

## WABA saddened at Urban Jonsson's passing

"The understanding that 'people who are poor should be recognised as key actors in their own development, rather than as passive beneficiaries of transfers of services and commodities'"

Those words represent Urban's credo in his 25 years of groundbreaking work for UNICEF.



Dato (Dr) Anwar Fazal, Chairman Emeritus of WABA and a long standing friend said: "Urban was a rare example of someone with five gifts: a head that could think clearly; a heart full of passion; hands that worked tirelessly; eyes that could see what others could not and finally an ability to hear the voices of the weak and vulnerable."

Urban's last appointment with UNICEF was as Senior Adviser on the Human Rights-Based Approach to Programming to the Executive Director, from which he retired in June 2004. He was a world authority on child malnutrition.

A strong advocate for breastfeeding, Urban supported the need for WABA to act as a catalyst for the wider movement from its inception.

A national of Sweden, Urban received a Bachelor's degree in Economics and Mathematics from the University of Gothenburg, a Master's and Doctorate degrees in Food Science from the Chalmers University of Technology, also in Gothenburg.

He worked at the Swedish Food Research Institute (SIK) in Gothenburg from 1968-1976, and as Head of the Planning department at the Tanzania Food and Nutrition Centre (TFNC) in Dar es Salaam from 1976 to 1979. From 1980 until his transfer to UNICEF, he was Programme Officer at the World Hunger Programme, United Nations University in Tokyo, Japan.

Urban joined UNICEF in September 1981 as Representative in Tanzania (Dar es Salaam). He was instrumental in the development of health projects in the country as well as the Joint Nutrition Support Programme (JNSP).

He moved to New York 1989 and from then until 1994, Urban held the position of Senior Adviser, Nutrition in the Programme Division, at UNICEF HQ. He was responsible for coordinating the implementation of the new UNICEF Nutrition Strategy, approved by the Board in 1990. He was an active member of several World Bank programming missions to Ecuador, Bangladesh and Nigeria. He was also a member of the ACC/Sub-Committee on Nutrition (SCN).

Between 1994 and 1998 Urban served as Regional Director for UNICEF in South Asia (Kathmandu), where he focused on nutrition and child labour issues. From 1998 to 2003 he worked as the Regional Director for UNICEF, Eastern and Southern Africa (ESARO). During this period he brought UNICEF in this region to focus on the HIV/AIDS pandemic. He also led the work on the operationalisation of a human rights approach to development.

More recently Urban had been critical of 'poverty reduction' because such an approach targets 'people who are poor' only, and he promoted an approach to 'disparity reduction' where 'people who are poor' and 'people who are rich' are both targeted in policies, programmes and projects. Such a position reflects the needs to meet the human rights principle of equality.

Urban played a catalytic role for WABA in both the Forum in Bangkok and the Forum in Arusha. His support, accompanied by a seed grant from UNICEF, was critical in inspiring us to move ahead those two amazing events that generated a new solidarity and energy for the movement as a whole.

WABA mourns his passing, and remembers him with gratitude.