Chapter 9

Children at the Front Line

W hen the 'ICEF' was created by the UN General Assembly in 1946, it was to provide emergency help to children in Europe and elsewhere suffering war-induced deprivation in the aftermath of World War II. When the organization achieved permanence in 1953, its remit was broadened to include children suffering the effects of more general poverty and deprivation, and the word 'Emergency' was dropped from its title. But the imperative to respond to children in special need as a result of war or other disaster was already indelibly stamped in Unicef's genes.

In the 1950s, the era of the disease campaign, there was a strong desire to place prevention ahead of cure, and in the 1960s, the era of the development crusade, an even stronger urge to give priority to the lasting solution. In 1960, the Swedish delegation to the Executive Board even proposed that Unicef should drop out of emergency first aid altogether[1]. But this idea provoked considerable opposition. It was neither desirable nor practicable for the leading international organization for children to ignore the 'loud' as opposed to the 'silent' emergencies.

However distracting emergencies might be from the ongoing preventive and developmental task, the provision of help for child victims of major tragedies was a crucial part of the organization's mandate: this was the expectation of the public, the media, donors, Unicef field staff, National Committees and secretariat. To leave all such action to the responsibility of others would have been incomprehensible. The organization's reputation and credibility depended upon being active, and being seen to be active, at times when the sufferings of those it existed to help were bathed in the

glare of publicity. This was reinforced after it became routine for disasters, even in remote places, to be paraded on the nightly television news. Besides which, Unicef was an organization invented to provide 'material assistance'—the goods in the hand so sorely needed in emergency circumstances—and over the years had developed an expertise and capacity in supply procurement unparalleled in the rest of the UN system.

But the degree of involvement, and the disaster relief role of a children's as compared with other types of humanitarian organization: these issues beset Unicef almost from its inception. The question of how much organizational time, energy and resources should be spent on relief as opposed to development is one that has been frequently revisited over the course of Unicef's history. On the one hand, Unicef has always been jealous of its—usually—high reputation for swift and impartial humanitarian action, and aware of the publicity and fund-raising opportunities emergencies provide. On the other, its organizational culture has persistently marginalized emergency work, treating it as inferior to—sometimes as a diversion from—long-term programming for development[2]. If development efforts would only be successful, the argument ran (not just in Unicef but in many NGOs), disasters would not occur. Or if they did, not at least on a scale beyond the capacity of the country in question to handle without inviting or having to accept assorted ranks of international relief warriors rushing to their assistance.

During the 1970s, when the basic services strategy and the country programming process were being developed as the purpose and framework for Unicef cooperation, the question of how to respond to emergencies and what priority should be attached to emergency activity was left out of the process[3]. The problem of how to bring emergency action back into the Unicef mainstream was not subsequently satisfactorily resolved. Questions surrounding Unicef's role in emergencies were supplied with answers on an entirely ad hoc basis. In exceptional circumstances an emergency programme might become an organizational priority: the Bihar famine in India (1966), for example; the Nigerian civil war (1967-70); the Bengal cyclone (1970) and the subsequent creation of Bangladesh (1971); to a lesser extent in the African droughts and famines of the 1970s and in the countries of Indo-China throughout the Viet Nam War period[4]. In some of these situations, especially those that were politically sensitive, the Unicef Executive Director took a prominent role in negotiating or leading the relief programme. For example, Maurice Pate, Unicef's first Executive Director, was asked by the then UN Secretary-General—Dag Hammarskjöld—to help initiate a UN humanitarian operation in response to famine in the Congo in 1960; Henry Labouisse, the second Executive Direc-

tor, was the key UN humanitarian negotiator in Lagos during the famine crisis associated with the Nigerian Civil War[5].

When Jim Grant took over at Unicef in 1980, he inherited the largest and most complex humanitarian relief operation the organization had ever shouldered. Twelve months before, the Vietnamese army had invaded and conquered Cambodia (then Kampuchea), ending the four-year reign of terror conducted by the Khmer Rouge under their leader, Pol Pot. The disruption of agriculture and ordinary economic life under the Khmer Rouge between 1975 and 1978, followed by their further disruption by the Vietnamese 'liberation', led to severe food shortages and a threatened famine. But the political complexities of the situation all but mired international efforts to come to the rescue of the Cambodian people.

Because Viet Nam had committed an aggression against its neighbour, an aggression excoriated by all its usual opponents—the Chinese, the ASEAN countries, the US and its Western allies—the regime installed in Phnom Penh was denied international recognition, no matter how preferable it was to the one it had replaced. Most of the UN system was therefore unable to interact with the authorities in Phnom Penh. But Unicef had developed ways of navigating around such insuperable obstacles to UN diplomacy as 'international recognition' and 'sovereign inviolability'. The Secretary-General, then Kurt Waldheim, had therefore turned to Henry Labouisse at Unicef, and asked the Children's Fund to act as 'lead agency' for the entire UN system inside Kampuchea. The relief operation both inside the country and on the Thai-Kampuchean border was to be run in conjunction with the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC).

The request to act in such a linchpin humanitarian role derived from Unicef's success in upholding over several decades the principle that children are above the political divide. At the time of Unicef's creation, Maurice Pate had insisted that no child should be seen as an 'enemy' and thereby disqualified from receiving Unicef assistance. At the beginning of the cold war, at the moment when the US was refusing to help victims of war in Europe via the existing UN mechanism because its aid went impartially to people in both Eastern and Western Europe[6], this was a more exceptional stand than it appears today.

The critical phrase in Unicef's founding resolution was that assistance should be dispensed 'on the basis of need, without discrimination because of race, creed, nationality, status or political belief'. Thereafter, by applying a certain elasticity of interpretation, Unicef had behaved as if this clause meant that it was not held up to quite the same rigorous rules of diplomatic conduct in respect of sovereignty as other UN bodies. A record of working on both sides of civil wars

had been established since 1948, in the earliest instance in the conflicts in Greece, in China and in the Middle East, even though this meant working through de facto authorities unrecognized as legitimate by other UN Member States. In 1965, Unicef's record on behalf of victims of armed conflict had been given international recognition with the award of the Nobel Peace Prize.

The principle of 'children above the political divide' gradually gained weight with use. It had reached a new level of acceptance and operationalization—despite all attendant political difficulties—during the 1967-70 Nigerian Civil War. Alongside the International Committee of the Red Cross, the organization that epitomized the idea of international humanitarian neutrality in wartime, Unicef had functioned as the conduit into rebel-held 'Biafra' for a major input of UN and international relief. Henry Labouisse had undertaken a mission to Lagos in mid-1968 and—with great difficulty—obtained the tacit agreement of the federal authorities in Nigeria to a relief operation that crossed what they regarded as enemy lines[7]. During the Nigerian conflict, with all its inter-ethnic hatred and accusations of genocide and atrocity, Unicef had never lost the confidence of either side—a tribute to the quiet negotiating skills of Labouisse and to the transcendence of the children's cause. A few years later, Labouisse managed to obtain agreement for Unicef to send aid to children on both sides of the Vietnamese conflict. In this instance he had to overcome both the isolationism of a communist regime suspicious of a UN, and therefore Western-tainted, organization, and the extreme displeasure of the US government, a major Unicef backer[8].

In the case of Kampuchea in 1979, the 'aid on both sides' principle was upheld with the gravest difficulty. The authorities in Phnom Penh demanded as a condition of receiving aid from Unicef and ICRC that none be provided to women and children at the Thai border still under the control of the Khmer Rouge. The two organizations' representatives found Kampuchean officials completely unable to comprehend that in order to meet this demand, Unicef and the Red Cross would have to abandon sacrosanct principles of humanitarian neutrality. To this they could not agree[9]. Matters came to a head in October 1979 and a formula was accepted whereby neither the agencies nor the authorities conceded the other's point of view. After this, a massive airlift of emergency supplies from Bangkok into Phnom Penh finally went ahead[10]. By the time Grant took over at Unicef in January 1980, Unicef and ICRC were not only leading a huge supply and logistic operation inside Kampuchea to stave off famine, but also—alongside UNHCR—running a major relief programme on the Thai-Kampuchean border for 500,000 refugees fleeing the Khmer Rouge.

For the next two years until the end of 1981, Unicef was obliged to continue to carry the UN 'lead agency' role in Kampuchea. This was because the political sensitivities surrounding the status of the Phnom Penh regime proved intractable as long as Vietnamese troops remained in the country, shoring up the security situation and the regime. Over the two-year period, the joint UN and ICRC programme, in which Unicef shouldered the lion's share of the administrative burden inside Kampuchea and much of it outside the stricken country, delivered some $634 million in assistance[11]. Grant himself was obliged to devote a considerable amount of his own time and energy to heading up 'lead agency' activities, and was deeply conscious of the diversion of organizational resources—especially of some of the brightest and best of his staff.

This experience had a major influence on Grant's attitude towards Unicef's role in emergency relief during his forthcoming leadership. However visible and popular prominence in a major emergency might make Unicef, the price in terms of the rest of the organization's agenda was much too high in his opinion. Being 'lead agency' included coordinating UN appeals and providing all-around support for the Secretary-General's representative and other UN agencies' programmes on the ground. Grant was not primarily a relief impresario. He was, on the contrary, deeply committed to the human development agenda, having already spent his lifetime's career in its service. From the outset at Unicef, he made it clear that his principal mission was to help combat the 'silent emergency' of child ill-health and poverty in the developing countries. He therefore resolved that he would in future try to prevent Unicef from being nominated as 'lead agency' for the UN system in a humanitarian crisis. This explains why, in 1985, at the height of the Ethiopian famine, he strongly backed the establishment of a special Office for Emergency Operations in Africa (OEOA) within the UN Secretariat[12]. He was very aware that lending staff and loaning facilities to a separate operation would be much less organizationally draining than shouldering all the responsibility. It was his constant worry that child survival initiatives would falter if Unicef became sucked remorselessly into the bottomless pit of relief provision.

However, there was an important context in which Grant promoted Unicef action in emergencies. The principle to which Unicef had been committed since its earliest years—that children are above the political divide—was one that Grant heartily embraced. In the early 1980s, he began to search for ways to exploit this principle on behalf of the 'child survival and development revolution'.

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The idea that children had a special claim to be protected from the scourge of war had first been articulated by the Save the Children Fund (UK) during the First World War and had gained ground in public consciousness steadily throughout the century. During the early 1980s, this idea began to accumulate new force. Civilians rather than armed soldiers appeared to be bearing an increasingly heavy burden of death and injury during war. Around 20 million people had lost their lives in conflicts since 1945, and among these the civilian proportion had risen from around 50 per cent to 80 or even 90 per cent in more recent wars. The overwhelming majority of deaths were among poor families in the developing world, and especially among women and children[13].

At the 1983 session of the Unicef Executive Board, Nils Thedin, the leading delegate of Sweden and a long-time Unicef elder statesman, proposed what at first hearing sounded like an old man's dream: that children be declared a 'neutral, conflict-free zone in human relations'[14]. This call came from Thedin's lifelong commitment to finding ways of protecting children from the fallout of man's inhumanity to man—especially in a more violent world, a world in which military strife and conflict were increasingly intruding into ordinary people's lives. In the past, the innocence and vulnerability of children had been cited as a pretext for shielding them from warfare and as a justification for humanitarian efforts on their behalf. Thedin now took this idea further forward, advancing the notion that where children were, there should warfare cease.

This call, repeated with force during the 1984 Unicef Executive Board discussion on 'children in especially difficult circumstances'[15], resonated with Grant, never one to be deterred by a good idea's apparently hopeless impracticality. Later that year, at a meeting in the office of UN Secretary-General Javier Pérez de Cuéllar with President Napoleon Duarte of El Salvador, Grant glimpsed an opportunity to put Thedin's idea into effect[16], at the same time combining it with his current main objective: the 'child survival revolution'.

At the time, civil war was raging in El Salvador. Grant proposed a unilateral cessation of hostilities on both sides—army and rebel—to allow a period of what Duarte called 'tranquilidad' so that parents could take their children to be immunized. After protracted negotiations with guerrilla leaders by senior bishops of the Roman Catholic Church, both sides agreed to a series of daylong lulls in the fighting early in 1985. These were not to be called cease-fires or truces: neither side wanted to appear to be showing a white flag.

Thus was born the idea of 'days of tranquillity': days on which a war was stopped so that something so comparatively mundane as a children's vaccination programme could take place. On three days in consecutive months, the Salvadoran conflict gave way to a programme in which 3,000 health workers

immunized nearly 250,000 small children against polio, measles, diphtheria, tetanus and whooping cough. At the instigation of Unicef, and with considerable help from others—including ICRC and the Vatican—Thedin's concept had been realized. The significance of the achievement was far greater than its tally of around two thirds of Salvadoran children immunized—somewhat lower than the target of 80 per cent. 'This reconciliation for progress and the common good announced loudly El Salvador's commitment to a positive future and has been an inspiration to the rest of the world,' wrote Pérez de Cuéllar in a letter to President Duarte[17].

The 'days of tranquillity' experiment was repeated in El Salvador regularly every year until the end of the civil war six years later, by which time the 80 per cent target had been reached and consistently sustained. The Pan-American Health Organization (PAHO) had used the opportunity to introduce other activities—nutrition education, family planning advice and supplies—under the banner of 'Health: a bridge for peace'[18]. As importantly, the Salvadoran 'days of tranquillity' had set a precedent for similar experiments elsewhere.

In 1986, independent negotiations with the Ugandan government of Milton Obote and with the Ugandan National Resistance Army under Yoweri Museveni led to the establishment of 'corridors of peace'—also for a countrywide vaccination campaign. In the case of El Salvador, parallel campaigns had been run on both sides of the battle lines; in the case of Uganda, the parties agreed to allow the campaign machinery to cross over from one side to the other. Vaccines, personnel and equipment were funnelled into the war zone through special air and land corridors. The first flight along a 'corridor of peace' in Africa took place on United Nations Day, 24 October 1986.

A few months later, in March 1987, following negotiations with the warring parties in Lebanon, a similar exercise took place in Beirut. In 1988-89, vaccination teams operated in Afghanistan in both government-controlled and *mujahidin*-controlled areas and succeeded in raising immunization coverage levels to 80 per cent in some areas[19]. To what extent these exercises helped to create the preconditions for an overall reduction in hostilities can only be speculative, but that they began to etch in the international consciousness an acceptance that children could—and should—be treated as a 'zone of peace' seems certain. When, after a few flights into the Ugandan venture, the 'corridor' nearly broke down, it was reinstated with a public declaration by the government that 'we all have children and we are all Ugandans'[20].

Every occasion on which warring parties could be persuaded to put down their guns to give priority to children's future well-being not only helped to build up a case-load of precedent, but added force to a principle incipiently

taking on the character of an international moral norm. Ironically, the enforcement of this norm could be managed only by the exercise of great political acuity. To be non-political—to put children's health momentarily above all political considerations including the waging of a war—required being highly political; engaging with the political process, even on behalf of children, entailed taking considerable risks. Any subsequent opprobrium that might descend on the leadership in question might tarnish even actions they had taken—apparently disinterestedly—on behalf of children. Some of the more daring Unicef representatives faced these challenges willingly; many took their cue from Grant, whose skills as a negotiator with Presidents and leading officials they built upon and emulated.

It was Grant's track record in this context that led to his appointment by UN Secretary-General Pérez de Cuéllar as the leader of Operation Lifeline Sudan (OLS). During 1988, a disastrous famine had caused the loss of 250,000 lives and led to the displacement of nearly half the 6 million inhabitants of southern Sudan[21]. This tragedy was the outcome of many years of civil war exacerbated by drought, which had driven people from their homes and caused a complete breakdown in traditional food security systems[22]. By January 1989, it had become clear that unless a massive effort was made before the rainy season to move supplies to strategically placed depots throughout the country, a similar tragedy would ensue over the coming months. An estimated 2.25 million people were in need of emergency assistance, of whom 600,000 were in imminent danger of starvation.

Accordingly, a joint government and UN meeting at the highest level was convened in Khartoum in early March to come up with a relief and supply delivery plan. Jim Grant led the UN delegation on behalf of the Secretary-General, and the meeting was attended by senior representatives of the Sudanese Government, UNDP, WFP (World Food Programme), FAO, ICRC, NGOs and bilateral donors. The meeting took place in an atmosphere of widespread scepticism. Since 1983, the Government had been locked in combat with the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA), and both protagonists in an ugly civil war had persistently obstructed relief efforts mounted on behalf of civilians outside their control[23]. The SPLA was not represented at the 'high-level meeting' and predictably denounced it as 'illegal and a deep conspiracy'. To win approval in such a climate for a plan that involved delivering large supplies of food through 'peace corridors' or their equivalent to civilians on the enemy side of the fighting lines required great delicacy of negotiation.

So as not to antagonize the Government, all references to SPLA-held territory in the conference documentation were suitably oblique, but for the first

time in UN relief assessments in the Sudan, projections of the needs in such areas were explicitly included. In order to make arrangements to reach such areas, it was suggested that the responsible UN officials should deal directly with the insurgents. Obtaining agreement to this provision was the vital breakthrough for it enabled humanitarian needs throughout southern Sudan to be addressed. The principle of humanitarian neutrality—that aid should be given not only to children but to all civilian non-combatants independently of whose control they were under and that relief programmes should not be regarded as weapons of war—was given official recognition. As a result, the SPLA decided to give the plan its support.

The Government agreed to an initial month of tranquillity during which relief efforts could proceed without fear of military action; the SPLA also accepted this idea with the proviso that only specified 'corridors of tranquillity' should be used for the safe passage of relief personnel and goods. These were to be negotiated through the mediation of UN officials, which effectively meant the mediation of Grant. The all-around consent to the plan was described by Grant with some hyperbole as 'historic'; certainly, it was in a different league from obtaining agreement to a vaccination campaign, which, unlike food supplies, could have no military or strategic usefulness[24]. The establishment of Lifeline was certainly a major achievement. It was also one for which a great deal was owed to Grant, both personally and because his position at the head of Unicef allowed the UN to overcome its normal inhibitions about working on both sides of a civil war and the invasion of sovereignty that this implied.

OLS was thus brought into being as a special UN operation, staffed by personnel seconded by Unicef and other UN organizations. Time was not on their side. Convoys of food supplies had to be dispatched and delivered by air, train, barge and truck to some of the most remote and worst-affected towns in the south, in some cases arriving no later than mid-April. Altogether, an estimated 120,000 metric tons of food and non-food supplies had to be delivered by September 1989—just six months away—through terrain that was hostile in every sense of the word. In order to keep things moving and iron out operational difficulties concerning the 'tranquillity corridors', Grant paid eight visits to the Sudan during this period and injected considerable energy into OLS. He also projected the suffering of the Sudanese people onto the world stage in such a way as to garner international publicity and financial support. By the end of September, when Grant handed over the leadership of OLS to Michael Priestley of UNDP, 88 per cent of the relief supplies—or 103,000 tons of food and 4,000 of medical and other non-food supplies—had been delivered to their many destinations.

Much of the donkey work of organizing depots and actually distributing food and other supplies to the population was carried out by NGOs, many of which had been conducting relief programmes in SPLA-held territory from bases in Uganda and Kenya for the past few years. Unicef itself, which had previously been prevented by the Khartoum Government from working in areas under the control of the SPLA, now began to supply cold-chain and other EPI equipment for immunization. By October 1989, vaccination clinics had become operational in all garrison towns and camps for displaced people, and had reached 90,000 children in SPLA areas.

The many organizations operating under the Lifeline umbrella continued to conduct their programmes autonomously; the contribution of Lifeline was to provide them—Unicef included—with an overarching political framework, mutually accepted by the warring parties, in which these relief efforts could take place. Lifeline also brought about a reduction in the level of fighting, at least along the 'corridors of tranquillity', and therefore temporarily enabled some of the people of southern Sudan to resume a lifestyle approximating to normal. Above all it gave people hope. Even though Lifeline's operations were interrupted at times when government forces and rebels intensified their military operations, never again did civilian despair become so widespread or intensive. A second phase of Lifeline was negotiated and began in March 1990, and with stops and starts Lifeline has been running ever since.

Operation Lifeline Sudan was an important milestone in the opening up of 'humanitarian space'. The provisioning of beleaguered populations in time of war can never be detached from its strategic and military implications; nevertheless, both sides in the Sudanese conflict recognized that to deny food to innocent people, especially children, who happen fortuitously to be under an enemy's control is to breach an international moral code. In the media age, actions that induce widespread human suffering cannot long be kept from public attention and tend to call down an unwelcome degree of international opprobrium. Among other political and military considerations, this one may not always win the day, but at least in the Sudan—as elsewhere—it is among the factors to be put in the balance. In elevating the rights of ordinary humanity to be treated as if they were something more than the pawns of warring parties, OLS set an important precedent on the African continent and helped to advance the humanitarian cause worldwide.

In Unicef, involvement with OLS represented a high point in the organization's identification with the principle of 'children above the political divide'. Since that time, there has not been a concerted effort to codify the principles involved or identify where next to take the concept. Although this is

a cause of regret, it is perhaps inevitable. The nature of some of the conflicts in the recent past—notably those in Rwanda and Burundi—has set back the moral and legal extension of what, up to 1991-92, was a fledgling 'new humanitarian order' designed to protect innocent civilians, especially children, and has left its advocates floundering in horrified disbelief.

Within the international humanitarian community, including among the most active and experienced emergency-oriented NGOs such as Médecins sans Frontières and Oxfam, relief operations in the Sudan opened up an important debate on 'humanitarian neutrality'[25]. This debate, which has remained ongoing, gained force during the flight of Iraqi Kurds into Turkey in early 1991 after their uprising in the wake of the Gulf War. Questions were repeatedly raised about the degree to which the sovereignty of a government over all the peoples it claims to rule ought to be respected in cases where there are gross breaches of civil rights, especially where a civilian population is the intended victim of military action by the government in question. The 'safe havens' established by the international community in Turkey in 1991 can be said to have exemplified the notion of 'children and innocent civilians as a zone of peace'. They were justified *ex post facto* by what was called the 'right of humanitarian intervention'[26]. Whatever the subsequent advances and retreats surrounding this new grounds for international military action, the creation of 'safe havens' turned out to be a precedent unlikely to be much repeated. It could only occur because of all but global unanimity among the nations concerning the actions of a joint enemy.

The complexities surrounding such issues became ever more tortuous as the 1990s advanced and certain countries in Africa and the ex-USSR descended into chaotic inter-ethnic and internecine turmoil. In the post–cold war world, the question of how to expand and uphold 'humanitarian space' has become ever more pressing.

The increase in emergencies over the decade of the 1980s, especially in Africa, led to a new consciousness of their effect on child victims. This consciousness mainly emanated from countries such as Afghanistan, Angola, Mozambique and Uganda, where a fluctuating state of emergency, interspersed with military action, was ongoing for a period of years.

At headquarters, Unicef was very preoccupied with the 'child survival revolution'. In the context of disaster response, it was inclined to stress the suitability of GOBI interventions for children's health and physical well-being in relief camps and against cholera, measles and other epidemics[27]. The 'GOBI in

emergencies' approach was an extension of Unicef's traditional view of children as the most vulnerable members of any population caught up in emergencies both 'loud' and 'silent'. But on the ground in places where emergency had become a way of life, an additional perspective was emerging.

With the growth of interest in children in their own right had come a new awareness that disasters had specific impacts on children and childhood, and that these impacts needed their own responses. This was particularly the case in emergencies associated with war. When the 1984 Unicef Executive Board asked for a review of 'children in especially difficult circumstances', one of the categories of children to be included in the CEDC definition—largely thanks to Nils Thedin and his promotion of 'children as a zone of peace'—was 'children in situations of armed conflict'[28]. This decision was a symptom of a renaissance of national and international interest in a group of children whose particular problems had tended to slip from view since the end of the immediate postwar period in Europe and Asia. The pioneers in raising these child protection issues—both as advocates and in programming terms—were, as usual, the NGOs, especially those within the Save the Children international alliance.

The special Unicef study prepared for the CEDC review not only examined the consequences of war on children in terms of death and injury, but drew attention to the profound psychosocial problems children were liable to suffer in an armed struggle in which a high proportion of the casualties were civilian. As Unicef had discovered in many earlier emergency settings, including those affecting the children of Viet Nam in the early 1970s and Kampuchea in 1979-80[29], children who had become caught up in conflict often bore hidden psychological scars that could take a lifetime to erase.

The earliest studies of the effects of armed conflict on children were undertaken in combat areas during the Second World War and among concentration camp survivors. From these it emerged that war had an all-embracing impact on a child's development, attitudes, experience of human relations, moral norms and outlook on life. Facing violence on a continuous basis created deep-rooted feelings of helplessness and undermined the child's trust in others[30]. The most common form of damage resulted from a child's separation from one or both parents because of their death or 'disappearance'. A child who had seen a parent or close relative being murdered or tortured, who had witnessed the wanton destruction of the family home, who had been forced to participate in acts of violence or who had been abducted, kidnapped or driven into flight from home bore psychological scars that could manifest themselves in disturbed behaviour for a long time afterwards.

From the mid-1980s onward, following the pioneering work of NGOs such as the UK Save the Children Fund, Unicef began to develop programme approaches to help children overcome fears and terrors that had become deeply implanted in their subconscious. One of the countries in which this was an early Unicef preoccupation was Mozambique. Many outrages of almost unbelievable cruelty were committed against children by the Mozambican National Resistance (Renamo) during the South African–backed insurrection of the 1980s. Significant numbers were abducted and taught to show no fear or sympathy, then forced to kill other children, even their own family members. By 1987, Renamo was believed to have murdered 100,000 people and committed widespread atrocities on ordinary civilians, including many children. Estimates of children traumatized, orphaned or abandoned ranged from 250,000 to 500,000, up to 10 per cent of the age group[31]. Unicef conducted surveys into the effects on children and published the results in its series of reports on *Children on the Front Line* designed to bring attention to the plight of children in southern Africa (see Chapter 6). Unicef also began to support programmes for the mental and emotional rehabilitation of Mozambican children. Primary-school teachers were trained in counselling techniques to enable children to express their feelings of terror and anxiety through drawing pictures and writing essays.

These techniques also began to be applied by Unicef in other theatres of East African conflict such as Uganda and the Sudan. Assistance was sought from a Norwegian child psychologist, Magne Raundalen. A stronger emphasis also began to be placed on education within emergency assistance as a vehicle for the social rehabilitation of children and for their emotional repair. In Mozambique, Unicef paid for the reconstruction of primary schools, 2,500 of which had been destroyed by armed attack[32]. In other settings, such as Sri Lanka, workshops or 'talk-shops' were organized to help young people explore their feelings about conflict and its resolution and share their experiences through structured discussions and exercises[33].

A remarkable effort to enable children to shed the hatreds and social divisions experienced in a wartime upbringing took place in Lebanon. 'Education for Peace' was initiated by the Unicef office in Beirut early in 1989 at a time when a mounting wave of violence had closed the schools and confined children to their homes and bomb shelters. Unicef had long been aware that because of the country's state of armed division, the children of Lebanon were growing up in separate enclaves with no physical chance to meet. So it was decided to remedy this situation by running a 'peace camp' where the children from different cultural and religious backgrounds could meet and get to know each other.

As a start, a group of young people aged from 18 to 25 with scouting and similar experience were trained by Unicef as camp monitors. The first camp was planned for July 1989 in a village far away from the scene of hostilities. After the rival militias and their various factions were advised of Unicef's intentions, buses carrying the Unicef flag drove the children through the Beirut checkpoints. The two weeks spent living together dissolved misunderstandings and created firm friendships. Unicef staff were surprised less by the happy intermingling of the smaller children than by the lack of mutual distrust displayed by the monitors, who proved able to discard attitudes absorbed from their elders and confirmed by a lifetime surrounded by violence.

So popular was the idea of bringing together children from the different communities that before the first camp was over, other organizations had begun to operate day camps under the Education for Peace banner at playgrounds, schools and community centres. Unicef managed the curriculum and training of all monitors and provided transportation as well. It was a rule that the participating children—including those in Palestinian refugee camps—must come from more than one area of the country. By the end of the 1989 summer season, around 29,000 children aged between 5 and 12 had attended peace camps of one kind or another. During the following year more than 240 NGOs collaborated with Unicef to promote the programme, and 40,000 children altogether took part. In the next phase of the programme, Unicef developed a curriculum for use in schools and a series of weekend events that took place throughout the year[34].

Many Education for Peace activities developed for use in Lebanese classrooms were subsequently incorporated—along with others from Liberia, Northern Ireland and Sri Lanka—into classroom projects in industrialized countries under the rubric of 'Education for Development'. This entailed the promotion among young people in both industrialized and developing countries of values such as global solidarity, peace, tolerance and environmental awareness. This attempt to educate the coming generation for world citizenship took its cue from the statement in the Convention on the Rights of the Child that a child's education should prepare the way for 'responsible life ... in the spirit of understanding, peace, tolerance, equality of the sexes and friendship among peoples'. Not only in the classrooms of Lebanon and Sri Lanka did young people need to unlearn entrenched attitudes about the 'alien other'; they needed to do the same in Europe and North America—as became more conspicuous after the outbreak of hostilities in former Yugoslavia[35].

The wars of the 1980s brought into view another abuse of childhood prompted by armed conflict: the use of children as soldiers. This phenomenon

first came to widespread international attention during the Iran-Iraq war, when half a million Iranian boys aged between 12 and 18 were recruited into the armed forces and thousands were reported to have lost their lives functioning as human mine detectors[36]. The recruitment of children who had become orphaned or lost contact with their families into the ranks of Museveni's Ugandan National Resistance Army was another notorious incidence of child soldiering. During the 'corridors of peace' initiative in 1985-86 to vaccinate children on both sides of the fighting line, Unicef representative Cole Dodge took the opportunity of protesting both to Museveni in person and through the international media the carrying of arms by children[37].

Once the issue of 'child soldiers' had been brought to light, it became obvious that boys in their early teens were a common feature in fighting forces around the world, regular and irregular. In environments where children's engagement in economically significant work was regarded as normal, the employment of under-age teenagers in military activity in communities en-gulfed by war was similarly part of the normal inculcation of children into adult life. In Afghanistan, Cambodia, El Salvador, Ethiopia, Liberia, Peru and Sri Lanka, children took part as combatants, not necessarily as fighters but as cooks, cleaners, messengers and porters. The total number of 'child war work-ers' was estimated in 1988 at 200,000 worldwide[38]. Some engaged in military life willingly, others under heavy duress. In some cases, as in Mozambique, refusal to cooperate with armed captors could lead to children being deliber-ately killed so as to prevent them being of use to the opposition forces.

The increasing attention given to the many impacts of war on children was reflected in the debates during the final drafting stages of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The age at which teenagers could be permitted to enter the armed forces became a stumbling block for some countries in the drafting group, who felt that 16 should be the lower limit. However, Article 38 finally specified 15 as the minimum age of military recruitment, with the proviso that among those aged 15 to 18, 'States Parties shall endeavour to give priority to those who are oldest'. The Convention also stipulated that, in accordance with their obligations under international humanitarian law to protect civilians, States Parties should make special efforts to care for children affected by armed conflict, including promoting their physical and psychological recovery and their social reintegration.

Since the passage of the Convention, other issues concerning wars and children have been precipitated onto the international agenda. One of the most important of these is the residual damage caused to human beings by uncleared land-mines. An estimated 100 million mines have been laid as part

of military action in more than 60 countries[39], and even when the fighting they are part of is long since over, these mines have the capacity to kill and maim people innocently going about their daily lives. Over 1 million people, most of them civilians, have been killed or injured by land-mine explosions since 1975.

Many of these casualties are children. This is because they are particularly at risk: they tend to run about and play in a carefree way, without an adult's in-built sense of caution. They are also inquisitive, and mines come in a variety of shapes and colours that attract children to them as playthings. When a mine goes off in the hand or under the foot of a child, the child has more than a 50 per cent chance of dying outright; those who survive usually face the prospect of amputation. Angola has more than 20,000 amputees, including many children; Cambodia has more than 35,000—one in every 230 members of the population[40].

The cost of demining averages between $300 and $1,000 per mine. In a country such as Cambodia, where there are 7 million mines and the annual per capita GDP is $150, the costs involved reduce to nil the prospects of clearing all the country's land-mines[41]. Apart from programmes to rehabilitate children with disabilities, which are conducted in many war-affected countries as a part of primary health care services, Unicef has begun to promote mine-awareness schemes. In El Salvador, the 12-year conflict that ended in 1992 left large numbers of uncleared mines and unexploded ordnance lying around in the countryside. When children began to be killed and injured by these devices, Unicef enlisted the help of the Salvadoran army, the ex-rebel forces and the UN Peacekeeping Mission to develop a mine-awareness project[42]. Teachers, health workers and community leaders were trained to point out the dangers of mines to children in affected communities through posters, leaflets and educational media. By the time the programme had been completed, a significant decrease in the number of children injured had been noted.

Unicef has also consistently maintained that the use of anti-personnel land-mines violates core provisions in the Convention on the Rights of the Child, including the child's right to life and the State's obligation to ensure the 'survival and development of the child'. The ultimate solution to the land-mine issue is to remove mines already laid, and to prevent their further use as weapons of war. In 1993, the UN General Assembly unanimously adopted a moratorium on the export of land-mines—a moratorium yet to become fully respected. Even this moratorium is only a first step. Unicef, along with ICRC and increasing numbers of NGOs, maintains that the rights of children demand a complete ban on the use of land-mines; it has recently announced that it will no longer deal with companies manufacturing or selling mines[43]. The

opportunity to obtain agreement to an international law on land-mines arose in October 1995 at a UN conference dedicated to the control of 'inhumane weapons'. Unfortunately, the proposal failed to gain international endorsement, but undoubtedly the campaign will go on[44].

Another variation of international conflict whose special impact on children has inspired humanitarian protest is the imposition of political and economic sanctions. These are usually applied as a substitute for military intervention in an effort to bring a regime regarded as an international pariah to its knees, as in Iraq; or to subject a regime to heavy international pressure, as in the case of former Yugoslavia. But measures that are intended to deprive a country of trading opportunities, ruin its economy and—by implication—its services, may have a disastrous impact on civilian populations. In non-democratic societies especially, these civilians have played no part in installing the regime and cannot be held responsible for its policies or practices. Since children are the most vulnerable members of the population, the negative impacts of sanctions fall hardest upon them. In Iraq, for example, five years of sanctions meant that by late 1995, infant mortality had doubled and mortality in children under five had risen by five times; 20,000 new cases of child malnutrition were being reported every month[45]. The International Red Cross and Unicef were among those calling for ways to be found of reducing the humanitarian disaster that sanctions constituted for Iraqi mothers and children.

A similar experience befell the children of Haiti, especially the children of extremely poor families, between the coup of 1991 and the ousting of the military regime by US-led international action in 1994. Over the three years that UN sanctions were imposed, the rate of malnutrition for children under five in health institutions increased from 27 per cent to over 50 per cent[46]. In mid-1993, a team from the Harvard Center for Population and Development Studies visited Haiti. Their study, with which Unicef was closely associated[47], recommended that in future, international sanctions be imposed in such a way as to target specifically the military and their élite supporters, and that safeguards on supplies of food and medicines be built in to protect the poor and vulnerable. In early 1994, Unicef began to call within the UN system and outside it for increased child-awareness in the application of sanctions[48].

In late 1995, in the annual *State of the World's Children* report written for 1996, its 50th anniversary year, Unicef took as its main theme the subject of 'children in war'. A 10-point 'anti-war agenda' to reduce the specific impacts of warfare on childhood was proposed. This was a recognition that, 50 years after Unicef's creation to relieve the postwar predicament of children in Europe, the

issue was as compelling as it ever had been. It also marked an increasing awareness in Unicef of the abuse of childhood suffered as a result of an upbringing in the midst of violence and armed hostilities, particularly where atrocities were widespread. The 'new world disorder' unleashed by the end of the cold war was one of the dynamics inexorably driving Unicef towards acceptance of a rights perspective, in addition to a development perspective, in its worldwide work for children.

The illusion of 'peace in our time' that accompanied the end of the cold war proved short-lived. The closing two years of the 1980s were ones of optimism, with the UN universally acclaimed for its role as peace-broker. Iran and Iraq declared a halt after eight years of hostilities; Soviet troops withdrew from Afghanistan; Vietnamese troops withdrew from Cambodia; Namibia inched towards independence; and countries such as Cyprus, El Salvador and South Africa, which were embroiled in long-running internal confrontations, seemed closer to resolving their tensions. But the prospects of a peace dividend and the sense of a more unified and harmonious world quickly receded. First came Iraq's invasion of Kuwait and the 1991 Gulf War. Then came a contagion of nationalist and ethnic strife, much of it apparently unleashed by the removal of superpower rivalry as a controlling influence over threats of national destabilization.

In the different hemispheres and continents, even in the countries within them, the thaw in East-West relations had different implications: in much of Latin America and in South Africa, for example, it raised the stakes for the advent of democratic rule. But in many fissiparous environments previously ruled by authoritarian regimes bolstered by links to one or other hegemonic adversary, sectarian or inter-ethnic passions boiled to the surface. The regions most affected by this phenomenon, despite their very different histories, conditions of 'development' and political cultures, were the ex-USSR and Eastern Europe, and sub-Saharan Africa. The long economic crisis and the crushing effects of transition in one region and structural adjustment in the other added a further destabilizing influence[49]. In Africa, certain nation States whose contours had been artificially imposed in colonial times and were sustained by cold war dynamics now showed a propensity to disintegrate. No region was, however, exempt: in Asia, Afghanistan continued to implode; and in the Americas, Haiti was in a state of almost perpetual crisis.

The year 1992—the year in which the UN Secretary-General issued his policy document *An Agenda for Peace*—saw a further significant escalation in

the number of emergencies involving the UN system, especially the number in which conflict was the principal characteristic. The UN's twin roles as broker between warring parties and as main international supplier of humanitarian relief to their victims were simultaneously coming under intense pressure. As a result of loud complaints from donor countries and the international NGO community about the shortcomings of the UN's humanitarian response, a new Department of Humanitarian Affairs (DHA) was set up following a UN General Assembly resolution late in 1991. Therefore 1992, the year in which the Somali famine crisis confronted the world with the new phenomenon of the 'failed State', can be seen as a year in which international humanitarianism was confronted with the grim realities of the post–cold war era once the honeymoon was over.

For Unicef, as for many other organizations involved in emergency relief, the Somalia crisis in particular represented a defining experience for post–cold war emergency operations[50]. At the end of 1990, during the fighting that led to the overthrow of President Mohammed Siad Barre, the UN organizations and NGOs, with the exception of a very few including ICRC and Médecins sans Frontières, had evacuated Somalia[51]. During 1991, most NGOs returned; but the UN, including Unicef, did not; some supplies were provided but there was no international presence. Only in December 1991 did Unicef obtain permission from the UN Secretary-General to send in some resident staff and re-establish its operational base[52]. Part of the reason for the absence of the UN was the atomization of power in the country and lack of a clearly constituted government—the body with which all organizations operating under a UN umbrella must formally deal. The lack of concerted international action led to a deterioration in the compounding political and economic crisis in the country. All order disintegrated in the face of violence and chaos, while famine took hold.

From late 1991, Unicef built up its presence in Somalia, putting in place—like other agencies—increased logistics, supply, communication, transport and security systems to make up for the absence of normal government infrastructures. However, its actions at this time were later perceived by an internal assessment to have fallen into the category of 'too little, too late'[53]. During 1992, a cease-fire was brokered by the UN and a relief operation involving the UN system was developed. But in the chaotic political and security circumstances, it took time for the programme to become effective. The creation of DHA early in the year did not initially do much to ease the problems of relief and rehabilitation under the UN umbrella[54]: the modalities for DHA operations and lines of command within the new-style UN humanitarian

response were still embryonic. In the meantime, the children of Somalia starved. Unicef rightly felt in retrospect that it could and should have done more on their behalf.

The problem was that the organization's energies were engaged elsewhere. During 1992, while hundreds of thousands of Somali lives were lost or in peril, Unicef had still not elevated the famine crisis to a level of major corporate priority[55]. Staff in the Somali office were not given adequate support; the programme was not fully geared to the emergency circumstances, and many actions were undertaken on an ad hoc basis in response to a rising crescendo of NGO and media criticism[56]. In October 1992, a UN mission to Somalia headed by Jim Grant and Jan Eliasson, the new Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, finally brought about the necessary transformation of organizational concern. The mission led to the formation of a 100-day UN action programme for accelerated humanitarian assistance[57]. After this, things rapidly changed, but for too many Somali children the organizational commitment had come too late[58].

Within the new UN programme, Unicef was to provide survival assistance to displaced populations, help them return home and re-establish access to basic services, including health, nutrition, and water and sanitation[59]; significantly, although it had much the largest UN presence in the country, it did not take on the 'lead agency' role. The 100-day plan did much to restore—temporarily—the credibility of the UN's humanitarian response. But it did not do enough to ease immediate distress. In December 1992, a UN General Assembly resolution paved the way for the US-led military intervention 'Operation Restore Hope'. During 1993, this was handed over to UN leadership, but the humanitarian neutrality of the mission subsequently became compromised[60].

Amidst these difficulties and a continuing state of lawlessness and insecurity, Unicef and the other humanitarian organizations—UN and NGO—continued their programmes. For this, some relief workers—notably Sean Devereux and several other Unicef staff—paid with their lives. Others lived in a constant state of fear and anxiety for protracted periods, sometimes losing all faith in the fundamental decency of human relations and paying a high psychological price[61]. The need to provide counselling and other types of special support to staff serving in such settings as Somalia was recognized as a result of these experiences. This was among the emergency management reforms that Unicef began to introduce around this time.

Criticism of UN humanitarian operations had begun well before the Somalia crisis and was coupled with contemporary calls for UN reform—especially

for better inter-agency coordination. The Save the Children Fund was one of the NGOs most actively calling for improvements in the UN emergency response, and among other studies into UN reform, that of the Nordic UN Project was highly influential[62]. The creation of DHA early in 1992 was in large part a response to calls for reform dating from the post–Gulf War emergency in Iraq[63]. But the first few years of DHA's existence were extremely fraught as it tried to contend with the long list of accusations levelled at the UN's humanitarian record and achieve a viable *modus operandi* with powerful members of the UN system already on the humanitarian block.

DHA was not expected to take over the functions of existing UN organizations with their various mandates for humanitarian activity—principally Unicef on behalf of children, UNHCR on behalf of refugees and WFP as organizer of food aid, but also UNDP (as field-based system coordinator) and the specialized agencies FAO and WHO. DHA's purpose was, rather, to run consolidated fund-raising appeals so that the different organizations were not constantly appealing to donors in competition with each other for the same emergency victims, and to provide a mechanism for avoiding waste and duplication by coordinating the various programmes on the ground. From the outset, Unicef was a keen supporter of DHA. Grant saw its creation as useful not only for the UN system as a whole, but as a welcome bulwark against the increasing strain exerted on Unicef's resources—financial and human—by 'loud' emergencies.

In the early 1990s, UNICEF's annual emergency assistance expenditures rose dramatically year by year: from $49 million in 26 countries in 1990, to $111 in 50 countries in 1991, to $167 million in 54 countries in 1992, to $223 million in 64 countries in 1993[64]. The huge jump in expenditures was accounted for mainly by the programmes in Iraq, Somalia and Sudan, and by 1992-93, in former Yugoslavia[65], but the African continent as a whole was the most crisis-ridden. Major emergency programmes were under way in Angola, Ethiopia, Kenya, Liberia and Mozambique as well as in Somalia and the Sudan. As a proportion of annual programme expenditures, the increase in emergency spending was from less than 10 per cent during the 1980s to more than 20 per cent[66]. There were policy implications in this change—a change that in spite of the creation of DHA, which might have been expected to de-emphasize Unicef's role in emergency relief, was consistent year to year. Inevitably, the switch in the destination of an important share of Unicef resources and human effort recalled the long-standing sense of competition between the emergency and the development roles of an organization that had always embraced both within its humanitarian mandate.

For several years, Unicef had been building momentum behind the idea of saving millions of children's lives unnecessarily lost to the 'silent' emergency of common childhood ailments. The growing clamour surrounding the loss of children's lives in emergency situations was becoming a distraction from the main task Unicef had set itself for the decade: of helping countries develop and realize national programmes of action in the wake of the Children's Summit. It was true that, compared to the 13 million children who died from easily preventable disease, the fewer than 1 million who died in 'loud' emergencies was comparatively modest[67]. But the sight of children suffering and dying on the nightly television news in an increasing list of major emergencies imposed its own demands. In the public mind in countries around the world, organizations such as Unicef existed to respond to such predicaments. The crises of the 1990s left Unicef with little alternative than to bite the emergency bullet with greater intensity than ever before.

So soon after the false dawn of international peace and prosperity, with all its promise of 'peace dividends' and human development progress, it was with some initial reluctance that Unicef began to address the changing emergency world. The first major step came when, in 1991, Unicef commissioned an evaluation of its emergency activities in an effort to draw upon the lessons of the past, especially vis-à-vis emergency preparedness and institutional capacity[68]. The subject of Unicef's involvement in emergency relief was revisited by the Multi-Donor Evaluation of Unicef, conducted during 1992. The report commented on the need to resolve what were described as the organization's 'contradictory signals about the position of emergency response activities in the organization' and the need to develop a clear Unicef policy at the global level on how to deal with emergencies[69]. Within the next year, Unicef had begun to address these issues as a matter of priority, establishing a new Office of Emergency Programmes and instituting various structural and policy changes. These included enhanced staff training and capacity for emergencies, improved security provisions and new arrangements for rapid response to emergencies[70].

Gradually, the way in which the crisis landscape was being remoulded in the post–cold war world was emerging into view. Not only was there no longer a clear-cut dichotomy between disasters classically described as 'natural' and 'man-made'. Even emergencies that appeared to be of recent inception—those in Rwanda and Burundi, for example—were the product of long-term processes in which ethnic hatreds were one element among others: environmental degradation, human displacement, population pressure on land and declining terms of trade. These emergencies were, therefore, essentially

ongoing. They were not temporary phenomena, breakdowns in the state of regular affairs. Turmoil in such countries had become the context of normal life, as much a manifestation of the development process—or its failure—as of a short-term halt within it[71]. The 'loud' emergencies had merged with the 'silent', or more accurately, had become ongoing acute silent emergencies that sporadically attracted loud attention. No longer was there a sense that in such environments aid for relief and aid for development were separate and competing.

Emergencies had once been characterized by images of hungry children, soup kitchens, ration bowls and teams of emergency helpers, many in medical uniform, trained to run camps and carry out emergency first aid. But this approach to dealing with population flight, the disruption of farming and subsistence life, the destruction of service infrastructure, and outbreaks of nutritional shortage or epidemic disease was clearly less than adequate. Increasingly, the humanitarian relief environment was becoming dominated by the need to find new techniques to respond to the 'complex' emergency.

The changes introduced into Unicef's emergency management system during the 1990s were a response to the evolving nature, and the expanding scale, of contemporary disasters. The word 'complex' embraced both causes and effects.

Complex emergencies were defined as those 'on a major scale, usually involving multiple causes with more than one political entity directly involved'[72]. Often, especially in Africa, drought as well as conflict contributed to mass population movement and serious food shortage, and was part of the layered complexity of cause and effect. In some cases the state of emergency became permanent as formal economic and civic structures collapsed, and dominant groups plundered whatever assets the general population retained by violence and thuggery[73]. In early 1993, out of around 50 ongoing emergencies, 10 were classified by the UN as 'complex': those in Afghanistan, Angola, Azerbaijan, Cambodia, Iraq, Liberia, Mozambique, Somalia, the Sudan and former Yugoslavia[74]. In 1994, Rwanda and Burundi were added.

However, the designation 'complex' for an emergency was to some extent tautological; since when had emergencies been simple? The use of this term by the UN had as much to do with the intricacies of political breakdown in the post–cold war environment as to compounding emergency causes. Most conflicts were no longer between nation States, nor even between two clearly defined political parties using weaponry rather than words to contest an existing national territory. They were, rather, a violent manifestation of clashing

and overlapping tensions—ethnic, religious, ideological—by groups vying for control over some part but not necessarily all of an existing State.

Fighting did not take place on a battlefield, nor was it primarily conducted by armies constituting the military wing of coherent political groups capable—should they win—of instituting effective government. It bore a strong resemblance to forms of warfare and civil upheaval common in the pre-modern era and long relegated to history, now being hideously revived with the addition of modern arms. Therefore, a set of organizations such as the UN, which had been designed exclusively to deal with relations between nation States—or, at a pinch, aspirant 'national' entities—had some difficulty in describing such situations, let alone in devising mechanisms to respond to them[75]. In the new era of internalized and deformalized warfare, the machinery of international humanitarianism faced challenges it was ill-prepared to meet.

With its long track record of elevating children's needs above the political divide, and more recently of negotiating 'corridors of peace' and 'days of tranquillity', Unicef appeared better rehearsed for negotiating humanitarian access with 'illegitimate' warring groups than UN organizations only used to interacting with recognized authorities. In its 1991 emergency evaluation report, this characteristic of Unicef's de facto mandate was described as one of its 'comparative advantages'[76]. However, where armed conflict was endemic among a number of groups—as in Liberia, Somalia, the Sudan and former Yugoslavia—it was difficult to negotiate stable understandings with the various factions. A Unicef attempt to bring about a 'week of tranquillity' in Bosnia-Herzegovina so that supplies could be brought in before the winter of 1992-93 was only partially successful because the parties involved did not hold to their agreements.

The new type of conflicts had special implications for their civilian victims. Combatants did not confine themselves to destroying enemy forces. They also set about winning over parts of the population and demonizing others, using high levels of brutality and collective violence, including against children. This phenomenon had already been witnessed in the 1980s in the Iran-Iraq war and in Mozambique. In the 1990s, it became more widespread. In the besieged cities of former Yugoslavia, for example, children were shot at by snipers as a macabre form of target practice[77]. In the Philippines, children brought up amidst armed insurrection frequently became guerrilla fighters in their teens, having absorbed from elders the idea that killing people was a normal kind of activity[78]. In Rwanda and Burundi, youngsters of the alternate ethnic group might be specifically targeted by genocidal gangs in an effort to destroy the next generation.

There were other more general ways in which children suffered from what ought to be an anachronistic type of warfare. Combatants often pursued a scorched-earth policy, destroying homes, social networks, community infrastructure and people's means of livelihood. In Angola, for example, the combined consequences of 10 years of warfare and drought contributed to a significant deterioration of children's nutritional condition, with between 25 and 40 per cent of children suffering from moderate malnutrition[79]. Similarly, in southern Sudan, a 1993 nutritional survey found that in areas with a recent influx of displaced families, malnutrition rates among the under-fives were 56 per cent[80].

As the 1990s advanced, upholding the UN's guiding principles of humanitarian relief—'impartiality, neutrality and humanity'[81]—in environments characterized by indifference to human rights and the collapse of civil administration and of normal economic life became increasingly difficult. Some NGOs preferred to adopt a stance of solidarity since at least this gave them access to the civilian population under the control of the 'illegitimate' side[82]. In circumstances where the humanitarian writ simply did not run, NGOs became increasingly the conduits for inputs of bilateral or international assistance to those inaccessible to the formal machinery of intergovernmental cooperation.

It proved, for example, extremely difficult to sustain Operation Lifeline Sudan in the face of a refusal by the embattled parties to respect the neutrality of humanitarian assistance and its practitioners. In 1994, conditions of insecurity caused 50 temporary evacuations of relief workers stationed in southern Sudan[83], and the destruction of compounds and looting of relief supplies in their absence. Practical expression of the original acquiescence gained for humanitarian principle frequently collapsed, but it also never entirely dissipated. In 1995, the SPLA became the first 'illegitimate' combatant group in dispute with a recognized national government to commit itself to the provisions of the International Convention on the Rights of the Child.

In the circumstances of certain complex emergencies, particularly those where genocidal activity was involved, the concept of 'innocent civilians' seemed to evaporate. Yet this was the concept on which the laws and conventions surrounding humanitarian assistance had all been erected, as had the idea of 'children as a zone of peace'. In some environments—the Rwandan crisis of 1994, for example—civilians, including children, were so systematically brutalized that it was almost impossible to separate the 'guilty' from the 'innocent'; in early 1995, an estimated 300 children were held in Rwandan prisons as suspected war criminals. In the case of these children, Unicef was a provider of food and medical help, and a defender of the basic human rights of the imprisoned, especially of those accused of genocide[84].

In circumstances fraught with hatred, aid to civilians could itself become a weapon of war. Combatant respect for symbols such as the Red Cross or the blue UN flag became less reliable. Instead of enjoying immunity from the contest, international relief became something protagonists admitted or withheld from adversary populations according to their current strategic purpose: witness the fate of many relief convoys in former Yugoslavia. Whether or not aid was allowed to pass through barricades might depend on military strategy or on whether a combatant party currently wished to present itself in an internationally favourable light. The media have become part of the armoury of warfare, wooed and manipulated by adversaries to pursue outcomes that guns, shells and international diplomacy have failed to bring about. In the humanitarian context, the media have often been 'played' to provoke international public sympathy for civilian victims, especially in the countries of powerful and important potential allies.

In the effort to create or maintain 'humanitarian space', the world's leading powers have taken unprecedented actions in the emergencies of the 1990s. The first occasion was in early 1991, when military forces were used to secure physical space in northern Iraq—the 'safe havens'—in which international assistance would be distributed to Kurdish refugees. This breach of the principle of national sovereignty—the idea of a 'right to humanitarian intervention'—was widely applauded at the time as a symptom of the world's growing insistence on the duty of the international community to protect human life. But subsequent deployments of troops under UN auspices in Somalia and former Yugoslavia to protect relief operations were more ambiguous in their outcomes and much more controversial. There are now serious questions about whether the militarization of international assistance in the deformalized and 'illegitimate' wars of the post–cold war is to the advantage of effective humanitarian practice[85].

Such viewpoints form part of the debates surrounding the ethics and principles of humanitarianism thrown up during recent crises. The removal of transcendent superpower interests in the causes and outcomes of emergency situations produced naïve expectations that a UN system driven only by the purest of motives could intervene successfully simply because its efforts were uncluttered by ideological and strategic rivalry. When this vision first came into view, the UN's image benefited enormously from the prominence it gained in the new diplomatic and relief climate. But its institutions and member organizations quickly found themselves—literally and metaphorically—in the firing line.

All parts of the UN system involved in any way with diplomatic and humanitarian affairs have suffered intense scrutiny and criticism for their performance in the face of the new world disorder. Unicef has not been immune to such criticism, as the Multi-Donor Evaluation of 1992 clearly illustrated. At the same time, some Unicef staff members have had to put their lives on the line in order to carry out the emergency relief mandate in extremely difficult circumstances. Over the past five years, more than 20 national and international staff members have lost their lives in conflict situations, to random violence, to genocidal attack (in Rwanda in 1994) and by deliberate murder.

Unicef as an organization has been protected from controversy in some degree by its mandate for children, whose helplessness and innocence gives some protection to efforts made on their behalf. Since the rise of children on national and international agendas, and the passage of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the fate of children in the contemporary world carries an increasingly forceful moral charge. Even among the most brutalized of armed combatants, the desire to relieve the suffering of children where the conscience can still be touched continues to count for something. The power of the children's cause to advance humanitarian space should not be underestimated, nor can it afford to be: there are few similar means of leverage at humankind's command.

Meanwhile, Unicef has continued the process of reform and streamlining of its emergency mechanisms. It is now more common for Unicef programmes in countries where emergencies are ongoing to interface regularly between emergency relief, rehabilitation and longer-term development. Although funded under separate headings, cooperation frequently takes identical forms: support for immunization, control of diarrhoeal diseases, repair or construction of water supply and sanitation systems, support for household food security and income-generation among women.

The fact that Unicef has been engaged long term in many naturally disaster-prone countries—such as Bangladesh, and in Africa—has meant adapting local operations to circumstances of sudden or creeping emergency. Unicef's decentralized character on the ground, coupled with the capacity of its supplies procurement operation, UNIPAC, based in Copenhagen, has the potential for flexibility and speed of response. However, all these 'comparative advantages' have felt an intense degree of strain, and more needs to be done to make them fully 'advantageous'[86].

In the meantime, new policy issues relating to emergencies have crowded the agenda: what to do for the growing populations of the internally dis-

placed—25 million at end 1994[87]—who do not carry the status of refugees because they have not crossed an international frontier; how to promote a ban on land-mines; how to lessen the impact of sanctions on children; what to do about mass rape and the special human rights violations experienced by women in warfare. Relatively new areas of emergency programme activity also required policy definition: best practice in the context of psychosocial counselling; how to demobilize and detraumatize child soldiers; how to deal with conditions of social breakdown in the 'failed State', including the problem of increasing numbers of orphaned and unaccompanied children. And still there are questions as to whether Unicef has truly been willing to accept that emergencies will play a central part in its programme activities until the millennium and probably well beyond.
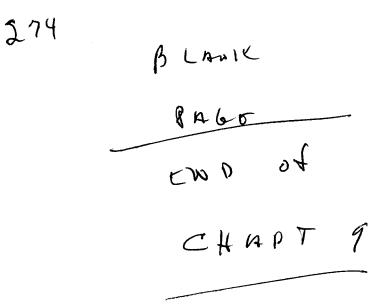
When Unicef first came into existence, the response to the emergency needs of children was 'some milk, and some fat...on bread'[88]. Supplies of drugs and vaccination equipment were later added, but there was no idea of extending relief and rehabilitation programmes beyond support for children's physical well-being. The subsequent 50 years have seen a metamorphosis in humanitarian activity, both in the techniques applied within the traditional response areas of food, shelter and medical first aid, and in the evolution of new types of programmes to respond to aspects of emergency-induced damage. They have also seen a sea change in attitudes in most parts of the world, hastened by the advent of the television era and the visual evidence of cruelties and inhumanities that remained under wraps in the past.

Although the new world disorder and the phenomenon of the 'failed State' sometimes seem to have ushered in a new age of barbarism, it is not the case that wartime atrocities against 'innocent civilians', including children, are previously unknown; the pages of history are riddled with them. What has changed even more than the rules of wartime engagement in the late 20th century is our level of awareness of warfare's many forms of human damage, and a concomitant change in values that demands that this damage be prevented or repaired. Fifty years after it was founded, Unicef's evolving approach to children affected by complex emergencies reflects that change in values at the international level, and tries to influence them further.

In many emergency circumstances—in Angola, for example, and in Mozambique—Unicef still provides today's protein-rich equivalent of dried milk for traditional programmes of supplementary child feeding. Immunization campaigns, water supply repairs and rebuilding the primary health service

infrastructure are also *de rigueur*. But the initiatives of the 1980s and 1990s—psychosocial counselling, the maintenance of schooling, land-mine awareness, efforts to reunite lost children with their families and 'Education for Peace'—are also becoming regular components of emergency country programmes. Programmes of today, unlike their cruder predecessors of 50 years ago, undertake much more than physical first aid. They aim to repair the psychological capacity of children and families, and to protect the state of childhood itself.

The existence of the Convention on the Rights of the Child now provides a basis for advocacy on behalf of emergency-affected children. In the face of wide-scale human rights abuses, it may prove impossible to hold governments to the commitments they have made on behalf of children by appending their signatures to this international treaty[89]. Nevertheless, the Convention provides a legitimate basis for shaming warring parties over their disregard of children's well-being and for advancing the proposition of 'children first'. Programmes for 'Education for Peace' emphasize the provisions of the Convention as a basis for building mutual respect and understanding between children of all races, and between children and adults.

In 1994, in response to a General Assembly Resolution, the UN Secretary-General appointed a Special Rapporteur, Graça Machel of Mozambique, to head a worldwide study on the impact of armed conflict on children, with support from Unicef. The report on this study will go before the UN General Assembly close to the date of the 50th anniversary of the resolution that conjured into existence a UN 'International Children's Emergency Fund'. It is to be hoped that the coincidence will prove prophetic for the children's cause.

274

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CHAPT 9