


File Sub: CF/EXD/SP/1990-0007

Address by Mr. James P. Grant
Executive Director of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)
at the conclusion of the
World Conference on Education for All: Meeting Basic Learning Needs

Jomtien, Thailand
9 March 1990

	UNICEF Alternate Inventory Label
	RCF0006HS7
Item #	CF/RAD/USAA/DB01/1998-02175
ExR/Code:	CF/EXD/SP/1990-0007
World Conference on Education for All. Closing Session. Ac	
Date Label Printed 20-Aug-2002	

cover + 4pp + 06



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/1990-0007

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

at the conclusion of the
World Conference on Education for All: Meeting Basic Learning Needs

Jomtien - 9 March 1990

Mr. President,
Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen:

On Monday morning, just over 100 hours ago, we gathered here at Jomtien. Now with the speeches, the debates, the negotiations and drafting behind us, we realize that together we may have opened a new frontier for human endeavour and human equality.

Each of us, by our presence and our discussion, has been part of a unique assembly of participants from many diverse fields, but with a common purpose - to explore how to reach all with the empowering knowledge and skills essential for life with meaning, life with growth and life with dignity. This is the true meaning of Education for All in meeting the basic learning needs of all children, youths and adults.

I pay special tribute to our partners - UNDP, UNESCO and the World Bank along with our other 19 partners. To His Majesty the King of Thailand, to Her Royal Highness Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn and to the Royal Thai Government we are indebted for their inspiration and warm hospitality. The mammoth tasks taken on by the Ministry of Education so successfully and so gracefully give us some insight into how this country has managed to move so far along the road to Education for All. Behind the scenes, under the leadership of Dr. Wadi Haddad, has been the Inter-agency Secretariat, which made this all happen.

The Jomtien Conference is historic in that it has resoundingly endorsed the concept that education is for ALL and that as we move into the 21st century, every person should be so empowered. In our Declaration, we have affirmed the right of all to education. Our success in this will profoundly effect the future health of our children, birth rates and economic productivity of countries and our ability to live in harmony with our natural environment. Universal primary education is indeed a cutting edge, opening the way for all of us and for all those seeking the knowledge and skills which education provides. It opens the way to lifelong education and to a new life of hope, of accomplishment and of growth.

cover + 4pp + 06

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The Conference has also been a milestone in that it has strongly and universally reaffirmed four important principles to guide us on this journey into the next century:

First, the six goals from the Framework for Action, the most concrete that we have ever had the courage to endorse at the international level, speak for themselves as beacons to guide and encourage countries in setting their own goals toward Education for All.

- (1) Expansion of early childhood development activities, including family and community interventions, especially for poor and disadvantaged children;
- (2) Universal access to and completion of primary education by the year 2000;
- (3) Improvement of learning achievement, such that an agreed percentage of an appropriate age cohort attains or surpasses a defined level of necessary learning achievement;
- (4) Reduction of the adult illiteracy rate to, say one-half its 1990 level by the year 2000;
- (5) Expansion of provision of basic education and training and other essential skills required by youth and adults;
- (6) Increased acquisition by individuals and families of the knowledge, skills and values required for better living, and sound and sustainable development, made available thorough all education channels including the mass media, other forms of modern and traditional communication, and social action, with effectiveness assessed in terms of behavioral change. What I call the "third channel" of education.

These are important guidelines to carry back with us to translate into policies and plans of national governments, of NGOs and of our multilateral and bilateral agencies.

Second, we can also carry with us, the commitment in the Declaration to eradicating the educational inequalities which discriminate against girls and women. Girls and women must share equally in access to and the benefits of education.

Third, in reporting the results of Jomtien to our colleagues back home, we must emphasize our new yardstick of success - namely that of learning achievement, not merely enrollment and access. We must be sure that the child moves through the learning system with real and meaningful gains. Success in this aim will require innovation and imagination in developing new measures of achievement.

Finally, the contribution of NGOs to the success of this Conference has been truly unique. NGOs provide much of the insight, the innovation and the vitality which are required by this global task of Education for All. Every sponsor of this Conference has reaffirmed the importance of this role. To the many NGOs around the world who are committed to Education for All, I would say - we need your partnership, governments need your partnership, communities need your partnership and most of all, children and young people striving to learn, need your partnership, your imagination and your ability to innovate and to test new ideas at the national and grassroots levels.

FINANCE

UNICEF, the World Bank, UNESCO and the UNDP are in agreement that a special effort should be made to ensure that by the year 2000 virtually all children are achieving a common early level of achievement, in literacy, numeracy and basic life skills.

Achieving this goal of achieving universal primary education will require significant additional financial resources, some \$50 billion over the decade, averaging \$5 billion annually, a majority from developing countries but with a significant share from industrial countries as well. This is clearly a substantial but not impossible sum. A three per cent increase in education budgets annually would be required over the decade. Only one half of one per cent of official development aid, less than \$300 million annually, is now devoted to supporting basic education; a shift in aid priority is clearly required. The statements in Jomtien by the heads of the four sponsoring agencies demonstrate that this process has already begun. It needs to be supported by the other multilateral and bilateral assistance agencies.

However, as the Declaration recognizes, success in moving towards basic education for all in many countries needs action to ease the crippling burden of debt. This has been eloquently underlined by delegates from Africa and Latin America and surely merits new approaches from us all. As stated in the Declaration, creditors and debtors must seek innovative and equitable formulae to resolve these burdens, since the capacity of many developing countries to respond effectively to education and other basic needs will be greatly helped by finding solutions to the debt problem.

Within the developing countries, and expanded educational process will require support from the highest leadership as well as from the Ministry of Finance and Planning in working out the financing of the priorities of Education for All. So also will the release of savings from military restructuring, as so challengingly put by Mr. Draper in his address to our plenary. In times of restructuring, basic education is a key investment which can be justified as education of a future generation. The IMF, like the World Bank has many times publicly stated their willingness to respond positively to such priorities, if governments give a clear lead.

Amongst other things, it will also require much greater understanding of the magnitude, depth and consequences of the problems in the industrial countries - an educational challenge in which the NGOs and the media have a particular role.

NEXT STEPS

This is not the final hour of a conference, but rather the first hour of a global movement toward Education for All. The success of this Conference will not be measured by our resolutions here, but by our actions and achievements in the months and years ahead.

UNDP, UNESCO, UNICEF and the World Bank have agreed to increase support to basic education within each of their own planning frameworks, structures and resource allocations. To this end, they have decided to maintain close contact at headquarters and field level in implementing their support of basic education and to meet at head of agency level for a periodic review. They have also indicated their readiness to join in any "Education for All Group" which may be convened.

Recent events offer us some exceptional opportunities to carry forward the conclusions of this Conference - to advocate for commitment and decisions at higher levels. I lend my full support and that of UNICEF to Dr. Mayor, the Director-General of UNESCO, in moving the principles of the World Declaration and the recommendations of the Framework for Action forward through the International Congress of Educational Planning in Mexico, and the International Conference on Education of the IBE in Geneva. The conclusions we have crafted will also contribute to the human development focus of the United Nations Fourth Development Decade.

Also, as many of you know, in September, world leaders will gather together at the United Nations in New York for The World Summit on Children. The Summit, whose purpose is to promote commitment at the highest political level for the survival, protection and development of children, will be greatly enriched by the bold initiatives you have taken here in the Jomtien Conference, and validated in the revolutionary Declaration on Education for All and the Framework for Action to Meet Basic Learning Needs.

The Summit meeting of world leaders also makes it possible to stimulate regional, national and even local mini-summits on issues, generating a sense of worldwide participation in the cause of children and in the goals and aims of the Declaration and Framework for Action, and give reality to Education for All. When these happen in your country, possibly due in part to your own stimulation, I hope you will join in and carry forward the vision and goal of Jomtien.

With the conclusion of the historic Conference, the baton in a real sense passes to countries around the world. It is for each and every government, each and every people to craft national alliances to determine strategy, to formulate concrete plans, to mobilize political support and resources and to move forward into action. As each has stressed from the outset, the four sponsors of the Conference, and I know many of our co-sponsors and other partners, stand ready to join with you in this endeavour and to commit increased resources to achieving Education to All.

And finally, there are all of you - you will make it happen for many more. Together we have forged a new community committed to Education for All.