

UNICEF
EDITION

The Children and the Nations

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The Story of Unicef 



Maggie Black

**With Forewords by Peter Ustinov
and Sir Robert Jackson**

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Ruth Massey

Maggie Black has been a writer on international social development issues since 1971, when she joined the staff of Oxfam, UK. She is widely travelled in the Third World, particularly in east Africa, where she lived between 1975-76 and 1977-79. Since then, she has been the Editor of Unicef publications, based in New York. She has written extensively for Unicef, and articles by her have also appeared in the *Guardian*, the *Economist*, the *Christian Science Monitor*, and elsewhere. Between 1976-77 she was an Editor of *New Internationalist* magazine. Maggie Black was born in 1945, comes from Oxford, England, and has an M.A. in History from St. Andrews University, Scotland.

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The symbol, and for many people, the ultimate goal, of all that is done in the name of Third World development is the suffering child. The image of the hungry child – hungry in the wake of war, famine, pestilence or poverty – is arguably the most potent image of the twentieth century. The way Mankind has come to notice and respond to the sufferings of children around the world represents a landmark in the history of ideas. This book is about the postwar experience in trying to realise an ideal. It is about how the nations – through one particular organization – came to address the problems of children in the developing world.

This organization is Unicef, the United Nations Children's Fund, and its story forms the central thread of this book. Its development over the forty years of the postwar period is a reflection of the many debates – on hunger, the environment, population growth, health for all, women's rights – which have characterized the evolution of thinking about development. Sitting astride the voluntary humanitarian movement and the technical assistance programmes, Unicef is a unique organization within which many different strands of social and economic co-operation fuse, overlap and sometimes struggle for ascendancy.

The idea behind Unicef's creation was that no child should have to endure hunger, sickness or lack of care in a world with enough resources for everyone, and to spare.

It sounded so simple in 1946, but it has proved a surprisingly difficult target. Nothing could be more complex, in fact, than to feed, succour and care for the world's hungry and malnourished children. Forty years later, the challenge has not changed, but those who have tried to meet it are older and wiser and have come a long way. The road they have trodden is full of hope and disillusion, excitement and disappointment, gain and loss. This is also their story. Maggie Black reaches beyond the growth of Unicef and international aid to present the human face to all the energy, goodwill, science and effort so far expended in trying to build a better future for the children of all of us.

