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Address by Mr. James P. Grant
Executive Director of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)
to the Opening of the Seminar on

"Improving the Quality of Life of Children Within the Framework of
Improving the Welfare of the People"

Jakarta, Indonesia
23 July 1986

Moving Forward During the Decade for Indonesian Children
1986-1995

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MOVING FORWARD DURING THE DECADE FOR INDONESIAN CHILDREN
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Your Excellency the Minister of Education and Culture,
Professor Dr. Fuad Hassan
State Minister for Women, Mrs. L. Soetanto S.H.
The Chairman of the PKK, Ibu Sopardjo
Distinguished Participants in this Seminar;

I am very pleased and honoured to have been invited to participate in the opening ceremony of this seminar on "Improving the Quality of Life of Children Within the Framework of Improving the Welfare of People" for the Decade for Indonesian Children. It is fitting that I should make my second visit to Indonesia as the Executive Director of UNICEF on this important occasion and during the 40th Anniversary of UNICEF.

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Progress for Indonesian Children

Indonesia has already achieved considerable success in improving the situation of children over the last three decades because of its strong national political commitment to improving child survival and development. For example, the Infant Mortality Rate has declined substantially from approximately 200 infant deaths per 1,000 live births in their first year of life when I first visited Indonesia in 1950 to approximately 100 infant deaths per 1,000 live births in 1980, and further progressed to less than 80 infant deaths in 1985. This is good progress toward the United Nations goal for the year 2000 for all countries to have an infant mortality rate of 50 or less, a rate achieved in North America and Western Europe towards the middle of this century. Another example is that life expectancy at birth for children over this period has also improved significantly from approximately 40 years to well over 50 years in 1980. These two basic facts underline the situation that although it is a somewhat long journey to improving child survival and development, it need not really be that long. This is further evidenced by the fact that even in the face of a difficult international economic climate Indonesia is vigorously maintaining its policy commitments to improving the situation of its children and, as we saw in today's Indonesian Children Day ceremony with President and Mrs. Soeharto ever increasing attention to its children. This continuing commitment is far-sighted, and it will enable Indonesia to develop a strong human resources base as part of the nation's efforts to create a highly productive and prosperous society.

Indonesia has made other significant achievements in improving child development after survival. From a very low literacy rate and only a handful of college graduates in 1950 the overall literacy rate increased to more than two-thirds of all adults and the literacy rate among women has increased particularly sharply during the past two decades to over 60 percent. The benefits, among other things, are that more women are able to take better care of their own health; healthy women have healthier babies, many more of whom survive; literate women are not only better mothers with far fewer babies which fall seriously ill and die, but are also more aware of family planning options, and desirous of employing them.

Indonesia has also taken important initiatives to help parents themselves better assure the survival and development of their young children since the mid-1970's. Important advances are being made towards Universal Child Immunization against six major diseases which at the start of this decade were taking daily the lives of well over 500 children and crippling hundreds more. Full national coverage against each of these diseases has increased from less than 1 percent in 1980/81 to 6 percent in 1983/84 to 10 percent in 1984/85 and 24 percent in 1985/86. Also, approximately one quarter of all pregnant women now receive two doses of tetanus toxoid vaccine.

I am particularly aware of how increasingly vigorous efforts are being made to achieve Universal Child Immunization. His Excellency, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, signed the United Nations' "We The People's" declaration on behalf of the Government of Indonesia in support of achieving Universal Child

Immunization by the year 1990 through the combined efforts of Governments and non-Governmental Organizations. The signing ceremony was held at the United Nations on 25 October 1985. In addition, the National Chairman of the PKK (Family Welfare Movement) signed the declaration on behalf of non-governmental organizations in Indonesia on 26 March 1986 during the visit of the Chairman of the UNICEF Executive Board.

With this solid base of important initial achievements, the objective, now, is to see how Indonesia and other developing countries can accelerate progress towards a child survival and development revolution - in a far shorter time than industrial countries experienced - through gaining a major momentum of progress for children.

The Decade for Indonesian Children

Today, His Excellency, President Soeharto declared that all of Indonesian society will march forward together into a Decade for Indonesian Children. This declaration represents a major initiative to improve the situation of children in Indonesia. The major aim of the Decade, as I understand it, is to intensify and expand public participation and creativity in order to assure the survival and realize the potential of Indonesian children. A second major aim is to develop a kind of social agreement or social contract between Indonesian children and adults which will engage both groups in accelerating progress in all aspects of child welfare in order to prepare today's children as high quality human resources for participation in a highly productive and prosperous Indonesian society.

His Excellency, President Soeharto, has launched the Decade for Indonesian Children in a very dynamic and effective manner by meeting with thousands of children who participated in the Children's Day ceremonies this morning. In addition, Madam Tien Soeharto and Madam Umar Wirahadikusumah have symbolically immunized children today with polio vaccine to highlight Indonesia's goal of achieving Universal Child Immunization as part of the Decade's thrust to accelerate progress in child survival and development.

I also understand that the Governors of the Provinces and the District Heads and Mayors of many cities are presiding over Children's Day ceremonies in their respective areas, and that their wives have also symbolically immunized children today as part of National Children's Day activities.

All these activities for National Children's Day and for launching a Decade for Indonesian Children reflect a powerful and impressive new development for accelerating progress towards a Child Survival and Development Revolution. What is this new development? It is the unprecedented new capacity and the new potential to communicate with the great majority of the population. Indeed, it is a revolution in social communications and organization which has occurred in recent times in many countries, including Indonesia, and which only now is beginning to be increasingly used for children. In many ways, Indonesia is already in the forefront of this communications revolution for improved child survival and development, and a

major transformation is taking place with respect to the capacity to communicate with the almost 165 million population of this the fifth most populous country in the world. For example, not only are there now schools in every village in Indonesia, but in small villages and towns of Indonesia, women of child-bearing age who have not had an opportunity to complete the equivalent of a primary education now have increasing opportunity to participate in non-formal education learning groups using "Package A" basic functional literacy and numeracy materials, and an opportunity to pursue useful, productive income earning activities is also provided to these community-based learning groups. With increased functional literacy and income earning skills, more women can help to supplement family income, can read and write, and have an interest in new knowledge and ideas, including how to better raise their children to be healthy, happy, and productive members of Indonesian society. Second, most families in urban and rural areas have equipped themselves with radios in their homes, and there is at least one television set or two in most villages. Third, voluntary organizations, including women and religious groups, have vastly improved organizational structure for communications. The result is that throughout Indonesia, as well as many developing countries, more and more people know what is going on and how to do things. The revolutionary potential of these communications advances on the life of the masses in Indonesia is now beginning to be dramatically experienced in the fields of child health and nutrition. This development coincides with the realization that there is still a large opportunity to improve the utilization of new, improved, rediscovered or newly appreciated technologies for Child Survival and Development, and these include:

- The recently discovered oral rehydration therapy consisting of a remarkable simple treatment with salts, potassium and glucose (sugar) in water - costing only a few cents, which can be applied by parents at home for a child suffering from diarrhoeal dehydration, the number one child killer in Indonesia and in most developing countries. In developing countries as a whole, diarrhoeal dehydration claims nearly five million lives annually throughout the world, and still kills an estimated 170,000 children, ages 0-5 years, annually in Indonesia. 1/

1/ Country Basic Data Enquiry, UNICEF/Jakarta, 1986.

- Recent advances in vaccines, now costing only about fifty cents in US Dollars or about Rupiah 565 to immunize a child for life against tetanus, measles, polio, whooping cough, diphtheria and tuberculosis which cripple and kill several million children each year in the world, and, in Indonesia, strike about 10,5000,000 and eventually kill about 184,000 children annually.^{2/}

- The recently appreciated, through scientific analysis, merits of early and prolonged breastfeeding and improved weaning practices. Early breastfeeding helps to protect infants with "natural immunization" through the first breastmilk known as colostrum. Prolonged breastfeeding also supports the child's healthy physical growth and also helps to develop a close, supportive, and loving relationship between the child and its mother.

- Growth monitoring through frequent weighing and charting that enables mothers to recognize weight gain as an important indicator of child well being and to detect early signs of malnutrition. In a surprising number of cases, probably a majority of cases in most communities, mothers are able to deal with the early signs of malnutrition through means within their control. Indonesia is a world leader in village-based child growth monitoring activities for children under age five years which now take place in more than half of Indonesia's villages.

- Better family spacing of children, which alone could reduce the infant death toll substantially through improving the health and the birth weights of children. Again, Indonesia is in the forefront of this kind of activity with its policy of promoting a two-child family. It is heartening to note that in Indonesia the interagency family nutrition improvement programme includes the participation of the National Family Planning Co-ordinating Board as well as the Departments of Health, Agriculture, Religion and Home Affairs.

Hence, Indonesia's efforts for children today, as we commemorate National Children's Day, are impressive, with words and planning goals very rapidly translated into deeds, and Indonesia is ready to initiate a Decade for Indonesian Children. We now face the question, what should be done to make the Decade for Children a success, particularly to succeed in dramatically improving the prospects for child survival and development for children under age five years?

A Chance to Move Forward Faster

Your objectives in this conference are premised on the Government's policy and conviction that the Decade for Indonesian Children will produce major advances in the survival and development of the young child as well as lay the foundation for a major improvement in the quality of human resources in Indonesian society. I share this vision, and I encourage you to consider the potential for accelerating the Indonesian Child Survival and Development Revolution to bring a further breakthrough for children even more impressive than the recent breakthroughs - the Green Revolution - in rice production

^{2/} Indonesia Country Review of EPI: Towards Universal Child Immunization 1985, UNICEF, Jakarta.

which is so properly being celebrated and honoured this week in Indonesia by the FAO, and its Director General, Dr. Edouard Saouma. I am confident that this momentous human goal is within our reach, and that the already impressive progress in child survival and development in Indonesia can serve as a springboard for even more dramatic and impressive gains between now and the end of REPELITA VI (National Development Plan) in 1999, and even to achieve by 1990 the UN's year 2000 goal of an IMR of 50 per 1000 births. Achievement of this goal, together with comparable progress in the health of those ages 1 through 4 will result in so improving the health of Indonesia's children that the lives of hundreds of children will be saved daily as compared to the rates prevailing in 1980. And this improvement in child health through means in which the parents participate actively, as through oral rehydration therapy, growth monitoring and bringing children for immunization, so improves the confidence of parents in the survival of their children that it is usually accompanied by an even greater reduction in births and a consequent slowing of population growth.

And I suggest to you that Indonesia's advancement towards a Child Survival and Development Revolution will also serve and contribute to a global cause. This is because both the global and national Child Survival and Development Revolutions are premised on the involvement and the empowerment of people - parents, other family members, and friends in the community - to take their fate into their own hands. Indonesia, for example, is in a key position to demonstrate the feasibility of universal access of village child survival and development services through the Pos Yandu (integrated village health) service system. This system, which is based mainly on the family nutrition improvement programme child weighing posts, is already in 38,500 villages, 57 percent of all villages in Indonesia.

The Pos Yandu is a powerful and important example to other countries of how communities and families can be mobilized and empowered through Governmental and non-Governmental efforts to participate in child survival and development activities. It is impressive that the Pos Yandu offers five key services - child weighing and related nutrition services like prevention of Vitamin A related blindness and anaemia; Oral Rehydration Therapy for prevention of severe diarrhoeal dehydration; the Expanded Programme of Immunization against tuberculosis, diphtheria, tetanus, whooping cough, measles and polio; family planning services, and MCH especially prenatal care which would help prevent and provide better care for high-risk pregnancies.

Hence Indonesia has a strong base from which to launch a decade for children. If we consider possible priorities for children under age five years during the Decade for Indonesian Children, there are at least five major priorities which deserve our serious consideration:

First, Indonesia can "accelerate" the expansion of its current successes in child survival and development by building the Pos Yandu system into a national service delivery system which provides 100 percent access for child growth monitoring and related services, EPI, ORT, MCH and family planning services. The earliest possible achievement of this goal would be a magnificent achievement.

In addition to increasing access, the next priority is to increase the coverage of basic services for children so that children will actually use the services available in their communities. For example, I understand that, presently, the coverage of the Pos Yandu is approximately 54 percent of the children under five years in villages where it is operating. This is a good start, but I suggest that a desirable and feasible goal would be to reach at least 80 percent of all children under age five years in all villages in Indonesia.

Third, the key manpower for the Pos Yandu system comes from volunteers of "cadres". Serious consideration should be given to helping develop the quality of services and the full potential of community cadres to provide services in addition to child growth monitoring - such as promotion of EPI and Oral Rehydration Therapy, and education and referral on improved self-care during pregnancy and signs of high risk pregnancy. The work of community volunteers, such as the PKK (Family Welfare Movement), is one of Indonesia's most valuable human resources for improving child survival and development. I have been particularly impressed by the role of the PKK in improving family welfare, and the enthusiasm and dedication of Indonesia's village volunteers has been cited by the Chairman of the UNICEF Executive Board as a model for other developing countries.

Fourth, although Indonesia is a leader in social mobilization for child survival and development, there is still considerable need to strengthen community participation and social mobilization. One of the major aims of the Decade for Children indeed is to intensify public participation in efforts to improve the situation of children. This certainly suggests expansion of two major actions: first, the involvement of provincial, district/urban, sub-district and village level government authorities must be increased in child survival and development activities if local public participation is to be increased and sustained. Second, there is a considerable role for groups like the PKK (Family Welfare Movement) and non-Governmental organizations, such as religious groups, to provide moral support, information, motivation and mobilization of families to help them better assure the survival and development of their young children.

Fifth, as we address the health and nutritional needs of Indonesia's children, we must pay greater attention to the early education, stimulation and cognitive development needs of children under age five years. A good start in this direction is the Bina Keluarga dan Balita (BKB) Programme also known as the Role of Women in Comprehensive Child Development which aims at increasing the knowledge and skills of mothers and other family members in supporting the mental, social, moral, and emotional development of young children. The further development and expansion of this programme would add an important dimension to the Pos Yandu approach, and it would help to address the need to better support the qualitative development of Indonesian children.

Over the next decade, it will not be easy to mount the massive effort required for a successful "Decade for Indonesian Children". The effort will require the same kind of determined political commitment which Indonesia has already demonstrated - and perhaps more. It will require the mobilization of all possible resources to empower and support parents with the knowledge and the means to bring about such a change.

But by the same token, there is now an opportunity for the Government and the people of Indonesia to bring about a significant improvement in the lives of Indonesia's millions of young children. In doing so, this will establish a pattern and method for the future to assure the continued well-being of Indonesia's young children and provide them with the opportunity they so richly deserve to develop into healthy, productive, and prosperous citizens. Therefore, we are confronted with a stark question: do we have the will? If we have the will, a great opportunity lies before us to do so much for so many children, and for so little. Thank you and I wish you the best of success in your deliberations on the priorities for the Decade for Indonesian Children.
