
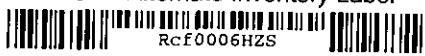


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Message from Mr. James P. Grant
Executive Director of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)
to the
Eighth Asian Congress of Paediatrics

New Delhi, India
February 1994

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Some Presentations at the
EIGHTH ASIAN CONGRESS OF PAEDIATRICS
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February 1994

A MESSAGE FROM MR. JAMES P. GRANT*

It is particularly a great pleasure to send this message to the 8th Asian Congress of Paediatrics to congratulate all paediatricians on the bold steps you have taken in convening this large and important meeting. UNICEF worldwide is acutely aware of the dilemma you faced in organizing this meeting without depending upon the traditional sources of finance. Your willingness to forego traditional sources of funding gives testimony to the sincerity of your message to all mothers that exclusive breastfeeding is the only recommended means to feed a newborn infant. We in UNICEF intend to take this example you have set, of intellectual honesty and integrity, to all corners of the world. My deepest congratulations and admiration.

Paediatricians were the first organized group in the world to support UNICEF's child survival and development revolution. Starting with the International Pediatric Association meeting in Manila in 1983, your professional bodies in each country have given major support and leadership to the concepts that underlie the importance of children, their health and nutrition in the national development of every country. As respected professionals, you carried the message that child survival could indeed be achieved by political action and social mobilization. You convinced Heads of States, Parliaments, social service groups such as Rotarians and Lions, religious leaders, women's groups, Scouts and of course your colleagues in general practice

throughout the world that good health could be obtained by all children if only societies made the effort. You have evidenced the very best precepts of preventive and promotive health care by carrying the basic elements of good paediatrics far beyond your offices into the community. You have not claimed a monopoly on important elements of child health: immunization, good nutrition, growth promotion and the timely detection and treatment of common diseases, especially diarrhoea and respiratory illness. You have developed effective and affordable technologies and successfully transferred them to others with tremendous success. This example of leadership has dramatically demonstrated the power of ideas and the capacity of the medical profession to lead entire populations to the dream of reaching *Health for All*.

The achievement of universal immunization, evidenced by full coverage of 80 percent of the world's children, was the largest peace-time effort in recorded history. We learned from EPI not only how to organize efficient health care systems, but also how to coopt politicians and social activists to the cause of children. The World Development Report (WDR) in 1993 notes that there has been a greater increase in life expectancy in the last 40 years than in the entire human history before that time. What a dramatic success! What a remarkable victory! But the job is not yet done. Most of you are well aware of the promises to children made by the world leaders in the 1990 World Summit for Children. The 27

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Goals which have become the blueprint for *Health for All* in most of your countries are predominantly health goals, the unfinished agenda formulated by paediatricians throughout the world. These are indeed ambitious goals:

- Reducing infant mortality to 50 or less and under-five mortality to less than 70.
- Reducing deaths from diarrhoea by one-half and from ARI by one-third.
- Halving the malnutrition rates, along with the virtual elimination of iodine deficiency, vitamin A deficiency, and a dramatic reduction in anaemia.

Today, Presidents, Prime Ministers, Kings and Queens are conversant with the basic challenges of your profession through the popularization of child survival goals in virtually every country of the world. But the time is passing quickly. The time for concerted action is now.

Only this week in Delhi, we have concluded the meeting of the 6th Global Task Force for Child Survival and Development, the first such meeting to be held with field trips in a developing country. Ministers of Health and other officials from 15 countries around the world, the Director General of WHO (Dr. Nakajima), the Administrator of UNDP, and Representatives from World Bank and the Rockefeller Foundation joined me in this exciting meeting where we reaffirmed our commitment to the goals for children, and particularly to the important 13 *Mid-Decade Goals* that have been singled out as special targets to complete by the end of 1995. These goals embrace the unfinished agenda in immunization with the elimination of tetanus, reduction of deaths from measles, an eradication of poliomyelitis, as well as high sustained immunization coverage. They call for

80 percent use of ORT and continued feeding in an effort to diminish both the deaths and nutritional impact of diarrhoea. They call for the virtual elimination of vitamin A deficiency through the use of supplements and better diets, as well as universal iodation of salt to remove, at last, the largest preventable cause of mental retardation in the world today — Iodine Deficiency Disorders. They call for every hospital where babies are delivered to become *Baby-Friendly*, promoting breastfeeding and avoiding the perils of bottled milk. You, in this Congress, have shown yourselves particularly willing to support this Goal. This could be considered the first fully *Baby-Friendly Paediatric Congress*.

I urge you in each of your national and local paediatrics societies to work with governments, with private general practitioners, and with other bodies as you have in immunization to make these *Mid-Decade Goals for Children* a reality in every community — in every country throughout the world. Your actions have made a tremendous difference — the miracle of universal immunization is a victory of paediatricians. Your concerned support for action in support of the *Mid-Decade Goals for Children* will once again demonstrate not only your commitment and leadership, but also a national capacity in each country to put first-things-first, where children truly belong.

UNICEF is proud of its relationship with the Congress and particularly proud of this Congress and particularly proud of the role played by the Indian Academy of Pediatrics in taking the bold steps that will make this Congress notable in history. We look forward to working closely with each of you, and we take pride in an association that is clearly dedicated, without reservation, to the best interest and concerns of each and every child of the world.

Thank you and God's speed in your most important work.