
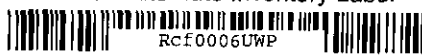


File Sub: CF/EXD/SP/1989-0031B

Address by Ms. Karin Lokhaug
Deputy Executive Director (Operations) of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)
to
Rotary International's First United Nations Day

New York
18 October 1989

	UNICEF Alternate Inventory Label
	
	Rcf0006UWP
Item #	CF/RAD/USAA/DB01/2002-00044
ExR/Code:	CF/EXD/SP/1989-0031B
Rotary International's First United Nations Day. Address 1	
Date Label Printed	18-Jan-2002

cover + 6 pp + 0/6



United Nations Children's Fund Fonds des Nations Unies pour l'enfance Fondo de las Naciones Unidas para la Infancia
Детский Фонд Организации Объединенных Наций 联合国儿童基金会 منظمة الأمم المتحدة للطفولة

File Sub: CF/EXD/SP/1989-0031B

Address by Ms. Karin Løkhaug

Deputy Executive Director (Operations) of the
United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)

to

Rotary International's First United Nations Day

New York - 18 October 1989

The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) joins in welcoming you to the United Nations. You are visiting at the busiest time of the year for the United Nations, right while the General Assembly is in its 44th session. Delegations from the 159 Member States are gathering in these meeting rooms you have been visiting, to act on the major issues of the day:

- issues of disarmament;
- issues of human rights, including the landmark Convention on the Rights of the Child, which is being presented for adoption next month;
- the settling of regional conflicts, such as in Afghanistan and Iran/Iraq;
- new opportunities to promote and protect child survival and development;
- issues related to the environment;
- promoting the equality of the sexes;
- Third World Debt; and
- the planning of the International Development Strategy for the next decade...

...to name but a few.

It comes as no surprise, however, that in the midst of these sensitive and demanding deliberations, a space and time have been carved out for members of Rotary International to view the inner workings of the UN. Rotary has earned special attention.

Your inspiring contribution toward the elimination of polio, to which Mrs. Bruggemann has just referred, has won international acclaim. You chose an extremely challenging goal of the highest priority - a priority grounded in the health and future of the world's children - and then you pursued the goal with great enthusiasm.

The fundraising side of that story has become legendary. Much of the world looked on in disbelief when you set yourselves a target of raising US\$120 million for "PolioPlus" within five years. Then you went on to almost double your commitment, raising US\$230 million - two years ahead of schedule!

cover + 6pp + 06

Many results have come of this. Already, vaccine purchases have increased 4-fold in the past two years. And in 1988, for the first time in history, more cases of polio were prevented than occurred. Some 229,000 cases of polio and 23,000 deaths from polio were recorded, globally. But, as a result of immunizations, 231,000 cases were prevented!

Another result that came of this effort is that Rotary International now enjoys a new credibility throughout the world. When you say you are going to do something, people now believe you. Credibility gives you a new potency to affect change. Many would say that with a new capacity comes a new responsibility. No one would argue that it brings opportunities and fresh challenges.

You have not come here to hear about your organization's work, however; you have come to increase your awareness of the work of the UN, and you have asked me to address you on behalf of its Children's Fund, UNICEF. And your first UN day has come at a crucial time for the world's children.

It may come as a surprise to many that at the last superpower Summit between General-Secretary Gorbachev of the USSR and President Reagan of the United States last year in Moscow, the single development issue discussed was that of children. The joint communique issued by the two leaders stated:

"Both leaders reaffirmed their support for the WHO/UNICEF goal of reducing the scale of preventable childhood deaths through the most effective methods of saving children. They urged other countries and the international community to intensify efforts to achieve this goal."

Many may find it equally surprising that more than 100 heads of state or government have endorsed the idea of a holding a World Summit for Children within the next year.

In fact many people may be asking why there would be serious consideration on a topic as mundane as children. Yet in the last three years, issues related to children have been the focus of debate, declarations, resolutions and joint support from such fora as the Summit of the seven South Asian countries (three times now), the Summit of seven Central American countries, and the Summit of African countries, also three times now, including this year's declaration of the 1990s as the "Decade of the African Child". The Summits of Francophone countries and the Non-Aligned Movement issued strong resolutions on children's issues this year. In March, 500 parliamentarians from 98 countries, meeting in Budapest for the Inter-Parliamentary Union Conference, joined the chorus with a resolution vigorously supporting a wide range of children's issues. It was the only resolution passed unanimously at the week-long conference, and its adoption was greeted by prolonged applause. Any of these actions would have been unthinkable five years ago.

What is happening? When we speak now about the major global concerns of the day, issues related to children are always high on the list of topics.

The new attention to children is attributable not only to the scale of the daily tragedy of child deaths - some 40,000 young children are still dying every day - but to the fact that the majority of these deaths are due to causes for which we have long-since discovered low-cost cures and preventions.

It is difficult to comprehend, but it is true, that 40,000 young children could still be dying each day in our world, a world which sent people to the moon more than a decade ago. It is as if approximately one hundred jumbo jets filled with children crashed each day, and left no survivors.

But these children die far from the lights of TV cameras, and their stories are not told under banner headlines. They die one by one, in their parents arms, quietly, and most often, in the poorest places in the world. And it happens just about once every other second.

One is impressed with a sense of urgency when we realize that during a single hour of today's discussions, more than 16 hundred young children will die.

There is light in this dark tunnel of child mortality and suffering, however; a light which is growing ever brighter. For the majority these deaths are preventable through low-cost means. As the Director-General of the World Health Organization (WHO), Dr. Nakajima, told 1,500 international health educators gathered in Houston last year:

"Parents and families, properly supported, could save two-thirds of the 14 million children who die every year - if only they were properly informed and motivated. Immunization alone could save 3 million lives - and another 3 million deaths a year could be prevented by oral rehydration, a simple and cheap technology."

What exactly is it, one might ask, which makes these deaths preventable?

The historic possibility to save child lives on such an unprecedented scale exists today in the developing countries because of two central new developments of recent years - largely a by-product of the development progress of the past decades.

It has been a coupling of the revolutionary capacity to communicate with and among the world's poor, with recently discovered or newly appreciated low-cost/high-impact health knowledge and technology, that now holds forth the potential for truly major breakthroughs.

Rotary International has, in fact, been a valuable partner in exactly the efforts that give rise to such possibilities. Many of you are aware of the efforts now commonly referred to as the Child Survival and Development Revolution (CSDR). PolioPlus is part of an effort to immunize at least 80 per cent of the world's children by the end of 1990 against the six main child-killing diseases, which, as Dr. Nakajima stated, could save the lives of 3 million children each year.

It is noteworthy that the antigen to protect a child for life from all six of these diseases costs about 50 US cents per child. Similarly, the oral rehydration salts to which Dr. Nakajima referred cost 10 US cents per treatment, and can even be made from ingredients found in the home, if only parents have the knowledge of how to use them.

Other simple health knowledge and technologies which are being advocated through the CSDR include a return to the common practice of breast-feeding with proper weaning practices, monitoring the growth of young children to warn of impending malnutrition, increasing female literacy, adequate family spacing, and food supplementation when necessary, especially where diseases caused by iodine or vitamin A deficiencies can be prevented through very low-cost care.

It has been exhilarating to see how fast the potential for a CSDR has advanced in the seven years since first articulated. As a result of two measures alone - child immunization and the use of oral rehydration therapy - the lives of 2.5 million children were saved in 1988.

Many health experts, UNICEF among them, believe that the full utilization of these few simple measures could actually halve infant and child mortality rates of 1980 before the end of this century. It is worth noting that the same activities which would save tens of millions of child lives would contribute, in the process, to slowing the growth in population rates, as parents gain confidence that the children which they do have, will live.

Having the technical capacity to achieve this, however, is not enough. We know now what is do-able on behalf of children. The historically unique potentials of the CSDR will become realities, however, if, and only if, the popular and political will manifests to make them happen.

If 40,000 children were dying each day from causes which we could do nothing to prevent, the situation would be tragic, indeed. But for these young lives to be snuffed out from causes which are so readily preventable is not only tragic, it is unconscionable. Morality must march with our new capacity to save these young lives - lives which represent the most vulnerable among us, and yet our strongest hope for the future.

It is time that the mass deaths of children be placed alongside slavery, racism and apartheid on the shelf reserved for those things which are simply no longer acceptable to humankind.

It is up to leaders such as Rotary International members throughout the world, to ensure that what is do-able on behalf of children, gets done.

Rotary International has, in fact, participated on every side of the winning formula of one of the most important advances of our times. You have assisted on the technical side of the CSDR by providing one of the antigens for UCI; through your vigorous fundraising campaigns you have mobilized social channels to educate people to do something about the preventable suffering of children - and social mobilization is perhaps the most important form of the

new ability to communicate; and through your persistent, coordinated efforts, you have manifest the will to transform some the best of what is possible, into reality.

Your successes have given you a new capacity to affect change where change is needed. What will be your next steps? Never before in history has the potential existed to do so much, for so many, and for so little a cost - both financially and politically. You have shown that you know how to seize the challenge of the day. How will Rotary International use this capacity?

As I mentioned a moment ago, the Convention on the Rights of the Child is slated for adoption by the General Assembly next month. It will hopefully then be ratified quickly by at least 20 countries - the number necessary to bring the new charter into force. First proposed 10 years ago, during the International Year of the Child, the Convention will offer a global standard regarding children's rights, and regarding the responsibilities of society to ensure that those rights are met.

The Convention represents a major step forward for humankind in terms of the survival, protection and development of children, and much work remains to be done to ensure that it is adopted and ratified. But this work is part of the broader substantive work regarding the Convention on the Rights of the Child which has already begun - and that is implementation - ensuring that children are given an opportunity to live and to develop fully; to be protected from exploitation; to be cared for, etc.

If the Convention is ever to have true meaning, everyone must become involved in its implementation - governments and non-governmental organizations, alike. Throughout the world, people will be looking to Rotarians for leadership and guidance regarding children's rights, in the context of the new Convention. Are you willing to design a new role for yourself in this challenging domain? Are you willing to use your new credibility to ensure that what can be done for children, is done for children?

Another exciting development on the horizon for children is the World Conference on Education for All which will be held in March in Thailand. It is time to apply the best of what we know in terms of social development - including the lessons learned in children's health through the CSDR - to the field of education. Can we look seriously toward eliminating illiteracy within our life-times? Might we dare set a time-frame for ourselves for this goal?

Again, Rotarian leadership on the literacy and basic education fronts could make a significant contribution not only to the next generation, which has been entrusted to our care, but to the advance of civilization itself. The United States regional meeting on the World Conference on Education for All will be held next month in Boston. What role will Rotary take?

As we enter the final decade of this millenium we may ask what more precious legacy could be left to the 21st century than the health and well-being of those people who will comprise the societies of the future -

that is, the children of today. Perhaps, in fact, there is a greater gift. But it will be given through the same efforts. We will have constructed the gift if the civilization which we are now becoming - which we are molding through our actions - takes for granted that the well-being of children is everyone's concern; if, as a matter of course, we put issues related to children first among our priorities at all levels of society. Such an ethic will help ensure the well-being of children for generations to come, and it will offer evidence that we are progressing as a more just and humane civilization.

None of us, no individual and no singular group, can take such a giant step for humanity alone. The vision, however, of what we could achieve together, is taking a very realistic form. In a Grand Alliance for Children - working together - we have the potential - we have the responsibility - to write an important part of the next chapter in history - for the children - and the future - of our world.