Can they make a more efficient use of scarce resources to achieve the decade goals while contributing to the take-off of an integral development process?
- If that were the case, what paradigm should guide their joint policies?
- What could be the specific contribution of a regional-popular-economy approach for such purpose?

## **Seven Imperatives for Social Policy**

**1. The need to obtain greater efficiency and synergy in the long-term use of increasingly scarce resources.** The unprecedented scale of social deprivation expected by the end of the millennium, and the ensuing decision of going to scale (universal coverage) require new ways of dealing with social policies. The geographic concentration of poverty in deteriorating rural areas as well as in large metropolises makes it the more urgent and feasible to have a long-term strategy integrating all geographic (rural, urban) and sectoral interventions (health, education, basic urban services, environment, gender) with a time horizon of no less than twenty years.<sup>12</sup>

**2. The need to guard the UN Human Development proposal against economicism.** The discourse on human capital can provide coverage to diverse and even incompatible

policy approaches, including a "poverty alleviation" policy. *it is imperative to pool the resources spent under the heading of "social policy", because they are the main non-profit-oriented source.*

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This requires a relative self-centering and networking of those economic agents structurally excluded from the modern economy by the current globalization process. A strong participation of socially sensitive agencies can help shape the new paradigm as an effective bottom-up approach to development, in the same way that structural adjustment policies were influenced by the proposal of an "adjustment with a human face". An economist bias will tend to privilege the efficient delivery of services to targeted populations, without considering its political and cultural implications. NGO interventions, no matter how flexible and cost-effective, should not substitute the agencies' preference for efficient democratic government procedures to cope with social problems. Besides, an economist approach is self-defeating, as long as it does not take into consideration the long-run political conditions of public policy's sustainability.

**3. The need to guarantee the sustainability of social policies as a tool for development.** The lack of a political will by industrialized nations to help develop the rest of the world, as well as the instability of private investments, make an enlarged sustainability all the more necessary (see APPENDIX B). Such sustainability relates to several aspects:

**a. Continuity in the stream of economic resources.** In a way, this is why development banks require that services be paid: to recover the cost of public investments, thereby maintaining a revolving fund. But, by itself, that approach to the social problem would be one-sided. How are the poor and indigent masses going to pay? It is now usual, for instance, to demand from the poor free labor to construct service facilities. But this cannot cover future recurrent costs. People need an income. So, it has become customary to add some "income generating activities" to the basic services programmes. However, this is done in an inefficient way. It is necessary to move from sheer individual or family survival to a process of collective development. At a macro level, this requires policies that enable and promote income-generation as well as other procurement activities (i.e. self-managed non market services), by nurturing or setting in motion collective processes of enlarged reproduction of life.

**b. Continuity in the drive of all the participating agents and beneficiaries.** This is imperative if a self-sustained process of *enlarged* reproduction of life is to be put in motion. For example, people's inclination to engage in life-long education depends on their expectations about the positive results of such an investment of the family's

energy. And the renown pragmatism of the poor requires those expectations to be based not on promises but on their own successful experiences. Therefore, it is not enough to provide access to services; it is necessary to ensure that access immediately contributes to self-reliance and nurtures the motivation of the beneficiaries. *This requires an explicit connection between social policy and everyday economic life. It is imperative to pool the resources spent under the heading of "social policy", because they are the main non-profit-oriented source.*

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**c. Use of the market mechanism** . The motivation to participate on behalf of the community is not easy to sustain, even if it indirectly contributes to improve everyone's life. Usually, collective motivation requires investing significant resources and energies in rising and sustaining social conscience. Ways must be found to *complement* voluntary-based processes with properly regulated market mechanisms based on competition and self-interest and already sustained by a worldwide system.

**d. Research and communication**. To be dynamic and self-propelling, social policy requires systematic monitoring and dissemination of experiments, in order to identify replicable or adaptable innovations. This implies a continuous action-oriented comparative research accompanying all relevant processes, whether grassroots organizations, NGO, governments or socially sensitive agencies are involved. This allows to draw lessons and systematize useful knowledge for guiding future policy-making and programme design. That knowledge needs to be systematically reverted to all organizations and communities involved in similar activities. Learning from others' experiences also requires a specific research effort as well as horizontal communication and dialogue among the different agencies' programmes.

**e. Going to scale.** The challenge of "going to scale" has injected major expectations among local NGOs and community initiatives. But this requires: (1) a concerted effort by international agencies; (2) a sustained intervention by both national and local governments; (3) the involvement of national and regional societies, far beyond small local communities, with the participation of embracing social movements and networks. *Inasmuch as all these requirements have political implications, an increase in the level of inter-institutional conflicts should be expected, making it more complex to attain an endogenous sustainability.*

**f. Identification of and focus on key networks and processes.** The apothegm "basic services for all" calls, in an apparent contradiction in terms, for a selective policy. The common proposal is to start with the most deprived individuals or families (wherever they are) and proceed upwards, until all those that have no access to services are covered. However, in many cases, this can be inefficient or simply not feasible, can disintegrate urban communities, and create dependency on the part of those receiving the services. Given the insufficiency of resources, *universal coverage requires that the very process of social policy implementation creates additional resources for self-reliance*, through cascade and demonstration effects. Instead of dispersing resources in isolated individuals or in scattered settlements, it may be wise to work with heterogeneous, organic units. In some regions it would even be efficient to start with the most developed agglomerations, where we may find both the largest masses of poor and the most dynamic networking among social sectors and activities, allowing thus a more dramatic and cost-effective impact on national indicators. *Those networks of communities most capable to take-off and contribute to solve other communities' problems by creating and sharing human and financial resources, should be given priority. At the same time, within each chosen social network, it will be advisable to work with all the people in an integrative way* (this does not require delivering public services to all, but involving all around the common interest).

**g. A systemic approach.** This type of approach provides a synergy-generating framework, going from local or sectoral isolated projects to more macro, self-sustained structure-building policies.<sup>3</sup> However, to avoid a mere juxtaposition of projects or sectoral interventions in a given space, a conception of integrative regional development is needed. Moreover, regional development requires taking into account trends in global and national markets and policies. Given the specific advocacy/professional vocation of the different social agencies, it is likely that they will keep a division of labor and complement each other. However, the socially sensitive agencies need a socio-economic proposal of their own, without which they may be trapped by economist visions and objectives.<sup>4</sup> A way to proceed could be to adopt the Human Development framework put forward by the UNDP, specifying it for the fields in which each agency is actually intervening. Only with their own conception of development, socially sensitive agencies can have a meaningful dialogue with agencies such as the World Bank which, in turn, emphasizes economic systems' efficiency.

**4. The need to work with different levels of social aggregation.** There must be a generalized drive to achieve a structural change of the social situation, if local or sectoral improvements are to be both efficient and sustainable. Socially sensitive agencies usually advocate for the interests of those groups deprived by the "natural" functioning of markets and political systems. Advocating for a special interest always means confronting other interests. But the most enduring way to defend the interest of the majorities is by modifying the ampler structures that produce and reproduce their situation, which means working with macrostructures in order to effectively target specific groups.

This is in fact what UNICEF did when it decided to include mothers as part of its children's programmes, and later recognized women's own legitimate interest. A policy for children, with children and by children, would be ineffective. The family structure, where children belong, *has* to be tackled. Family values and situations, in turn, cannot be separated from the primary community of which they are part. Thus, communities must be taken as the basic units of intervention. Community structures certainly allow a higher level of concreteness and efficacy than do aggregates of isolated individuals. Inasmuch as communities are part of local or national societies, these must also be brought to bear if a sustained structural transformation is purported.<sup>5</sup>

**5. The need to consider the goals of the community as well as those of the agencies involved.** When *participation and empowerment* are mentioned, the minimal unit is a community of some sort. But the community is not a homogeneous entity: it includes a complex array of organizations, levels of government and social agents. The difficulty in maintaining communities "mobilized" around a certain goal is in part the consequence of seeing them as a homogeneous force pushing for one single purpose. When a community is convened to participate, its boundaries (who is in and who is out of it) are usually set on the basis of a limited and specific purpose, without due consideration to ethnic, family or cultural -purpose-less- affinities. However, the rationale of most existing communities is not instrumental but practical (conviviality, value-sharing, etc.). In social participation policy it is usually expected that the members of a community act collectively according to an instrumental rationality, to achieve certain results. Such collective behavior can be promoted by the agency, but the actual goals and strategies should be owned by the community. This might conflict with an agency's predetermined goals. The solution to this conflict is not having the agency work for the community, because that simply is not true (as shown by the existence of several constituencies for every agency: donors, governments, beneficiaries). It is better to openly unfold the objectives of each institution - whether agency, government, or grassroots organization- and reach a negotiated agreement to work together, taking into consideration each other's goals.

**6. The need to consider pre-existing community values and relations to strengthen self-reliance.** A voluntary and highly motivated participation by an autonomous community is a must when service delivery goes together with empowerment. However, when life is on the edge of survival, participation may appear to be a highly risky venture. In the midst of a catastrophe, there is a tendency to see the "community" as a cluster of starving human beings; there seems to be no time left to discriminate beyond the needed and the rest, nor



time to think about the integration and development of the community itself. And yet, *merely targeting people by levels or kinds of needs and trying to organize them in order to receive (or even to produce) the needed services will only "disorganize" them in the long run, keeping them dependent on further external interventions.* This becomes even more serious when the critical situation lasts for a long time, as is the case of the present economic crisis.

*Empowerment* supposes building on self-sustained human capital and democratic collective decision-making. This in turn requires a proper consideration of preexisting cultural traits and institutions: *beyond sheer necessity there is a symbolic life to be taken into account, including values and other complex determinants of behavior and social relations.* Needed people cannot be organized for long in supply lines, while the more affluent ones observe, without hampering their community relations. Ideally, both parts - needed and affluent- must be convinced by both rhetoric and coherent actions that there is a better-for-all way for the whole community. *Here, democratic procedures gain relevance over bureaucratic top-down processes.* This long-term approach, although time-demanding, reduces the risk of inadvertently reinforcing pre-existing power structures to insure delivery, which usually helps to reproduce the very same causes that generate the problems.

### **7. The need to overcome the artificial division of labor between social and economic policies and between agencies through the joint promotion of a popular economy.**

Just as the World Bank is shaping social policies from an economic standpoint, socially sensitive agencies should shape economic policies, if a non-dependent sustainability of social policies is at stake. An integral development approach with a popular economy perspective could be an avenue in that direction. Such an approach should consider the following guidelines:

(a) Place the development of a third pole (the popular economy) at the center of attention of economic policy-makers (see Appendix B);

(b) Take into consideration the *productive* side of "social" services in a double sense:

-see the systematic production and reproduction of services as part of the popular economy, thus overcoming the artificial separation of "social" vs. "economic" activities;

-consider services not only as means of consumption but also as direct inputs (water, sewage, energy, housing, transportation systems, etc.) or conditions for production activities (health, nutrition, education).

(c) Systematize the varied and rich experience accumulated by social agencies in the economic realm. That experience is lost of sight when interpreted as "social" (as opposed to economic) because of a wrong conception. There is a need to reinterpret that well of experience from a more macrosocial and anthropological

approach, as apposed to microsocial, project-oriented approaches. On that basis, it is necessary to produce appropriate conceptual frameworks and methodological guidelines, not in the form of detailed operation manuals but rather as broad methodologies to orient new general procedures.

(d) Adopt the Human Development framework and develop, within it, a strategy for community-based development, outlining guidelines to promote the development of the popular economy as a sustainable basis for Human Development.

(e) Give more consideration to the redistributive effects of fiscal and credit public policies at local and higher levels, and not only to the items earmarked to specific projects.

(f) Develop a strong, empirically founded philosophical and methodological framework, and build upon concrete cases of cooperation along these lines with other economic and social agencies.

## APPENDIX A: ON THE URBAN POPULAR ECONOMY

### A. The "informal-sector" approach

This is an ill-informed empiricist approach. Taking the "formal" economic logic as the main (and only) parameter, what does not fit within this parameter is judged as "informal" (that is, *not* formal), negating thus the very possibility of a radically *different* economic logic.

The "informal sector" is usually described by the juxtaposition of diverse criteria: illegal economic activities; small establishments; low capital/labor ratio; low labor productivity; independent labor; low income; street trading; handicrafts; domestic service; low or non-existent accumulation; prevailing kinship or other pre-modern relationships, such as master-apprentice; solidarity values.

The resulting collection turns out to be an ad-hoc conglomerate that does not follow any specific "logic". A complementing idea is that these agents are dominated by the logic of the "formal"/ modern economy --private or public-- but participate in its interstices, expanding or contracting to compensate the movement of the modern sector.

All these criteria are commonly applied to individual laborers or to small enterprises that participate independently in the market. Domestic non-mercantile labor is excluded. Likewise, the salaried workers of "modern" enterprises --private or public--, regardless of income, are not seen as part of the informal sector because they operate under the immediate direction of employers who represent the logic of private profit or state power.

Even with these exclusions, in most developing nations that aggregate accounts for at least one half of employment and for a significant part of national product. In any case, it can no longer be thought of as an ephemeral phenomenon.

This empirical outlook of the informal economy has given rise to four approaches as to what to do with it:

a. The *neo-liberal approach* proposes to put an end to regulations that would inhibit the initiative of these economic agents. The dismantling of the legal system that pretended to control the free private initiative, would be a sufficient condition for these agents to emerge from informality.

b. The *evolutionist approach*, present in the most diverse government, NGO, and development bank programmes, is based on an evolutionist concept of modern enterprise. Such an evolution, starting from thousands of individual or family initiatives, would generate --by selection through competition--, hundreds of modern medium sized enterprises and tenfold large enterprises. This approach attempts to accelerate that evolution by intervening to increase efficiency by injecting resources from "above" to selected units of this sector (mainly credit and training).

c. The *solidarian approach*, associated mainly with religious groups and advocacy NGOs. It sees poor families' and communities' survival strategies as the cultural ground to horizontally extend reciprocity and solidarity values incarnated in economic institutions such as voluntary labor or mutual aid. This approach assumes the need to counteract the intrusion of the market as well as of political power in the domestic realm.

## **B. The "popular economy" approach**

This approach purports a development based on the technological, economic and communicative intermingling of economic activities performed by direct laborers (dependent or independent, precarious or modern, owners or not, manual or intellectual). This approach does not propose merely extending present popular values and practices, disconnecting those activities from the capitalist market, or overcoming them through their full conversion into capitalism. It is an open proposal in that it does not anticipate what specific activities, relationships, or values, will constitute the popular economy. The only characteristic that should be maintained and developed at a collective level is the centrality of human capital and its rationale, oriented towards the reproduction of life. An excluding option between society and State is also rejected, because building a popular economic sub-system requires working in their interface.

One objective is to build a strong organic solidarity among grassroots economic activities. Promoting interdependence between domestic units as well as between communities, materialized in collective regulatory mechanisms or dynamic exchange networks, will create the economic foundations for new institutions and collective identities.

The central elements of a popular economy are domestic economies --unipersonal, families, communities, cooperatives-- whose immediate rationale is the utilization of its labor force towards the transgenerational reproduction of its members' biological and cultural life.

The resources of a domestic economy include not only the possible display of human energy and its intangible elements --skills, abilities, and technical and organizational knowledge-- but also fixed assets: land, dwellings, instruments and installations for production or trade as well as durable consumer goods. At the level of the community, domestic economies include collective resources, such as land for common use, physical infrastructure, service centers and networks, corporate and social organizations in general, etc.

As opposed to a capitalist economy, whose rationale is private capital accumulation, *the rationale of the popular economy is the enlarged reproduction of the life of its members*. Considering the tendencies to structurally exclude a significant part of human capital, the possibility of building that sub-system is presently enhanced. *From the perspective of the popular economy, human capital is not seen as another input that can be used or let aside,*

*but as inseparable from the person, from the domestic unit and, by extension, from the community. Therefore, the efficient development of communities or societies includes the improvement of the quality of life of its members both as a means and as an end.*

The growth and qualitative change of existing popular economic activities requires a founding and sustained effort to, among others:

- a) reorganize its relations, behaviors and expectations. This cultural change should have an intensity equivalent to that of the changes currently experienced by capitalist firms and State administrations all over the world;
- b) reach more equitable exchange relations with the other economic sub-systems: the capitalist economy and the public economy;
- c) add a substantial amount of those inputs that are externally produced and that limit its development: land and basic services, credit, technologies and educational resources.

To be dynamic, a popular economy must include complementary social, organizational and technological elements. For example, it must incorporate the national universities and their technological centers, NGOs, social movements (neighborhood, corporative, youth, women's, environmental, secular cultural, religious, etc.). Therefore, it must incorporate not only subsistence but also cultural and scientific exchange networks.

A popular economy encompass the generation and mobilization of resources through conscience rising -- the energy of youth to teach or to vaccinate, the cooperation of neighbors to clean up the environment--. This requires a cultural struggle to make personal or group motivations compatible with transcendent community and societal objectives. However, since it is not possible to substitute the market completely, a popular economy must seek ways for efficient and properly regulated mercantile action, in line with its goals.

Total autonomy is impossible and undesirable. Moreover, a degree of autonomy must be articulated with certain heteronomy resulting from the global capitalist system. In order to reinforce this *relative* autonomy --which implies a higher degree control over the conditions of reproduction of the popular sectors' life--, it is necessary to overcome immediacy and fragmentation. This requires reinforcing community and social networks to successfully overcome common economic problems, to exercise a unified economic force in the market, and to have a unified presence in the political system in order to democratically influence public policies.

## **APPENDIX B: ON SUSTAINABILITY**

**Sustainability:** this is a requirement in the case of those policies which, **in order to have long-lasting effects**, must be pursued in a stable, permanent (although not necessarily always the same) way. It is specially required when public policy sustainability is imperative for achieving **structural change** (e.g.: economic, institutional, cultural) in order to minimize

the need of further public policy interventions. Without sustainability there may be a one-shot dramatic improvement in relevant indicators, but natural and social processes may by themselves turn the situation back again (i.e. functional illiteracy, school drop-out and repetition, vocational training without working possibilities) if the same or follow-up policies are not continuously pursued. Although much has been said about it, it is not clear whether state or private (including NGOs) interventions are better suited for sustainability. The lack of government continuity, due to electoral and other political processes, usually conspire against state supported sustainability; dependency on external funding conspires against NGO-supported sustainability. There are basically three types of social policy sustainability:

**dependent sustainability:** when the continuity and rational development of the policy depends on the will or on the influx of resources by agents other than those directly involved and interested in their design, implementation and assessment, including the direct beneficiaries.

**endogenous sustainability:** when the continuity and rational development of the policy depends mainly on the renewed will and resources of those agents with a real interest in those policies.

**enlarged sustainability:** when the very same effects of the policy provide increasing resources, reduce the burden of maintaining the policy or allow a quantitative expansion or a qualitative improvement (e.g: better human resources that in turn are able to contribute to the development of more and even better human resources; investment to generate employment that produces enough income to accelerate further investment to generate further employment; organization to obtain a given service that, if successful, generates new demands and higher levels of organization).

**A non-sustainable policy** is one that by its own effects erodes the very bases of its continuity, by destroying needed resources and by weakening the will of those involved (eg: investments in production that degrade the non reproducible natural resources needed to sustain production; investments in providing a service that, once satisfied at a certain level, halt the will to continue investing in the same line; investments in training human resources that exceed the needs of the economy so as to reduce prospected salaries and hence the motivation to pursue that kind of education).

## NOTES

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1. UNICEF emerged as an institution to provide relief in short-term localized emergencies. Later it develop programmes directed towards structural problems at a world scale. When confronting the adjustment process consequences, these were expected to last for a

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limited, transitional period. However, now we are dealing with a more permanent catastrophe: the present economic crisis, whose resolution requires a conceptual and political framework oriented towards long-term development.

2. Through access to UBS the urban poor are supposed to directly improve their everyday lives: drinking water, sewage... But these are not the only services whose provision to the urban poor is promoted by UNICEF: medical services, basic academic and survival skills education services... They should all be embraced in a complex of services for the urban poor, allowing their interrelations to be considered and, thereby, increasing synergy. While in rural areas it is well established that most services have a direct impact on everyday life and also a direct (water irrigation projects) or indirect (education, health) effect on production, in urban areas there is a tendency to separate consumption from production. This cannot be justified, because household and market-oriented activities are usually entangled in the economy of the urban poor. And any attempt at developing that economy should consider this entanglement to be a lasting symbiosis.

3. The main question is not how to solve the incoherence between vertical-sectoral vs. horizontal-geographical approaches, but rather that between national-sectoral (health, education) vs. local-sectoral (water, sanitation) interventions. Thus, an integral approach to social policy could transform UNICEF's Urban Basic Services in a regional transectoral operating division (urban, rural, rural/urban), able to overcome costly sectoral biases.

4. For instance, the top-down proposal to modernize the informal economy, promoted by the development banks, could benefit from a bottom-up view of the popular economy, enlightened by the moral and political doctrine underlying UNICEF's advocacy, and illustrated with examples in which NGOs and social agencies have participated worldwide. This means going beyond the mere replication of good local examples. It requires both going to scale and upgrading the strategic framework. To go beyond philosophy and social theory, this should be based in UNICEF's own worldwide experience, although such experience should be seen from the wider perspective of a development paradigm.

5. In turn, societies are immersed in a global world. Of course, the question is: how can an agency cope with the children's situation without having to deal with everything? Or, given the institutional limits to interventions, which is the best (time and cost efficient, life-effective) interweaving of interventions? To accept the historical division of labor among economic and social agencies only begs the question: it could prove very inefficient to merely try to compensate for the social problems that the markets and economic interventions recreate. The best path to social development still passes through the economic realm.