

50th Anniversary Issue



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CHILDREN
1996

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Chapter I

Children in war

Wars and civil conflicts are taking a massive toll on children. The numbers, though imprecise, are devastating: approximately 2 million children have been killed during the last decade, and between 4 million and 5 million disabled. Twelve million more have been uprooted from their homes, and countless others face the heightened risk of disease and malnutrition and of separation from their families.

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International law provides standards for protecting children in war. These standards must be vigorously enforced to create a zone of peace for the young. UNICEF, founded to provide emergency relief for children in the aftermath of World War II, takes this opportunity in its 50th anniversary year to set out an Anti-war Agenda, a series of vital, practical actions to help stall the momentum of violence. The Agenda calls for an end to the recruitment and conscription into the military of children under the age of 18, for a ban on the manufacture, use, stockpiling and sale of all anti-personnel land-mines and for strengthening of procedures to monitor and prosecute war crimes. The Agenda also urges support for long-term development, reconciliation, rehabilitation and education for peace.

Chapter II

Fifty years for children

This chapter traces UNICEF's and the world's response to the needs of children, starting with the 1950s, when mass campaigns promised to end a number of infectious diseases, including tuberculosis, yaws, trachoma, leprosy and malaria. The 1960s' focus on eradicating poverty grew during the 1970s into the development of flexible, community-oriented initiatives. Then in the 1980s, with economies in decline, UNICEF launched the 'child survival and development revolution', which, through simple, cost-effective methods, saved more than 12 million children's lives by the end of the decade.

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With the 1990s, a new era has opened for children, with the world making great strides towards achieving the World Summit for Children's basic health, nutrition and education goals for the year 2000 and a campaign that has brought universal ratification of the Convention on the Rights of the Child nearly within reach. Looking towards the year 2000 and beyond, children are increasingly at the centre of the international human rights and development agenda, and despite the depredations of war and poverty, global progress is possible.

The material in this chapter draws on the historical research of Maggie Black on UNICEF, including her books *Children First: The story of UNICEF past and present* (UNICEF/Oxford University Press, to be published in 1996) and *The Children and the Nations* (UNICEF, 1986).

Chapter III

Statistical tables

Statistics provide an essential foundation for gauging children's well-being and are vital indicators of the care, nurture and resources that children receive in their communities and countries. We are reminded that more than 12 million children each year continue to die from the 'silent' emergencies of preventable diseases and malnutrition. Statistics such as those on infant and child mortality, immunization, maternal mortality, malnutrition and school enrolment chart the progress countries are making towards the goals set at the World Summit for Children and in overcoming disparities, such as the discrimination against girls and women. Basic indicators on nutrition, health, education, population, economic progress and the situation of women are given. Regional summaries are also provided.

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“The most important meaning of this Nobel award is the solemn recognition that the welfare of today’s children is inseparably linked with the peace of tomorrow’s world.”

Henry R. Labouisse, Executive Director of UNICEF (1965-1979),
in his acceptance of the Nobel Peace Prize in 1965 for UNICEF.

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