

File Sub: CF/EXD/SP/1990-0044b

Message from Mr. James P. Grant
Executive Director of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)
for the publication

"The Girl Child"

published by South Asian Publications in Karachi, Pakistan
as a souvenir of the
"South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC)
"Year of the Girl Child – 1990"



UNICEF Alternate Inventory Label



Rcf0006XVT

Item # **CF/RAD/USAA/DB01/2002-01015**

EXR/Code: **CF/EXD/SP/1990-0044b**

The Girl Child. Message from Mr. James P. Grant, Executive
Date Label Printed 20-Aug-2002

cover + 1p + øb

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What are our aspirations for the girl child? What are our plans to ensure equity for her...in education, nutrition, health care and all of life's opportunities? Are we prepared to advocate for the fundamental shifts in attitudes and long-standing practices responsible for the gross inequities which have been the focus of this SAARC Year of the Girl Child?

During 1990 a whole new level of attention has been drawn to these questions in South Asia - to the inequities suffered by females and to the steps necessary to reduce the disparities between girls and boys. Intensive effort is being channeled into initiating policy and programme actions for the survival and overall development of the girl child during this year, and for the long-term.

Plans are underway to involve all sectors of societies - government ministries, the media, international agencies such as UNICEF, and non-governmental organizations in common efforts on behalf of the girl child.

During the SAARC Year of the Girl Child, global commitment toward these same ends was made at the highest political level. At the World Summit for Children on 29-30 September, 71 Heads of State or Government and ministerial-level representatives from more than another 80 countries - constituting the largest gathering of world leaders in history - adopted a Plan of Action which states:

"The enhancement of the status of women and their equal access to education, training, credit and other extension services constitute a valuable contribution to a nation's social and economic development. Efforts for the enhancement of women's status and their role in development must begin with the girl child. Equal opportunity should be provided for the girl child to benefit from the health, nutrition, education and other basic services to enable her to grow to her full potential."

I am convinced that the insistence by SAARC to place these issues high on the political agenda in 1990 was largely responsible for the global awareness of the importance of the issues, and for the courage to commit to rectifying inequalities against females that we saw at the World Summit.

Much has been planned and promised for the girl child in 1990. The challenge, of course, is to transform these good strategies and plans into a new reality - a new way of life, full of all of the opportunities available to anyone - for the girl child in South Asia, and throughout the world.