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Foreword to PFO Emergency Presentation by
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to the
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FOREWORD

Until now, the annual UNICEF Proposals for Supplementary Funding book has presented descriptions of emergency situations along with proposals for development activities. But given the increasing number of emergencies in the world -- some caused by natural disasters and others by political conflict -- UNICEF is now obliged to issue a separate book cataloging emergency appeals. This volume 1992 UNICEF Emergency Assistance, marks the inaugural edition, and from now on it will serve as a companion to the UNICEF Supplementary Funding Proposals for Development Activities. UNICEF Emergency Assistance, however, is designed in such a fashion that it may be periodically updated throughout the year. I trust potential donors will find it useful and that it will facilitate timely and generous responses to emergencies.

The end of the cold war and the sweeping political and economic changes that have taken place in so much of the world in recent years hold out the potential for a far better, healthier, more prosperous life for all in the century ahead. But at the same time, new conflicts and instabilities have quickly come to the surface, making complex political and economic transitions more difficult and challenging the international community's capacity to respond.

The recent war in the Persian Gulf; civil strife in several African countries; the merciless drought and famine which threaten even more African nations; the lack of adequate social "safety nets" in Central and Eastern Europe; the ethnic and other conflicts in the former Soviet Union; the horrors we have seen in the former Yugoslavia; the plight of Haiti; and the return home of tens of thousands of Cambodian refugees -- to mention only some of the most dramatic crises -- reflect the scope and diversity of emergencies to which the international community has had to respond in recent times.

Though promoting human development is the backbone of UNICEF's work, helping to organize relief and rehabilitation assistance for people, particularly children and women, whose lives have been jeopardized by emergency situations, is equally central to UNICEF's mandated activities. Since the mid-1980s, through such mechanisms as "Days of Tranquillity" and "Corridors of Tranquillity" in a number of countries, UNICEF has sought to provide special protection and assistance to children in times of war. At the September 1990 World Summit for Children, the world's leaders strongly endorsed the concept and called for its application wherever children's lives are imperilled by military conflict.

The descriptions of emergency assistance programmes contained in this volume are very brief summaries of substantially longer proposals with detailed project descriptions, which can be obtained upon request from UNICEF's Programme Funding Office.

UNICEF has a unique comparative advantage in dealing with emergencies, which are, by their very definition, unpredictable and rapidly changing. But because of UNICEF's large international field office network already in place working with development programmes, assistance can be rapidly mobilized to respond to crisis situations. Our supply center in Copenhagen is pre-stocked with emergency hospital kits, medical kits, basic survival packages, cooking utensils and a wide variety of other items needed during a crisis, any of which can be sent virtually on a moment's notice to a country in trouble.

UNICEF has a long history of inter-agency cooperation in emergency activities. Included in this document are several examples of such cooperation - the Consolidated United Nations-Southern Africa Development Coordinating Conference Appeal; the WHO/UNICEF Programme for Cholera Control; the Consolidated Inter-Agency Appeal for the Horn of Africa, to name just a few. The recent establishment of the United Nations Department of Humanitarian Affairs (DHA) is certain to enhance United Nations system coordination and efficiency in response to emergencies. UNICEF has seconded its Director of Emergency Programmes to the Geneva office of DHA, as well as an Emergency Programme Officer to the DHA Secretariat.

The emergency situations which follow are in urgent need of donor support. Without substantial assistance, many thousands of people -- in particular, children -- may perish. I trust that Governments, NGOs and others will join UNICEF in our efforts to extend aid as quickly as possible to the millions of people in desperate need of emergency assistance. The words of a recent commentator should serve as a warning to the world: "If we wait for the dying children to reach our TV screens, it will be too late." We must act and act now.

James P. Grant
Executive Director
UNICEF
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