

Chapter 10

Towards 2000 and Beyond

It is a cloudless day in northern Mexico in May 1994 and a grand public occasion is under way. In a ruined church containing dignitaries, politicians, mayors, officials and a children's choir, Governor Arturo Romo de Gutierrez of Zacatecas is launching his 'new State policy in favour of the child': better health care, more rural schools, more popular participation. 'We must build a new world, a society of peace, democracy and progress in which all can live well, especially the children.'¹

This language of political commitment to children, echoed in strikingly similar speeches on platforms in places as far apart geographically and politically as Brazil and Bangladesh, South Africa and Senegal, the Philippines and India, could be easily traced to its source. It had travelled four years and several hundred speeches from the World Summit for Children. Mexico was one of the first countries to lay out a national programme of action to put into effect the promises made at the Summit.

The then President of Mexico, Carlos Salinas de Gortari, called his first 'Meeting for Monitoring and Evaluating Summit Commitments' in early November 1990, barely a month after the Summit was held. Jim Grant of Unicef attended this 'national evaluation' and others that followed: the seventh evaluation meeting in October 1994 was one of the last public engagements Grant's failing health allowed him to undertake. At these events, as in the ruined church at Zacatecas, health, social affairs and education officials recounted their achievements on behalf of Mexican children to prolonged and much-publicized applause. After the end of his presidential term, Salinas' name became besmirched in ill-repute; a commitment to the politics of childhood is

not a guarantee of sainthood. But it was due to Salinas' commitment to Grant's vision that Mexico lowered its 1990 infant mortality rate by one third, six years ahead of the target date set at the Children's Summit².

When UN Secretary-General Pérez de Cuéllar asked Unicef to follow up on countries' Summit commitments, he could never have envisaged how assiduously it would do so. Between 1990 and the end of 1994, Jim Grant and his country representatives held over 100 meetings with Presidents and Prime Ministers to promote the Summit goals³. Nearly 100 countries had prepared and launched national programmes of action (NPAs) to 'keep the promise to children'. Even more impressively, in 76 countries, such programmes had been started or were in preparation at state, provincial or municipal level⁴. By 1995, this 'decentralization of the NPA process' was relatively far advanced in 50 countries, according to a survey conducted by the International Child Development Centre in Florence⁵. Among those to join the Governor of Zacatecas in calling for improvements for children were 24 state governors in Brazil, 60 city leaders in the Philippines and 13 mayors of West African capitals⁶.

All this activity, and Unicef's direct and indirect role in it, was exemplary by comparison with most national and local outcomes of lofty resolutions passed in international fora. Some of these programmes of action, perhaps, were not much more than glossy documents expressing good intentions. But a large number were important instruments, developed painstakingly by a range of national and local officials, for reshaping and streamlining health and education services and remotivating their staffs. Some were introduced in tandem with new systems for collecting data to measure health, nutritional and educational progress. These were systematically encouraged by Unicef, with advice and funds as part of the Summit follow-up and NPA process.

During the early 1990s, Unicef's organizational culture became dominated by 'the goals'. In the 1980s, the central mission—expressed as the 'child survival revolution'—had been the reduction of young child mortality. Following the Summit, it had become a broader extension of the same idea: reductions of children's rates of death, disease, malnutrition and illiteracy with reference not to one, but to several, key social indicators. As with young child mortality, these indicators were regarded not simply as measures of a population's state of poverty but as key symptoms of its plight that should themselves be attacked in the name, and on behalf, of children. Improvements in these indicators were seen as contributing to the reduction of poverty itself.

This emphasis on measurable and time-bound goals—an emphasis reinforced in 1993 by the setting of the mid-decade goals (see Chapter 6)—led to charges in some quarters that Unicef was more interested in what was de-

scribed as 'targetitis' than in 'sustainability'⁷. Such criticism failed to take into account the importance attached by Unicef over the past decade to improving techniques for measuring how programmes were faring, especially in the field of public health. New methods using cluster surveys had first been developed to help measure progress towards universal child immunization, and were introduced into many countries with Unicef's help. After the Summit, a quick and comprehensive survey methodology for measuring progress towards all 'the goals' was developed, with support from WHO, UNFPA, the UN Statistics Office, Unicef and the Centers for Disease Control in Atlanta. Its widespread use meant that the degree of precision with which many countries were now collecting data in the social sector was unprecedented. As well as the reporting benefits, such techniques provided quick feedback to communities and authorities on how well they were performing programmatically⁸. The investment Unicef made in helping authorities understand what was going on in the poorest 20 per cent of communities was regarded not just as a means of measuring whether targets were being reached, but as an important element of Unicef cooperation in its own right⁹.

Unicef also placed a strong emphasis on 'the goals' as a public relations exercise to mobilize and maintain forward momentum towards them. But to dismiss this as 'targetitis' was unfair. The scale of NPA preparation, the volume of child-related rhetoric it produced and the degree of serious attention paid in many countries to monitoring and evaluation as an essential part of programming were counterweights to the occasional provocative critique. Many directors of social sector services found that the new political backing they enjoyed opened up new vistas. In some cases, the setting of targets induced the very shake-up and redirection of health and educational services, which everyone agreed was at least as important as the goals themselves. Even the fact that the 'goals-led strategy' generated controversy—as selective primary health care had done a few years before—showed that the post-Summit process was making its mark in elevating children and social objectives on the policy-making agenda.

In 1993, in addition to its annual *State of the World's Children* report, Unicef published the first in a new series of reports entitled *The Progress of Nations*. This was principally devised as another boost to the goal-driven process. *The Progress of Nations* set out to monitor countries' rates of minimum human needs satisfaction by bringing together statistics on the progress each was making in health, nutrition, education, family planning and progress for women¹⁰. Its controversial characteristic was to list countries in their order of performance in these areas, implicitly criticizing those whose performance fell

behind that of others whose GNP was similar. The digest of information the report contained was valuable in its own right, but the publication's wider purpose was to use global statistical comparison to influence national policy-making in the child's direction. This was taking social number-crunching a step further than Unicef had ever taken it before.

The report also took the opportunity to highlight the fact that if countries were sincere in wanting to achieve progress towards measurable improvements in human well-being, they would have to put in place the means of essential data collection. More, and up-to-date, information was needed about disease case-loads, service delivery figures, even births and deaths. This was a theme reiterated in subsequent editions of *The Progress of Nations* in 1994 and 1995. The need for better data—one of the themes of the 1990s—was the flip side of the emphasis on targets and goals.

As the mid-point of the decade drew near, Unicef began to exert the maximum leverage at its disposal to encourage countries to meet the mid-decade goals. In late 1994, *The State of the World's Children* for 1995—the last of these reports to be issued during Jim Grant's lifetime—reviewed in detail the practical accomplishments so far. The verdict was that more than 100 of the developing nations, with over 90 per cent of the developing world's children, were making significant progress¹¹. According to Grant: 'Overall, it is clear that a majority of the goals set for 1995 are going to be met by a majority of the developing nations. This means that, by mid-decade, about 2.5 million fewer children will be dying every year from malnutrition and disease. And at least three quarters of a million fewer children each year will be disabled, blinded, crippled or mentally retarded.'¹²

Rarely, if ever, had so many nations in the world rallied behind a common social programme and made such progress towards its accomplishment. To a degree that Unicef could not and did not lay claim to because its organizational impetus was only one element among many, this had happened because of Jim Grant. Not only had he had the vision of a Summit and Summit goals; he had thought out a subsequent strategy for creating national and local bandwagons to transform the rhetoric produced by the Summit into reality. And the momentum for this process had been sustained for several years after the event itself had faded into the past.

One of the most outstanding successes was the progress being made against iodine deficiency disorders (IDDs). Following the Children's Summit, all 94 countries whose populations were affected had agreed to aim for 95 per cent iodization of common salt—the simplest method of mass IDD prevention—by 1995. By 1994, 60 were on target. Other notable successes included the

promotion of breastfeeding by the establishment of baby-friendly hospitals, improvements in immunization tallies and significant advances towards polio eradication in 43 out of the 55 countries that had set themselves a 1995 deadline.

This round-up of post-Summit achievement in the *State of the World's Children* report concluded by commenting that to maintain momentum towards the year 2000 goals, more support was needed from the industrialized nations. At the time of the Summit, only a small proportion of all aid—around 10 per cent—was being allocated to social investment. The industrialized countries had promised to review their aid programmes with a view to helping the developing countries meet the Summit goals. In the four-year interim, little had happened towards a comprehensive revision of donor priorities. Not only the quality of aid, but its quantity was unimpressive: as a proportion of donor countries' GNP, official development assistance (ODA) had been declining since the early 1980s, and in 1993 had reached an average of 0.29 per cent—the lowest for 20 years¹³. Moreover, the share of United Nations resources being devoted to relief and emergency work had increased from 25 per cent of the total budget in 1988 to 45 per cent in 1992¹⁴. This was perhaps inevitable given the spate of crises—in the Persian Gulf, Rwanda, Somalia, the Sudan, former Yugoslavia—that had erupted in recent years, but it was an unfortunate indication of a transfer of resources from causes to cure, the report concluded.

In early 1995, the World Summit for Social Development in Copenhagen was looming. Here was a new opportunity for those countries that controlled three quarters of the world's wealth and dominated the international machinery of trade, aid and finance to commit more investment to sustainable human development. In early 1995, Unicef—now temporarily under the directorship of Richard Jolly following the death of Jim Grant in January—made its presentation for this latest World Summit. Children and youth, Unicef claimed, should be at the heart of the new international social pact called for by UN Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali.

Since the Children's Summit, Unicef claimed, the world had already made considerable progress in meeting those needs, 'and the potential exists to make that progress truly global'¹⁵. To accomplish this, concrete goals for the reduction of poverty should be set and the necessary resources allocated. The 20/20 formula—the donor nations to provide 20 per cent of ODA and the developing countries to allocate 20 per cent of their government budgets to the social sector—was developed under the auspices of UNDP and strongly promoted during the Summit by Unicef, UNDP, UNESCO, UNFPA, WHO and a number of NGOs.

For much of the last four decades, no matter how strongly the problem of world poverty had been presented as one for which the richer nations of the world must shoulder their share of responsibility, the necessary commitment—moral and financial—had not been forthcoming. Their failure was a central theme of Grant's last *State of the World's Children* report, which had further stated that time was running out. In the early decades of the post-colonial inheritance and with the cold war raging, there had been both an economic and a strategic—not to mention a humanitarian—case for the investment of public funds into the notional equivalent of an international welfare state. Not only had the basis for that case gradually changed in the intervening years, but the strategic need to win 'third world' allies with a judicious use of aid was disappearing rapidly into history. The whole nature of internationalism, and the mechanisms by which it was expressed, were suffering acute strain as an outcome of their liberation from superpower stasis.

The Social Summit that took place in Copenhagen in March 1995 attracted 116 Heads of State: the largest number until then ever to attend an international meeting. The brightest hope of its anti-poverty agenda—the 20/20 initiative—was diluted during negotiation¹⁶. Many donors were unwilling to commit themselves to spending a fixed proportion of their aid on social needs; developing countries were equally unwilling to commit themselves to spending one fifth of their GNP the way the world told them to. This was understandable, given the indignities to which they had been subjected in the recent past over programmes of structural adjustment. However, many country delegations brought to the Conference achievements in poverty reduction—accomplished against the odds of the 'lost development decade' of the 1980s. Unicef itself issued a special report entitled *Profiles in Success*, detailing the social progress achieved by countries that were not necessarily high earners, but that had adopted development strategies targeted at the poor¹⁷.

Whether or not the Social Summit could regenerate the cause of 'development' as an international anti-poverty crusade was the question underlying its ambitious agenda. Of all the problems in the world, decades of 'development' had shown that poverty was the least susceptible to universal characterization or a composite solution. Joblessness, widening economic divides and social alienation were not issues that were easy to address other than rhetorically at an international level.

Given the tensions and distractions of the 'new world disorder', it was difficult to see early in 1995 where the cause of international development was headed. Twin themes important to Unicef—a focus on human well-being on the one hand and on sustainability on the other—were continuing to gain

ground, but the space occupied on the international agenda by the cause of 'development' generally was shrinking. It was certain that for as long as there was an international anti-poverty agenda, Unicef would promote the cause of children as its leading edge. Equally, it would champion the elimination of poverty as a leading edge of action on behalf of children. But the development framework was no longer the only, nor perhaps even the main, context in which the children's cause was now moving forward.

The role of the Convention on the Rights of the Child in the post-Summit pursuit of 'goals' was not immediately conspicuous. Unicef was pledged by the Convention's terms (Article 45) to assist in its implementation, complementing the work of the Committee on the Rights of the Child, a 10-member body of experts elected by States Parties¹⁸. However, in most Unicef country offices, as in headquarters, support for the Convention was largely perceived as an external relations exercise whose main purpose was to gain country ratifications. Grant fervently supported the ratification of the Convention by as many countries as possible, and put considerable personal and organizational energy into promoting these ratifications. Beyond this, Unicef advocacy concerning the Convention was intended to inform governments, citizens, NGOs and children themselves about the concept of child rights and their expression in international law.

In 1990 the Convention was, therefore, still regarded by much of Unicef—with the notable exception of Latin American country offices—as peripheral to its own child-centred human development mission. From 1991-92 an alternative school of thought began to develop. The theme of complementarity between the Summit goals and the Convention articles came to the fore, largely due to the International Child Development Centre in Florence¹⁹. Commentators wove their way between two perceptions of the Convention: one, that it could help achieve 'the goals'; the other, that the implementation of the Convention itself was the most important goal of all and ought to be the basis of all Unicef action. The Convention, as a relatively timeless international treaty, legitimized the goals²⁰; meanwhile, a country's determined pursuit of 'the goals' was an indication that it was actively trying to honour the rights designated in the Convention²¹.

By a process of comparison and fusion, therefore, the Convention and the goals became interlinked. Gradually the Convention began to be perceived less as some separate manifesto for children on parts of which Unicef was active than as an overarching statement expressing values and norms that should

inform everything that Unicef was doing. In spite of increasing lip-service paid to this perspective, however, there continued to be a weak manifestation in practical terms—programming guidelines, policy documentation, budgetary allocations—of Unicef commitment to the Convention as an ultimate frame of reference. Over the natural course of organizational absorption of such a major international statement of standards concerning childhood, and with help from key individuals, this was to change. But for the meantime, for all practical purposes, ‘the goals’ continued to hold sway.

While Unicef country offices in the developing world were caught up in post-Summit activity, the Unicef National Committees in the industrialized countries were also gazing out over enlarged horizons. For them, too, a new chapter had opened. Before the Summit, some had feared that it would be a spectacular ‘global event’, largely without substance. In its wake, their doubts dissolved. The Summit had given both children and Unicef a profile much enhanced by the *gravitas* conferred by top-rank political participation. It had caught a ground swell of increasing public concern about childhood in the industrialized world; Unicef had built a Summit wave, and had used that wave to carry forward the children’s agenda. However, there were many other items on that agenda—child neglect, child abuse, single-parenting, preschool education, drugs, juvenile crime, the State’s reduction of services—that were not prominently mentioned in the Summit Declaration or Plan of Action but were very prominent in industrialized countries’ preoccupation with their children.

Although the Summit helped to reinforce the advocacy platform, ‘the goals’ did not carry the same dynamic force in the industrialized countries as they did elsewhere. This was not surprising given that they were mainly designed to deal with classic problems of child malnutrition, hunger, illiteracy and ill-health experienced in the countries of the developing world. The role of the industrialized countries in meeting the Summit goals was essentially that of donor, although efforts were made to encourage them to prepare NPAs, and many did so²². But there was not the same need to secure governmental commitments to targets that bore little relation to contemporary manifestations of poverty in the fully industrialized State.

Yet the post-Summit atmosphere increased the growing feeling that the situation of children in the industrialized world ought now to command some degree of Unicef’s concern. For the first time, the subject was tackled in *The State of the World’s Children* for 1991²³. During the 1980s, the report stated, the proportion of children living below official poverty lines had increased in many Western countries, paralleling the situation of children in developing countries mired in debt and economic crisis. The countries in which this had

happened included Canada, Germany, Ireland, the United Kingdom and the United States. In the United Kingdom, for example, the proportion of children living in families whose income was less than half the national average had more than doubled during the decade, from 12 per cent in 1979 to 26 per cent in 1989²⁴. In the US, one child in five was estimated to be living in poverty. According to Marian Wright Edelman, President of the Children's Defense Fund, a leading anti-poverty voice for children in the United States: 'The inattention to children by our society poses a greater threat to our safety, harmony and productivity than any external enemy.'

Unicef was beginning to feel its way towards a role vis-à-vis all the world's children rather than those exclusively in the developing world. The difficulty was that while it remained locked into a definition of child distress borrowed from models describing poverty solely in terms of classic survival, health and education indicators, there was no clear basis of legitimacy for a broader concern. Within the Unicef world-view, countries were divided into donors and recipients; although over historical time, some countries had switched camps—countries in Eastern and Central Europe, for example, moving across the divide in one direction, and Hong Kong, Korea and Singapore crossing in the other—the broad axis remained that of rich world versus poor.

All Unicef's programmatic and policy advisory work took place in the 'poor' world: essentially the world of low per capita GNP, but also the world that performed badly according to the classic survival, health and education indicators. Therefore, although Unicef might fund research into child poverty in the 'rich world'—and tentatively began to do so—there was nowhere for Unicef to go with such research. Thus a 1993 study²⁵ made interesting and important points about the way the market-led drive for prosperity in the US and UK was discriminating against children. But other than by attracting a *frisson* of media attention, there was no mechanism whereby its conclusions could be fed into any policy-making apparatus.

If a rights perspective was superimposed on the poverty perspective, these problems fell away. Many of the concerns relating to children and childhood in the industrialized countries centred on child protection, or what Unicef had described since 1986 (see Chapter 5) as CEDC—'children in especially difficult circumstances'; invariably, most CEDC were children of the poor, or of racial or ethnic minorities. In some countries, one child in three suffered family breakdown²⁶; the number of children raised in single-parent households was rising everywhere. So were reported cases of child abuse: in Britain, these were three times more numerous in the early 1990s than in 1970²⁷. There were other signs of childhood and adolescent dislocation. In the US, figures both of

suicides and murder cases showed a rising proportion of child and adolescent victims²⁸. In many industrialized and industrializing countries, young people were becoming disaffected by their inability to find work and join the social mainstream. The results showed up in crime statistics, teenage pregnancy and the relatively high level of HIV infection among the young²⁹. Like counterparts on the streets of Nairobi, Rio and Bombay, certain young people in New York, Paris and London were retreating into a world of homelessness, violence, sex and drugs.

The National Committees—the bodies that represented Unicef in industrialized countries and whose traditional role was fund-raising and public information—were unsure how to engage with children's issues in their own societies. But they increasingly found themselves forced by the weight of public interest to comment on the international dimensions of issues such as child labour, children victimized by war and conflict, child slavery and prostitution. A framework now existed for their involvement. The Convention was not only a relatively timeless instrument; it was truly universal in its conception and application. Its articles required adherence in West and East, North and South, independently of a country's per capita GNP and social indicators performance.

A process different from the familiar one of running fund-raising and information programmes in the industrialized world to meet children's needs in the developing world was required. In developing countries, responding to children's needs included monitoring the situation of children, advocacy on behalf of disadvantaged groups, policy debate and legislative change; all these were equally relevant in industrialized countries. The Convention opened up new possibilities for Unicef National Committees³⁰. It gave them licence to campaign on child protection issues—such as the restriction of infant formula marketing, for example, or a ban on the production and sale of land-mines—which concerned children in 'developing' and 'developed' settings alike. The North/South dichotomy was anyway becoming increasingly blurred in the post-cold war world. Even while National Committees in industrialized societies were beginning to take up advocacy for child rights, some Unicef country offices—such as the Brazil office—were undertaking fund-raising and information among the general public.

The new visibility of the children's cause increased the Unicef National Committees' sense of self-confidence. This was a time when the prominence of the voluntary and non-governmental sector was generally increasing, partly because it was regarded as having an important role to play in the evolution of civil society in the post-communist world, and partly because, both as re-

source- and service-provider, more was demanded of private philanthropy in a climate politically and economically hostile to bureaucracy and the State.

A combination of these factors, together with the outbreak of emergency situations in the early 1990s, led to a substantial increase in the overall proportion of funds provided to Unicef by the Committees and other partners in the private sector. Between 1990 and 1992, National Committee and NGO contributions rose by over \$80 million, a proportion of 40 per cent³¹. In 1994, the non-governmental income from the Committees, greeting cards and private sector income was \$327 million out of a total Unicef income of \$1,006 million³². Significantly, at a time when multilateral aid volumes were under threat, Unicef's income was buoyant and private contributions were increasing.

The National Committees' contribution of nearly one third of Unicef's resources led to changes in the relationship between them and the Unicef secretariat. Many of them gained in self-confidence, and their increased resources allowed them more room for manoeuvre in their own programmes of advocacy and 'education for development'. Their professionalism regarding Unicef issues increased along with their autonomy. They benefited, too, from the fact that they were NGOs, a breed of organization whose star in international circles was rising, while the UN generally was struggling to maintain a positive image in the eyes of governments and the general public. This network of autonomous Committees helping to put Unicef's cause constantly before the public throughout the industrialized world was an asset unique within the UN system and much envied. Their increased importance was formally recognized by many of their governments. By 1988, 21 out of 33 National Committees were represented in their government delegations to the Unicef Executive Board³³; their leaders were also represented on Unicef delegations to UN meetings such as the International Nutrition Conference in 1993 and the Social Summit in 1995.

The expanding 'Grand Alliance' on behalf of the children's cause was also reflected by the number of distinguished artists, celebrities, intellectuals, sportsmen and sportswomen who had become Goodwill Ambassadors for Unicef. For most of its life it had been 'represented' by only two core Goodwill Ambassadors: Danny Kaye (1953 until his death in 1987) and Peter Ustinov, who by 1995 had served for over 25 years and undertaken countless television and personal appearances. In 1980, Liv Ullmann—the first woman Ambassador—had similarly become a highly committed emissary, visiting Unicef programmes in a number of countries³⁴. In the late 1980s came a sudden spate of new Goodwill and Sports Ambassadors: Richard Attenborough, Harry Belafonte, Tetsuko Kuroyanagi, Roger Moore, Edmund Hillary, Vanessa Redgrave, Judy

Collins, Imran Khan, Johann Olav Koss, Julio Iglesias, Mario Kreutzberger, Youssou N'Dour, Neon Nai and Nana Mouskouri³⁵.

But the gentle actress whose dedication to Unicef from the late 1980s conferred upon her a starring ambassadorial role was Audrey Hepburn. Appointed in 1988, Hepburn travelled widely on behalf of Unicef, especially to famine-stricken African countries—Ethiopia, Somalia and the Sudan—which she visited at considerable risk and discomfort. The sufferings of the children of Africa affected her deeply and were those with which she closely identified in her new career as international children's champion. On her death in January 1993, an Audrey Hepburn Memorial Fund was set up to benefit specific projects for African children in crisis³⁶. The contribution of Ambassadors such as Belafonte, Hepburn, Ullmann and Ustinov was significant not only in publicizing the plight of children and helping to raise money. They also used their prestige to engage with national leaders on the issues behind the scenes, helping build political momentum behind 'the goals' and the Convention.

As Unicef devoted more energy to advocacy, information activities in both developing and industrialized countries began to draw upon the latest in communications and marketing expertise. The redefinition of 'development education' as 'education for development', an activity equally appropriate for North and South, was one example of the changing world-view. Another was the staging of events in both North and South with local dignitaries and celebrities on such occasions as the 'Day of the African Child' (June 16).

Towards some of these allies—the media, for example—special efforts were made. Unicef country offices organized seminars, study tours and training fellowships for journalists so that they could be given in-depth familiarization with issues³⁷. Special associations of artists and intellectuals were formed so that creative people could offer their skills on behalf of children outside their formal professional lives. The idea of forming media groups was pioneered in industrialized countries to encourage better coverage on human development and children's subjects. After 1991, following the establishment of a special Unicef support fund for global communications, these were set up in developing countries. The purpose of this kind of advocacy was to build up nuclei of informed people among those who set trends, acted as role models or influenced opinions in the hope that they would take up the children's cause less in the 'lady bountiful' tradition than as a professional concern.

Another communications initiative very much in the mode of transworld thinking set out to explore how visual entertainment—especially animation—could be put to use for children's issues. The attraction of animation was its capacity to convey messages in a way that was visually appealing to a wide

audience³⁸. Unicef's first involvement was in Nepal during the 1980s, where simple cartoon features were developed for use in remote villages to put across health messages entertainingly³⁹. In 1990, Unicef hosted an Animation for Development Workshop in Prague. This started the ball rolling on joint projects between Unicef and key members of the industry, including Hanna-Barbera Cartoons. The earliest of these to reach fruition was the *Meena* series in Bangladesh (see Chapter 7).

The Unicef attempt to reinforce partnerships on behalf of children in the volatile climate of the post-cold war placed great emphasis on the role of NGOs. As the 1990s progressed, NGOs increasingly found themselves not only at the front line in emergencies, but also stepping in to substitute for cut-backs in social services in all parts of the world. In some European countries, in Latin America and in some countries of Asia and Africa, they also carried much of the impetus for democratic change. They were pioneers of alternative programme models and creators of popular movements; they enjoyed a growing reputation as the unofficial conscience of nations and as critics of international action. They also became an increasingly important source of human development funds in the face of ODA cut-backs. By the early 1990s, the total contribution of NGOs to the development process worldwide was estimated to be around \$5 billion a year⁴⁰.

From the late 1980s onward, both in the field and at headquarters, Unicef began to give NGOs a weightier voice and a larger role in both its programmatic and its advocacy work. It began to invite NGOs to participate in meetings on child-related issues about which they were particularly concerned. These included female rights, especially the right of girls to education—the subject of a special NGO symposium held in New York in November 1991—and children's rights generally. As far as child protection issues were concerned—those connected to 'children in especially difficult circumstances'—the pressure coming from the NGOs in developing countries, and from NGOs and Unicef National Committees in industrialized countries, was still the most influential dynamic behind Unicef's own programmatic involvement.

For NGOs both national and international, the passage of the Convention on the Rights of the Child had been a watershed. Not only was the Convention something they had fought for and won, it provided an internationally endorsed framework for child-related action and a new legitimacy for their work. The Convention also provided a neutral umbrella under which they could find common ground with National Committees for Unicef and promote child-related issues collaboratively. In the UK, for example, a Child Rights Development Unit was set up as a joint Unicef National Committee initiative with a

group of children's NGOs to monitor the implementation of the Convention in the UK. Altogether, NGO coalitions to promote and monitor the implementation of the Convention were formed in over 50 countries.

As the new decade progressed, it gradually became clear that the landscape vis-à-vis child-related issues had permanently altered. Child consciousness as a feature of public policy was on the rise. And although the NPAs and 'the goals' were playing an important role, it was ultimately the language of childhood protection and children's rights that most accurately expressed the changing mood of public concern.

If the 1980s was the decade when the cause of children was propelled into view, the 1990s became the decade in which it never vanished from sight. In the developing countries, this owed much to the orchestrated pursuit of NPAs, 'decade goals' and Convention ratifications. At the international level, it owed something to the effort made to ensure that children's concerns were addressed within the discussions on others—the environment, human rights, population, poverty and women—now taking their turn in the international sun. In the industrialized world, the children's cause was rising as a result of the cumulated fruition of political and social trends. In certain industrialized countries, notably the US and the UK, troubling stories of youthful drug addiction, homelessness, teenage pregnancy, child murder, school-ground violence and social alienation constantly captured media headlines. A moment of profound psychological shock came in 1993 when two 10-year-old British boys were found guilty of the murder of a two-year-old they had apparently abducted for the purpose. This event was perceived—not just in the UK but elsewhere—as a symptom of deteriorating moral and spiritual values among the young⁴¹.

If childhood was in difficulty in the West, an equally distressing picture emerged from other parts of the globe. In the past decade, conditions of conflict in Africa, Asia, Central America, the Middle East and former Yugoslavia had produced 2 million child deaths, 4 million to 5 million children permanently injured by bombs, bullets, land-mines and other weapons, 1 million orphaned or separated from their parents, and many millions more traumatized, homeless or living in refugee camps⁴². At the verge of Unicef's 50th year, in the words of its *State of the World's Children 1996* report: 'To an organization born among the detritus of war, it sometimes seems as if the historical wheel has come full circle.'

Arguably, as great a level of damage was being inflicted on childhood by economic stress. According to the International Labour Office (ILO), as many

as 200 million children around the world were working in jobs that were dangerous, unhealthy or inhumane⁴³. Increasing numbers of children—especially in Asia, notably in India, Nepal, the Philippines and Thailand—were being sold or enticed into prostitution⁴⁴. Human rights campaigners regularly reported new instances of gross violations to childhood: six-year-old boys abducted to the Middle East to work as camel jockeys⁴⁵, girls barely past the age of puberty sold into sexual slavery in Thai brothels⁴⁶, 11-year-olds engaged as partners for paedophile tourists in the Philippines⁴⁷. The sensational nature of these accounts conferred on them a special commodity status, which ensured their public airing even if it did not always lead to a sober understanding of the social and economic dynamics surrounding the phenomena.

Whether damaged childhood was really becoming more prevalent as a product of the Western-led modernization process and the erosion of traditional value systems, or whether it was simply more noticed because the fate of children generally was more noticed, it became increasingly a subject of comment. Many reactions were confused: horror on behalf of child 'victims', and equal horror against child 'criminals'—two categories that frequently overlapped. There was equal ambiguity about who and what was responsible for the destruction of childhood. The divorce rate, the fragmentation of family life and the number of single-parent households—factors blamed for all manner of social ills—implied parental responsibility. Not only parents, but employers—and by implication legislators and law enforcement agents—were responsible for the engagement of children in exploitative, servile or dangerous work, including sexual services⁴⁸. But parents, too, were victims of forces beyond their control—landlessness, unemployment, conditions in the workplace, media-fed consumer expectations, lawlessness and crime—which the State had some duty to regulate. Meanwhile, many employers of children saw themselves not as exploiters, but as saviours and benefactors: without their jobs, the children would starve. And children themselves might see an employer, even their procurer or regular sexual client—a woman or man who had won their affection and trust—in a similar light⁴⁹.

All these areas of damaged childhood, and those associated with political turmoil and the collapse of society into violence and warfare, fell into the category of 'child protection' issues. Unicef had first begun to address these issues in its extensive 1986 policy review on 'children in especially difficult circumstances' (see Chapter 5). The difficulties of any global analysis of such problems and of developing a unified prescription in response to any one of them, let alone to CEDC as a group, had already emerged. This was one reason—in addition to the familiar one of government sensitivity—why the

green light given to activity in this area had at the time been somewhat pale. There was no instantly applicable technical solution, nor a single responsible sector—as, broadly speaking, was the case with public health—with which to address such problems. This made them less ‘doable’, in Jim Grant’s inimitable phrase. More experience of the type pioneered in Brazil (see Chapter 5) was needed in how an international organization such as Unicef could best respond to problems traditionally tackled on a very localized scale by churches, NGOs and social welfare departments.

It was also the case that in the mid-1980s Unicef’s top priority had been the ‘child survival and development revolution’ and, within that, universal immunization by 1990. The 1986 CEDC policy review had legitimized country-level action and suggested some ‘situation analysis’ and ‘advocacy’, but no priority was placed upon CEDC as yet. Not only would emphasis in this area require quite a different standpoint about the nature of deprivation in childhood, but it would require a shift from the recent Unicef focus on infants and the very young child, to the whole passage of childhood up till age 18, and from physical survival and well-being to personal development in all its manifestations—intellectual, social and emotional. In the late 1980s, the time for such a shift was less than propitious.

Nevertheless, the pale green light in favour of child protection activity provided in 1986 was all many country offices needed. In Bangladesh, Ecuador, Egypt, India, Kenya, Mexico, Myanmar, the Philippines, Thailand and some West African countries, Unicef began to carry out situation analyses and develop programming and advocacy skills around CEDC. Initially, the focus was mainly on street children, but gradually and inevitably—since street children were invariably working children, and might be abandoned children, sexually exploited children or child criminals—they began to embrace other categories of deprivation and risk. NGOs working on behalf of exploited and abused children exerted local pressure, and their allies in the broader human and child rights community did so internationally. Media exposure of the issues also prompted Unicef’s deepening involvement, as did interest emanating from the concerned public in industrialized countries via Unicef National Committees.

Some country offices commissioned special surveys. Many focused on networking relationships and coordination. In Bangladesh, Brazil, India and the Philippines, Unicef encouraged—and funded—the establishment of ‘child rights fora’: umbrella bodies within which NGOs at national or local level could develop a common agenda and voice on child protection issues. These also provided a setting for seminars, training workshops and the running of national advocacy campaigns, as well as a context in which to invite the partici-

pation of children and young people themselves in the debates. In countries such as Brazil, organizations of this kind were regarded as manifestations of the new democratizing civil society.

Other parts of the UN system were also beginning to respond to the new climate of opinion concerning children's rights. Graça Machel, appointed to head a UN study into Children and Conflict in 1994 (see Chapter 9) was not the first special appointee of the UN Secretary-General on an issue concerning children. The number of shocking exposures of damaged childhood during the run-up to the passage of the Convention on the Rights of the Child had led in 1990 to the appointment of a UN Special Rapporteur on the Sale of Children: Vitit Muntarbhorn of Thailand⁵⁰. His area of concern included the exploitation of children in prostitution and pornography—the subject of activist campaigns by the International Catholic Children's Bureau, Redd Barna (Norwegian Save the Children), End Child Prostitution in Asian Tourism (ECPAT) and other NGOs. Many of these had published reports cataloguing abuses and seeking programmatic and legislative response⁵¹.

Muntarbhorn's annual reports to the Commission on Human Rights, together with renewed media attention prompted by the spread of AIDS, helped to lift the issue of children's sexual exploitation out of the minority concern of moralist campaigners into a matter of serious policy interest. In the Philippines and Thailand, this led to legislative change banning under-age prostitution; some European countries—notably Sweden—brought in legislation to prosecute their own nationals for paedophile acts committed abroad and began to apply it. A World Congress on Commercial Sexual Exploitation will take place in Stockholm in August 1996, sponsored by the Swedish Government, Unicef, ECPAT and the NGO Group for the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

The exploitation of children in the workplace also attracted a new level of attention in the early 1990s. In some settings the recruitment of youngsters into the organized workforce was connected to the process of economic globalization. The attraction of cheap labour led to the increased establishment of garment, toy and other light manufacturing export industries in countries such as Bangladesh, China, the Philippines and Thailand. This in turn fuelled the process of urbanization and social transition. Women and youngsters were absorbed into the 20th-century Asian equivalent of Europe's 19th-century sweatshops; in Latin America, into plantations and mines. The workplace was often hazardous, working hours long, and breaks for rest, leisure or schooling inadequate or non-existent. In his 1992 report to the Human Rights Commission, Vitit Muntarbhorn commented: 'Much of the exploitation of children arises precisely because material values have overtaken those which place a

price on human life and development. Shamefully, the human rights of the child may be violated because the child is viewed as a factor of production . . . rather than an entity vested with substantive rights and inherent dignity.⁵²

An important influence on the re-emergence of child labour as an international issue after a long period of dormancy was the growth of the movement for social responsibility in trade. This set out to emphasize the exposure and elimination of child labour as an abuse of worker's rights⁵³. The employment of under-aged workers was seen by consumer groups and labour unions in Europe and North America as unethical, partly because their use dramatically reduced labour costs and gave products made by them an unfair competitive edge. In 1992, legislation was proposed in the US to ban the import of products from foreign industries in which children under 15 years of age were employed. The Harkin Bill—as it was known—caused shock waves throughout the developing world and became the subject of heated international debate.

One of the countries specifically targeted was Bangladesh. In 1992 around 10 per cent of the 750,000-strong workforce in its garment industry—garments were Bangladesh's most important source of export income, and its most important customer was the US—were alleged to be under 14 years old⁵⁴. At the time, schemes were being introduced by some socially aware garment industry employers to phase out child work in a humane and appropriate manner. But from 1993, so alarmed did the industry become at the prospect of international reprisals that these were abandoned in favour of sudden mass dismissal. All parties, including industry and government, agreed that this was not in the interests of the young workers involved. Pleas from a variety of sources, including child workers themselves, have since softened the manufacturers' policy. A national Child Labour Working Group including employers, the Department of Labour, ILO and Unicef has been formed to develop an appropriate response to the issue, not just in the garment industry but in the country as a whole⁵⁵.

This illustration of the way in which international action, however well-intentioned, can have an unfortunate impact on the children involved is a salutary lesson in basing policy initiatives in complex areas on simplistic assumptions. There are real dilemmas concerning the reduction of child labour. The abolition of child work may, in certain settings, lead to worse distress or worse exploitation of children. If their own and their parents' situation obliges them to work, they may then be forced to earn illegally, invisibly, in circumstances of greater vulnerability. Only if school-going and a more economically and socially secure life can be guaranteed to the working child is his or her total removal from the workplace desirable. The first step is the removal of children

and teenagers from hazardous workplaces and the provision of education for working children. This type of response—unlike a boycott of goods made with child labour—is difficult to effect through international mechanisms. Bearing these complexities in mind, after considerable internal reflection, in May 1995 Unicef issued its own guidelines for procurement of goods on national and international markets to ensure that its own purchasing policy was entirely consistent with its stand on child exploitation and the provisions on child work set out in the Convention on the Rights of the Child⁵⁶.

Another country where Unicef devoted considerable attention to the issue of child labour was India. Since the early 1980s, there had been increasing exposure of child labour in the rapidly expanding hand-woven carpet industries of South Asia. The plight of these children, many of whom were 'bonded' to employers by parents manipulated into a position of unrepayable debt, was brought to national and international attention during the 1980s by organizations such as the Indian Bonded Liberation Front and Anti-Slavery International⁵⁷. During the early 1990s, activists demanded legislative change and stronger penalties against perpetrators of bonded child labour. A German group working with Indian NGOs is trying to achieve an export ban on all rugs not carrying a 'Rugmark' seal of approval that the product was made without child labour. Unicef's country office in New Delhi was closely associated with this initiative, especially with programmes for the rehabilitation of children released from the carpet industry⁵⁸. By 1995, the Indian Government had also begun to develop its own scheme to monitor labour practices in the industry⁵⁹.

One of the major problems in responding to the predicaments of CEDC was the lack of good data. Whatever the inadequacies of contemporary health and educational statistics, they were nothing in comparison with the gaps associated with hazardous child work, sexual abuse, child servitude and the impact of warfare and violence on children. Even in the organized labour sector—as for example in the Bangladesh garment industries—accurate information was hard to come by because factory owners were reluctant to release it. In the informal workplace, figures were even more elusive: as casual labourers in agriculture, fishing or on construction sites; in bars, restaurants and massage parlours, workers—adult or child—were rarely registered and their numbers fluctuated widely. Child workers in these occupations and in domestic service—which together constituted the majority of child workers in developing countries⁶⁰—were to all intents and purposes officially non-existent. If this was the case for child labour, even more problematic was accurate information on even more sensitive categories, such as bonded labourers or the sexually abused.

While Unicef country offices grappled with these difficulties, other parts of the policy-making apparatus were helping to shed light on the ways in which pressures of all kinds and at all levels of society were fracturing childhood and family life. In 1990-94 the International Child Development Centre in Florence carried out a four-year international inquiry into the 'urban child in difficult circumstances'. This project brought together research from five countries—Brazil, India, Italy, Kenya and the Philippines—in an attempt to identify common features of childhood under stress both from old forms of poverty and from the 'new poverty' emanating from the economic reversals of the 1980s⁶¹. The Centre was also fostering policy-making debate around children's rights. Not only was it actively trying to bring the concepts of human development and human rights closer in Unicef thinking, it was helping to extend understanding that the doctrine of children's rights expressed by the Convention was not simply about protections and CEDC, but contained far broader implications. This point of view was strongly reinforced in Unicef's senior management team by Guido Bertolaso, Deputy Executive Director of External Relations from 1993 to 1995, a leading exponent within Unicef of the Convention as the legal and ethical framework for the organization's entire range of work.

In certain country offices, the full implications of the Convention for Unicef's programmes not only had been understood but were already being acted upon. In the vanguard, as ever, was Brazil, whose Unicef Country Programme for 1994-2000 was entitled: 'Children and adolescents: the right to have rights'. In other countries of Latin America, notably Bolivia and Ecuador, the Convention was similarly seized upon as a basis for advocacy on behalf of social and legal reform. This type of stance had previously been regarded as outside Unicef's mandate, or had simply been shunned for reasons of sensitivity. Now this began to change.

Reinforcement came from another part of the UN system. In February 1991, the 10-member Committee on the Rights of the Child was set up under the terms of the Convention. It included figures such as Thomas Hammarburg of Sweden, Marta Pais of Portugal and Hoda Badran of Egypt (an ex-Unicef staff member) who were internationally respected and deeply committed to the children's cause. The creation of this body was designed to give the Convention at least some teeth: no powers of legal enforcement are attached to any international human rights instrument. Within two years of ratifying the Convention, States Parties were obliged to report to the Committee on the steps they have taken towards implementation. The Committee's task was to review and critique these reports, taking into account the evidence of independent groups

such as NGOs. As increasing numbers of countries ratified the Convention, Unicef offices began to find themselves drawn into this reporting process, as facilitators, as technical advisers and as allies of those agents—government and NGO—trying to maximize the Convention's potential.

Although the Committee is a watch-dog whose purpose is to monitor and, where necessary, criticize States Parties' child rights performance, its policy has been to foster a constructive dialogue with governments. Since all implementation of the Convention in terms of legislative and policy change has to be carried out at national and subnational level, persuasion rather than confrontation is seen as its most practicable strategy. The principal instrument at its disposal is the States Party reporting process. This can be used as an opportunity to raise sensitive or 'invisible' issues with the country concerned and encourage moves towards the vision of childhood encompassed in the Convention⁶². Both in the period leading up to the presentation of the States Party report and in the post-reporting phase, Unicef has been an active partner of the Committee in a number of countries.

A case in point was Viet Nam. One of the earliest countries in Asia to ratify the Convention, its report fell due in September 1992. At least a year in advance, the Unicef country office familiarized the Government with their reporting obligations and the procedures. An official government body, the Viet Nam Committee for Protection and Care of Children (CPCC), was designated to produce the report. To assist the CPCC, Unicef conducted a workshop on data-gathering and analysis, and the functions of the international Committee on the Rights of the Child. Between the time that work began on the report and the preparation of the final version several months later, an important consciousness-raising process had occurred. The first draft of the report was essentially superficial, but it gradually took on an entirely different character. CEDC topics—previously taboo—were included, and the authorities adopted a new tone of openness concerning social issues⁶³. This experience showed that the Convention had a surprising capacity to transform policy even in environments where extensive dialogue with external partners was not a normal part of the political culture.

Of all the implications of the Convention for Unicef's work, the most profound was that it provided a new framework for its country programmes of cooperation. In the 1960s and 1970s, welfarism as the predominant motif of Unicef's mission had been displaced by the campaign for development and the provision of 'basic services'. Now, in its turn, this idea was being subsumed within a different vision: support for childhood in all its contexts and dimensions, and from age 0 to 18. The most fundamental implication of the new

vision was that the social indicators normally accepted as those of classic poverty and underdevelopment should no longer be taken as the only signposts to the mission. Damaged childhood needed also to be analysed from the perspective of the 'new poverty' in the industrialized world, and from the perspective of the protection of children from armed violence, abandonment, economic exploitation and abuse. Although these were conditions extra to poverty itself, they were also conditions closely associated—even intertwined—with poverty.

Addressing the Unicef Executive Board in May 1991, Jan Martenson, UN Under-Secretary-General for Human Rights, stated: 'The most revolutionary element of Unicef's approach to the implementation of the Convention is the integration of [its] principles into country programmes and analyses. For the first time, the United Nations brings fully to bear on its practical activities, international standards of human dignity.'⁶⁴ For the majority of Unicef country offices, Martenson's congratulations were still premature. But in a pioneering few, new trends were being set, and increasingly, others were following their example.

For more than a decade Jim Grant had done his best to revitalize the development cause by claiming for children, especially for their survival and health, a position at its leading edge. At the World Conference on Human Rights in Vienna in June 1993, Grant's address was entitled: 'Children's rights: the cutting edge of human rights'. Here was a signal that Unicef was at last beginning to regard the doctrine of children's rights as central to its own policy and mission.

During 1994, the final year of Jim Grant's leadership of Unicef as well as of his life, the child health agenda moved significantly forward. In every region except sub-Saharan Africa, child nutrition levels were improving; measles deaths had dropped; polio was on its way towards eradication, with reported cases down by 36 per cent over the year⁶⁵; IDD was on the run; vitamin A deficiency was in retreat; and guinea worm disease was down to 10 per cent of its former toll⁶⁶. In World Breastfeeding Week, 24,000 doctors signed the Physician's Pledge to protect, promote and support breastfeeding⁶⁷. True, not all the health news was positive: AIDS and malaria were far from under control. Nonetheless, those who in Unicef, in WHO, in other international organizations and research centres as well as in national health services throughout the developing world had been inspired by Jim Grant to revitalize the 'Health for All' agenda could justifiably feel that immense progress had been made.

Although the 'Education for All' agenda agreed at Jomtien in 1990 could not be said to be close to achievement, nonetheless significant progress here had also been made. The new emphasis on people's well-being and their capacity to better themselves within the continuing movement for development cast a new light on the importance of education; schooling was also being increasingly placed at the centre of concern for women and girls. Since Jomtien, there had been a shift in donor policies and resource commitments to basic education. In 1993 and 1994, World Bank lending to education totalled around \$2 billion a year, half of which was allocated to primary education⁶⁸. Unicef had more than doubled its resources for basic education, from \$37 million in 1987 to \$87 million in 1994⁶⁹. However, despite new levels of commitment to basic education goals—notably from the 'E-9' countries: Bangladesh, Brazil, China, Egypt, India, Indonesia, Mexico, Nigeria and Pakistan—there was still a long way to go.

The campaign for universal ratification of the Convention on the Rights of the Child had, meanwhile, achieved extraordinary success. By November 1994, five years after its passage in the UN General Assembly, 167 countries had become States Parties. Addressing the UN General Assembly on 11 November 1994, Jim Grant observed that these ratifications were much more meaningful than mere strokes of 167 presidential pens. In many countries ratification had been preceded—or followed during the reporting process—by a national process of soul-searching. This had led to dialogue with civil society, media scrutiny, legislative change and the creation of new bodies to monitor the national well-being of children. Grant renewed his call for universal ratification by the mid-decade: 'I cannot think of any more appropriate way for the world to signal its commitment to human life and social progress in the year of the United Nations' 50th anniversary than by making the Convention the first truly universal law of humankind.'⁷⁰

This speech—the last public speech of his Unicef career, and of his life—marked an important evolution in Grant's presentation of children's issues. He had not in any way abandoned 'the goals' or the post-Summit process—far from it. But in the past, his public statements on children's rights had mainly concentrated on the economic and social rights that underpinned the fulfilment of the human development agenda. Now, he catalogued the growing number of child protection issues related to war and to the ills of rapid economic and social transition that were increasingly dominating national and international consciousness.

Grant had decided that the moment had come to commit Unicef as publicly as possible to the new range of childhood issues that had accumulated on the

international agenda. He had concluded that his own criterion of 'doability' should not be allowed to drive out issues that might be less 'doable' than immunization or curriculum reform, but had to be as important. 'The existence of measurable goals, deadlines and proven strategies in the areas of health, nutrition, education, water and family planning paves the way for accelerated action for children. But due to the lack of comparable goals, deadlines and strategies in the areas of child protection and observation, we run the risk that children's rights in these equally vital areas will be neglected or relegated to a lower priority. We must not allow this to happen.'

Grant's capacity for single-mindedness was a hallmark of his leadership style. He had spent his career in pursuit of the development agenda launched in the 1960s and modified down the many 'development decades'. The assault on poverty and underdevelopment in the South remained the overarching moral framework for his commitment to the children's cause. But he had a keen sense of judgement about when to move the agenda on. The pain of child sexual exploitation; the mutilations by land-mines; the disastrous impact of sanctions on the condition of children; the tragedy of AIDS orphanhood in Africa; the horror of children implicit in genocidal crime; all these issues and others were commanding a level of public attention that could not be ignored. The world's leading international organization for children not only had to engage in these issues within its country programmes and local advocacy campaigns; it had to do so, and be seen to do so, more strongly at international level. The volume of noise around childhood in trouble had convinced him that the time had come to elevate the vision of childhood expressed in the Convention—with all its complexities and sensitivities—to the cardinal position in the international struggle on behalf of child well-being.

By this time, Grant was seriously, and terminally, ill. He made this speech only by dint of extraordinary effort. He remained Unicef's Executive Director until 23 January 1995, a few days before his death. Pursuing his vision unto the end, he found a way to deploy even his final moments as an instrument for his wider purpose. The US was the only major country in the world not to have made any progress towards ratifying the Convention, as indeed it had failed to do for other international human rights instruments. This was a matter of great disappointment to Grant, who had used various opportunities of contact with the Clinton White House to promote the role of the US as a world leader on behalf of children and to press for the Convention's ratification. After its own eight-month review, still the US Government held back.

The day before he died, in response to a message of personal sympathy, Grant wrote to President Clinton asking yet again that the US sign the Convention⁷¹. At his memorial service on 10 February 1995, Hillary Clinton announced that the US would do so. A few days later, it did. No action could have been more fitting to mark the passing of James Pineo Grant and his extraordinary contributions both to the cause of human development and to the cause of children.

During the 15 years of his directorship, Grant had dominated Unicef. He had inherited an organization unique in the UN system and had developed and deployed its strengths to brilliant effect. He had had the time—a necessary commodity in the shaping of an international bureaucracy—to fashion a special course, focus organizational energies and put his own stamp firmly on the organizational culture. Under his leadership, Unicef had undergone enormous expansion in financial and human resources, its income rising from \$313 million in 1980 to \$1,006 million in 1994. He had personally raised the organization's profile and influence to an unprecedented degree. In the process he had done more than any other single individual in the past half century to put children on the international political, economic and social map. At his death, hundreds of tributes poured in from all over the world to honour his memory and register the profound impact he had made on individuals great and small.

But the aftermath of such a long and powerful leadership was bound to be problematic. Although he was in no sense an autocrat and inspired love as well as loyalty, Grant drove Unicef very hard. He rephrased John F. Kennedy: 'Ask not what shall be given to you, but what you shall give to Unicef', expecting the same tireless hard work, relentless energy and buoyant commitment to the cause that he himself always gave. He created a climate in which countless functionaries performed well above what they or anyone else would have believed possible. But the constant frenzied activity and the heightened sense of organizational mission had other impacts from a managerial point of view. As the agenda—and organizational size—expanded, from GOBI to child survival, from UCI to Summit Goals, and as one set of achievements led on without pause to multiplying sets of challenges, the experience was exhilarating, but it was also stressful, and the fabric of Unicef came under strain.

In 1993, the Unicef Executive Board requested a comprehensive management study into all aspects of the organization's work. Grant himself gave this management study his fullest cooperation and support. When its findings were delivered in late 1994, even though his health was failing, Grant devoted time to seeing that a suitable structure was set in place to implement its recommen-

dations. The management consultants Booz, Allen and Hamilton described 'magnificent results', but they raised some questions about efficiency⁷². One matter of concern was the identification by the study team of a sense of malaise among Unicef staff. To what extent this reflected the general sense of insecurity currently being experienced throughout the UN system in the uncertain climate of post-cold war internationalism, and to what extent it was particular to the specific pressures within Unicef, the authors of the report were unable to say; their survey data was too limited. But this and other recommendations—on information systems, planning, emergencies, the streamlining of procedures—required careful attention⁷³.

Also in late 1994, an internal audit revealed that the rapid expansion of activity in one country office—Kenya—had led to managerial laxity and financial irregularity on a considerable scale. Unicef was at pains to explore all the parameters of this episode fully, be completely open about it, bring the culprits to book and introduce procedures to minimize any similar occurrence in future. However, it was a profound organizational shock to discover that what appeared to have been overambition on the part of certain individuals to reach mid-decade and decade goals could have led to such an outcome. These indications of organizational stress, coupled with wider issues related to demands for reform of the UN system, suggested a need for internal change.

On Grant's resignation, UN Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali appointed Richard Jolly as Acting Executive Director. The question of the post-Grant succession had long been exercising members of the Executive Board. Once again, as in 1979, the US 'possession' of Unicef's directorship was being challenged from Europe. Once again, the key movers were the Scandinavian countries, all of which were major Unicef donors: their combined governmental contributions in 1994 came to \$215 million, nearly one fifth of Unicef's entire income⁷⁴.

Boutros-Ghali, like Kurt Waldheim before him, found it difficult to reach a decision between the European and US claims. But after Grant's death the question could no longer be postponed. Boutros-Ghali became open to a US candidature as long as another stipulation was met: that the UN Children's Fund should, for the first time, have a woman at its head. In May 1995, he appointed Carol Bellamy, previously an investment banker, then Director of the US Peace Corps, and well known as an ex-New York politician. In her first talk to the Unicef staff in New York headquarters, Bellamy spoke of her own experience as a Peace Corps volunteer in Guatemala and described it as one of the most enriching and influential passages in her life.

The immediate task facing Bellamy was managerial. While continuing along the track already set by the 1990s experience to date, Unicef would at the same time undergo a process of tidying and reinvigoration. There was also a need to maintain continuity and build on the accomplishments of the Grant regime. In her first speech to the Unicef Executive Board, she stated: 'I am fortunate to join an organization that already has clear goals, solid strategies and an overall agenda that will take us through the rest of the decade and into the next century. I want you to know that it is not my intention to steer Unicef in a new direction; I think that Unicef is headed in the right direction. What I see as my initial task is to keep the momentum going—accelerating it wherever possible—and helping to ensure that we get better mileage along the way.'

In the closing years of the 20th century, many forces are at work that will permanently affect the set of institutions that came together in the postwar world and have since constituted the United Nations system. Whatever Unicef's own mandate and idiosyncrasies, this is the international system of which it is a part. The mainspring of these forces is the end of the cold war and of the long ideological confrontation that divided the world and threatened another war of immense destruction affecting everyone on the globe. Because this threat is over, the face of internationalism has fundamentally altered, not only in the political and strategic sphere but in the social and economic. The full implications of what has happened will take many years to manifest themselves and to work their way through institutions, policies and attitudes.

Unexpectedly, a world in which there is no longer an incipient threat of a 'world war' is also one in which the concept of 'world' problems and the prospects of their solution by action taken at the international level have lost credibility. This is the opposite of what was first assumed when the Berlin Wall came down and the 'end of history'—the triumph of liberal democracy—was first declared. As a force for solving today's nationalist and ethnic conflicts, let alone the problems of poverty and social injustice, the new role of intergovernmental talking-shops and organizational bodies is far from clear. Every day, more is expected of international mechanisms invented in a different era for a different generation's tasks. Their failure to solve the problems laid at their door is usually ascribed to the lack of resources made available to them and an absence of 'international political will'. It is as much to do with their questionable suitability for the resolution of problems whose origin does not reside in the existence of powerful empires and overweening nation States and the need to broker relationships between them.

This does not mean that there is no role for internationalism: far from it. Certain issues—notably those associated with the environment and the 'global

commons'—cannot be resolved in other fora. And in the context of many others, international networking and exchange—assisted by modern technology—have become a vital part of their debate and of the problem-solving process surrounding them. New methodologies for working at the international level that do not assume the existence of definitive power or political will at the international centre need to be developed. It is not overstating the case to suggest that the methodology invented by Jim Grant for Unicef's work in the period of his leadership—extensive mobilization around 'doable' goals for which the key actions take place at regional, national, local and community levels—provides one model. Whether it will be replicable, or replicated, in appropriate contexts has yet to be seen. Other models for different kinds of initiatives and campaigns will also be needed in an increasingly menu- and options-dominated international culture.

At one level, the world is becoming increasingly globalized; at another, increasingly fragmented. Because or in spite of both of these tendencies, in many countries government's role in the ordering of social and economic affairs is on the retreat. In some settings—in Africa and Eastern Europe, for example—it is the result of economic crisis and transition, and attendant cut-backs in government services. In others—the US and the UK, for example—it is a product of the elevation of market forces and contemporary ideological distaste for state intervention and bureaucracy. In such an atmosphere, it will be hard to maintain—let alone expand—official support for an international campaign against poverty and social inequity. The task is made harder by the number and scale of emergencies that the decade of the 1990s has so far witnessed, and the diversion of resources for international assistance into relief and peace-keeping measures. Without the pressure of public opinion as expressed through NGOs and other citizens' channels, there would probably be even less governmental willingness to invest public money in international programmes devoted to the resolution of other people's intractable internecine problems, let alone to their broader social and economic progress.

In the new climate governing international affairs, certain realities present new and exciting prospects. One of these is that the end of the post-colonial era is bound to be accompanied by the gradual demise of that whole set of values and assumptions that shaped a world-view of 'industrialized' versus 'developing', 'North' versus 'South'. In a world whose geopolitical components have fared so differently in the economic and strategic lottery of national wealth, commodity prices, superpower friendship and investment prospects, the notion of 'global progress' can no longer be viewed holistically. Global analyses of social and economic phenomena seem simplistic and out of date. The product

of increasingly refined methods of data collection, situation analysis, programme planning and evaluation echoes the experience of four development decades: there is no such thing as a formulaic 'development' prescription any more than there is a formulaic predicament. In today's world, such ideas seem almost quixotic. Effective responses to problems of poverty both 'new' and old, and of other forms of disadvantage, have to derive from local, national and regional realities, as does their analysis. Diversity between regions and countries and within them; adaptability of strategies to circumstances on the ground; decentralization of decision-making to include the views of participants in the change process: these are the keynotes for the future.

The child-centred development agenda that preoccupied the energies of Unicef over much of the past 15 years—at least during the 1980s—was largely a reversion to the child health agenda. This was the preoccupation with the small child's physical well-being identified in Unicef's founding resolution and which dominated the work of its first 15 years. What Jim Grant realized, 20 years on, was that simple, low-cost technological means existed to tackle major problems of public health, and that no one had bothered to extend these techniques to reach the majority of the human race—to take them to the 'end of the road'. With the eagerness of an earlier generation of international health enthusiasts—a generation to which his father had belonged—he rediscovered and popularized the mass disease control agenda. This idea was willingly embraced by partners throughout the developing world and by the international apparatus of public health. With the aid of modern communications and social mobilization, it had a fantastic success. It was Grant's intention that this would provide a springboard for wider action across the whole human development agenda to which he was deeply committed.

However, certain attributes of the child survival and health agenda worked in its favour. Health problems are relatively uniform. And the medical breakthroughs of the 20th century have equipped public health practitioners with the technological means of transforming human well-being, given a relatively modest degree of human cooperation. Technological advance is far less potent in other areas of the human development agenda. With all the progress in communications, there is no way in which education, or the behavioural and attitudinal change it helps to bring about, can be injected from a syringe or ingested in a sugar and salt solution. To state that the eradication of such symptoms of poverty as illiteracy, environmental squalor, lack of food security and the presence of children in the workplace will be far more complex than the eradication of polio or iodine deficiency is to state the obvious. Whether the success with the child survival and health agenda can pave the way for

fulfilling much of the rest remains an open question. Until the millennium, it will not be possible to tell whether such goals as 'universal access to water and sanitation' or 'universal access to basic education' were truly 'doable' in a similar way.

However, if the health agenda is seen as a health agenda and not as the vanguard for something else, the accomplishments of the past 15 years are more than remarkable. There is a very strong chance that before the end of the century, those goals established at the World Summit for Children that encapsulate that agenda will—outside such places as the poorest countries in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia—have been virtually fulfilled. This will continue to require major effort on all sides. But by the year 2000, it is conceivable that—in so far as it is technologically practicable, a qualifier that excludes such prospects as the conquest of AIDS—the promise of 'Health for All' will have been delivered. If that happens, the achievement will owe much to the mobilizing power of the children's cause and to the joint contribution of Unicef and WHO.

It is important to realize, however, that even if the health goals are reached, there will still be a significant residue of work left undone. All mass public health campaigns, however smart their technology and effective their social mobilization, reach only a proportion of their target. That proportion may be high: 80, 90, even 95 per cent. In the case of some infectious agents, this may be enough to reduce their presence in a population to the point where the disease spontaneously dies out. In other cases it may not. And the remaining proportion of households still unreached by measles vaccine, or ORS packages, or sanitary latrines may take as long, cost as much and be as difficult to reach as the earlier 80 or 90 per cent. In a highly populated country, the unmet group can represent a subpopulation of many millions, and it will be unevenly distributed within the population as a whole. Inevitably, the extremely poor, ethnic minorities, fragmented families, girls, migrants and the dispossessed—all those who routinely suffer discrimination—will be overrepresented within it.

It is at this point that an approach based on human needs converges with that based on human rights. A universalist approach—'Health for All', 'Education for All'—assumes that by extending services ever outward, they will eventually embrace all those in need. In fact, they rarely do so. When an intervention has reached the majority of its target group, therefore, it is logical to abandon it in favour of an approach that specifically targets the unreached. 'Health for All'—and 'Education for All' and 'Water and Sanitation for All' following behind—cannot be allowed to stop short at the majority, even if that majority is a relatively large one.

Under the terms of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, affirmative programmes to reach those disadvantaged by exclusion from care and nurture, whether they bring services or redeem rights, target the same group of children. Those children today categorized as CEDC or children in need of protection—child victims of violence, exploitation, armed conflict, parental loss; children of ethnic minorities, refugees, the landless and lone parents; and girl children within every group—are the children with most need of, and least access to, health, education and social services. Children disadvantaged by unmet needs and children disadvantaged by unmet rights are, at the end of the day, the same disadvantaged children. Children whose rights to protection and participation are least fulfilled are—in the majority of cases—children whose vulnerability could equally well be described in the language of social and economic distress.

In this fusion of these twin strands of the 20th-century children's movement, the future of Unicef surely lies. Whatever have been the dichotomies of the past, the framework of needs and the framework of rights now seem destined to mesh. The idea of 'children as a lever for global progress'⁷⁵ is likely to make way for a greater emphasis on children in their own right, on children as subjects and objects rather than as the instruments of a wider social purpose embraced by a concept—global development—whose star is in eclipse.

Many new twists and turns await the story of international cooperation in the new millennium. Unicef will continue to be a small player in the ongoing drama of international affairs. But it can feel some pride, as well as renewed inspiration, that there has never been a time during the past 50 years when the children's cause has enjoyed a greater visibility or when there has been a clearer sense of the need to protect childhood. This applies wherever childhood is threatened, by whatever forces, in societies North, South, East, West, rich, poor and in between. Over the past 15 years, great gains have been made on behalf of child survival. Now, in the words of Carol Bellamy, Unicef is asking the question: 'Survival for what?'⁷⁶ As it faces its 51st year, that is the challenge in all its dimensions and its settings that Unicef is gathering its strength to meet.

Hand 1 / 0

Blank Page
of 0
