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UNITED NATIONS CHILDREN'S FUND
New York Headquarters

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Administrative Instruction 359

9 November 1983

TO: Members of the staff

FROM: Erich Buenger, Director
Division of Management Organization and Administration

SUBJECT: Procedural Guidelines for UNICEF Records and Archives

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1. Introduction

Pursuant to paragraph 1(a) of EXD-2867 of 9 November 1983, this instruction details the rules and procedures to be followed in respect of transfer, maintenance, custody and disposition of the archives and non-current records of UNICEF and also explains the guidelines concerning internal and public access to UNICEF records stored at the archives or records center.

I. Responsibilities of the Records Management Unit

2. Management and Preservation

The Records Management Unit shall establish procedures and monitor maintenance, preservation and repair of the archives and non-current records of UNICEF in co-operation with the United Nations Archives and shall arrange for the description of the archival groups and preparation of finding aids to make them available for use. In order to facilitate retrieval, the Records Management Unit will ensure that only properly described records are sent to storage areas and, where appropriate, that listing of all files is undertaken by the office from which records originate before transfer. The use of word processing equipment for this exercise will be encouraged.

Transfer of non-current records

When required, the Records Management Unit shall effect the mandatory transfer from Divisions/Sections and Units to the Records Centre or United Nations Archives for all non-current records which are more than three years old. It is the responsibility of the originating office concerned to complete the necessary forms. In exceptional cases where shorter or longer term retention periods are deemed desirable, a schedule mutually agreed upon between the Records Management Unit and offices concerned may be established. Agreements covering specific series will be reflected in the UNICEF Retention/Destruction Authorization Log to be updated and issued periodically as an addendum to this Administrative Instruction.

4. Conditions of access

The Records Management Unit shall make arrangements for access to archives and non-current records under the following conditions:

(a) Staff members of UNICEF may have access to archives and records necessary to the conduct of their official business except to those subject to restrictions imposed by the Secretary General or Executive Director.

(b) Members of the public may have access to - (i) archives and records that were accessible at the time of their creation; (ii) those which are more than 20 years old and which are not subject to restrictions imposed by the Secretary-General or Executive Director; (iii) those which are less than 20 years old and not subject to restrictions imposed by the Secretary-General or Executive Director on condition that the originating office has given written consent for access.

(c) Records as to which the Secretary-General, the Executive Director or their authorized representatives have imposed restrictions may be declassified at any time by the same authority. Records that remain restricted when transferred to the Archives will be declassified automatically or be subject to a declassification review when 20 years old. Those remaining restricted after 20 years shall undergo further declassification and review at 5-year intervals.

5. Disposal

With the agreement of the UNICEF work unit concerned, the Records Management Unit shall arrange for disposal of non-current records that have no further administrative, legal, historical or other informational value. When required, security arrangements will be undertaken in co-operation with the United Nations Archives. Offices away from Headquarters may follow the guidelines set forth in the Destruction/Retention Authorization Log which will be issued as an addendum to this Administrative Instruction.

II. Responsibilities of UNICEF Sections/Units at Headquarters

6. Transfer of non-current records

UNICEF Sections/Units shall transfer their non-current records, to the UNICEF Records Center or United Nations Archives in accordance with predetermined disposition schedules, mutually agreed upon between the Records Management Unit and Sections/Units concerned. Prior to transferring their records, Sections/Units shall prepare them for transfer in accordance with the format established by the Records Management Unit (see Information Bulletin No. 83/64 of 28 September 1983). Listing of files will be completed using the word processor. The Documents and Reproduction Unit will make arrangements for the physical transfer of records, assign storage location and maintain a Log of Transactions.

7. Conditions for temporary retention.

Sections/Units authorized to retain archives and non-current records beyond the normal three-year period for the conduct of their official business, shall establish suitable conditions for the preservation of these archives and records as approved by the Records Management Unit.

8. Disposal

Sections/Units shall not dispose of records in their possession without the written authorization of the Records Management Unit which will consult with the United Nations Archivist and other interested parties (i.e. UNICEF History Project) in questionable cases. The Records Management Unit may require samples of the records proposed for disposal to be sent to the Unit for review prior to authorizing disposal.

III. Responsibility of staff members

9. Legal title to the records

All records regardless of physical form, created or received by UNICEF staff in connection with or as a result of the official work of UNICEF are the property of UNICEF.

10. Inviolability of records

Prior to separation from UNICEF or transfer to another post, staff members shall make arrangements for the transfer, through the Records Management Unit, of those records in their possession not retained for their successor and shall not remove any records from the UNICEF premises. The Records Management Unit may inspect all records of a staff member prior to separation from service. Staff members to be separated are entitled to have a reasonable number of unrestricted resource documents copied at their own expense, and to retain their private papers.

IV. Archival Guidance to UNICEF offices away from Headquarters

11. The Records Management Unit shall provide guidance and set standards for the maintenance, preservation, repair, arrangement, description and disposal of, and public access to, the archives and non-current records of UNICEF offices away from Headquarters. In the event of the closure of an office, its archives and records shall be transferred to UNICEF Headquarters in accordance with procedures to be laid down after mutual consultation between the office and the Records Management Unit.