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Kamil Taha, Executive Producer
Discussion with Michael Littlejohns (Host),
James Grant (Executive Director, UNICEF)
Graciela Hall, Anthony Goodman, Afsane Bassir Pour, Appan Menon

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VOICE: From United Nations Headquarters in New York, this is **WORLD CHRONICLE**, an unedited interview programme about major global issues. Here now to introduce our guest is the host of today's **WORLD CHRONICLE**.

LITTLEJOHNS: I'm Michael Littlejohns and this is **WORLD CHRONICLE**.

As we approach the end of this century, the majority of children are born to poor families, mainly in third world countries. Disease, malnutrition and famine claim the lives of millions of them at an early age. Meanwhile, others fall victim to wars and civil conflicts. What must be done to save the children of the world?

Our guest today is dedicated to the cause of children. He is James Grant, Executive Director of the United Nations Children Fund, or UNICEF. A national of the United States of America, Mr. Grant will be interviewed here at United Nations Headquarters in New York by Anthony Goodman, of Reuters; Afsane Bassir Pour, of Le Monde; and Appan Menon, of Inter Press Service.

Before we talk to Mr. Grant, let's look at some aspects of an ambitious programme that saves children in Central America. Our correspondent Graciela Hall reports.

HALL:

Throughout Central America, widespread poverty and malnutrition particularly affect mothers and children.

[CHILD CRYING]

Many babies are born prematurely, with birth weights of less than four pounds. Until recently, the best hope for keeping premature babies alive, like this

two-week-old girl, weighing less than two pounds, was the use of sophisticated equipment. But there are not enough incubators. Lack of maintenance means infection is a real risk.

An idea borrowed from half a world away is providing a low cost solution. Kangaroos in Australia are always born prematurely, but spend the first part of their lives in their mother's pouch until they're strong enough to hop around on their own. A Kangaroo Mother Project in Guatemala is underway with help from UNICEF. Mothers are taught to keep their tiny babies under their sweaters around the clock. Incubators are still used for babies with breathing problems. The others get everything they need from mother's body -- love, warmth, and breast milk, which provides immunization against infections and prevents diarrhea.

The approach is needed for a high proportion of Guatemalan babies, says Roosevelt Hospital's pediatric specialist, Dr. Rosales.

With this technique, less children die. Already in some rural areas, 30 to 40 per cent of children are underweight. They are the ones most at risk.

As soon as doctors approve, the babies go home. This technique means mother can work freely with her hands. The babies are kept warm and upright, so they breathe easily. This closeness helps establish an emotional bond which stimulates development. But mother needs rest and support, because for some

weeks she sleeps sitting up to keep baby upright all night.

Frequent checkups are important to monitor the child's progress, and mothers at risk receive food supplements and vitamins at the hospital.

Demetris and Longina are three-week-old twins born underweight into a poor neighborhood. Family poverty puts children at risk. No electricity or running water, for example. But the kangaroo technique works with fathers, too. Men actually secrete the same hormone that stimulates mother's milk. Dad can't breast feed, but he does become more tender and caring. No wonder it's called "the love hormone".

Six months later and the twins are developing well. Thanks to Kangaroo parenting, Demetris and Longina are well, normal bouncing babies.

LITTLEJOHNS: Mr. Grant, UNICEF has been around for more than 46 years and doing remarkable work in many countries of the world, but in the last year or two, the focus seems to have been on emergency situations, and this has been attracting a lot of media attention. Is this trend likely to continue in the future, do you think? And if so, will it perhaps result in funds that could otherwise have been used to do the kind of things that we have just been watching in that video, and these countries might suffer as a result?

GRANT: Well, clearly, there has been an increase in emergencies in the last 12, 18 months, and it's become very clear in the last six months that these are in many ways a new class of

emergency. They're an emergency where the internal security situation is much more chaotic than historically. And that under these circumstances it's extremely difficult to deliver assistance, therefore this makes the problem even more acute. And then it means more input of people, energy, and in the case of Somalia, it meant the unprecedented intervention finally of some 30,000 American and other UN troops to change the situation.

This is, of course, in a sense, a sign of progress, because in the old days, in a Somalia type situation, one or the other or both superpowers would have moved in, in the cold war, and you would have had relative order in the country with their backing of one clan or another, or you'd have a division as in Angola, with a civil war and relative order on both sides of the fighting line. Whereas in this, what we're seeing is just a chaotic situation. And Yugoslavia, the former Yugoslavia has many of the same.

But yes, we will have more of this. It does take management time away, as well as money. And management time is a very important ingredient. But, we must underline the fact that there is a roll on for children around the world, that with 1990 as the watershed, when we saw the Convention on the Rights of the Child coming into force, the World Summit for Children a month later, and then the -- which was the largest gathering of heads of state in history, up to that moment, only exceeded in more recently by the Earth Summit in Rio, and then there was the achievement by the end of 1990 of the universal child immunization effort, honouring the promise made in 1985 to reach at least 80 per cent of all children in each country by having them fully immunized by age one.

LITTLEJOHNS: Has the Convention on the Rights of the Child gone into effect?

GRANT: Well, it came into force when 20 countries ratified it, and so it came into force September 2, 1990. But it has since then had an unparalleled, rapid joining of countries. So we're now at a state where there's nearly 130 countries that have ratified it. Never before has any convention moved this fast, and when you realize that this is a very complex, more complex convention than most, it's really quite -- it does indicate that a revolution for children is underway.

LITTLEJOHNS: The United States has not ratified.

GRANT: The United States has neither ratified nor signed its intention.

LITTLEJOHNS: Why is that?

GRANT: Well, this is first and foremost you've got to go back to the White House for this. A large majority of the Senate passed a resolution asking the President of the United States in the summer of '92 to send forward the convention. It's not moved forward yet, it's still going through internal comments. But --

LITTLEJOHNS: With a new occupant of the White House, do you think a little push might see it through?

GRANT: Yes. Actually what I would expect is a double -- two stage. One is a signing by the new administration of their intention to proceed rapidly -- that is easy. Second, they will undoubtedly want to review the reservations that would normally accompany -- when the administration sends it up to the Congress, they would indicate what reservations they would want to attach to the ratification process. And so those would be reviewed. But my hope would be that we would get an early signature, and I do dream

before the UNICEF has its next board meeting in late April of 1993 that we will have the United States, which at this moment is the last major country in the world not to have acceded to the Convention, India has just -- very imminently has just signed.

LITTLEJOHNS: Anthony Goodman.

GOODMAN: Mr. Grant, perhaps I might ask you some nuts and bolts questions about UNICEF. How large is its annual budget? What are the main sources of funding? And what are the main areas of expenditure?

GRANT: Well, UNICEF now has a budget that's approaching \$900 million a year. A quarter of this comes from private voluntary contributions, and the other three-quarters comes from voluntary contributions from governments. A government can give whatever it wants, and one year it can be one size and the next year somewhat less. This compares with about \$200 million in 1980. So it's been an agency that's been on a growth pattern. There are about 6,000 employees around the world for UNICEF, of whom some 87 per cent, nearly 90 per cent, are in developing countries in well over 150 offices. They're not only in capital cities, but in places like India; they're in most of the major provincial capitals.

The priority purpose is health, particularly primary health care, which last year took almost 40 per cent of the total; of basic education, water supply and sanitation. We are the largest source of grants for rural and slum water supply systems.

GOODMAN: If I might follow up, as a result of the World Summit for Children and the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which came into effect at about the same time in September 1990, what have been the practical fruits of those two main events in the life of

UNICEF?

GRANT: The fruits have really been major. The Convention, for the first time in history, provides a Magna Carta, a bill of rights, for children. I mean, historically, children are at the bottom of the heap, and while we like to remember the cry from the Titanic of "Women and children first", that happened only in first class. When you looked at what happened to the rest of the ship, it was very clear that children and mothers were at the bottom, and most of them went down with the ship.

So that this, the Convention for the first time provides this legal umbrella, and the very fact that it has gathered ratifications faster than any other convention in history indicates it's got some -- it really has some dynamism to it. And then the fact that one month after it came into force that there was the World Summit for Children, which really was a concentration on parts of the Convention -- the Convention says a child has a right to survive, has a right to basic education, has a right to access to clean water -- and in effect what the World Summit did was to define 27 quantified goals, to be achieved by the year 2000, that really are implementing many parts of the Convention.

Now, somebody could easily say, well, aren't these just words? But here was the importance, of course, of the achievement of the immunization goals, because as the largest collaborative peacetime effort in world history, it demonstrates that words could be translated into action. And since then, the big question has been are they going to keep their promises? And I would say that at the moment they are -- the countries of the world are well on their way to keeping their promises, but these are a ten-year set of promises, and the first measurable promise, of course, was that each country promised to produce a national plan of

action on how to get from here to the year 2000 goals.

A hundred and forty countries have produced their national plans of action, including the United States and Canada. So it's the industrial countries as well. And in the fall of '92 we have seen a whole series of regional conferences on how -- at ministerial level -- on how to convert these plans of action into the next steps. And the largest of these was held in Dakar, the Organization of African Unity, 48 African countries came together together with 18 industrial countries and international non-governmental organizations, national non-governmental organizations, to discuss how to move forward next. And I must say, it was a very powerful thing.

At the same time, we are seeing actual results. There has not been a case of polio in the western hemisphere -- eradication of polio was one of the goals -- we've not seen a case of polio in the western hemisphere now for 14 months.

LITTLEJOHNS: The programme is WORLD CHRONICLE, our guest is James Grant, Executive Director of UNICEF. Afsane Bassir Pour.

POUR: If I may change the subject, Mr. Grant, we are witnessing in Somalia the first case of humanitarian intervention. First of all, I'd like to know whether you agree with such a concept, to intervene in a country whether the government wants it or not, secondly --

LITTLEJOHNS: There is no government in Somalia.

POUR: Well, in Somalia there isn't, but the concept, for other countries. And secondly, what would be the role of UNICEF in Somalia?

GRANT: Well, let me just say that when I heard that the United States offer and the United Nations reaction, and that this was resulting in the major UN intervention, I breathed a massive sigh of relief, and also felt a sense of exhilaration. The relief was that UNICEF and the International Committee of the Red Cross, CARE, we were involved in a mammoth operation in Somalia which frankly did not have a chance of success without a change in the security situation. So not only were a thousand children dying a day, but the reputation of the UN and these other NGOs were at stake. And the US intervention, the UN intervention, 30,000 men indicates what a massive intervention was required to change this.

The sense of exhilaration came out of the fact that this was the most massive move yet, demonstration, concrete, of the right to food. And we've been discussing for a long time the right of people to food. And I was in Calcutta in early '44 when the tail end of the Calcutta-Bengal famine. A million and a half people died in the streets of Calcutta, treble what's died in Somalia so far. There were ample food supplies, the people didn't have the money to buy it, and people, families died around [telephone polls?], just like the Somalia pictures. But the British raj at that time felt absolutely not responsibility to take any action. It was just like the Irish famine, when there was a potato famine from which thousands of Irishmen died, but that same bad weather that brought the blight brought the best corn in years, and so there were major exports of corn, but there was no responsibility to bring the two together.

So this is a very historic intervention, of which I think the United States and the UN together have reason to be proud.

LITTLEJOHNS: Afsane, another question?

FOUR: Well, UNICEF's role. How do you intend -- how many people do you have in Somalia, and how do you intend to participate in the operation?

GRANT: Well, UNICEF had the most people, has had the most people in Somalia of any UN agency. Really, from the beginning, when they went back in on Christmas Eve of 1991. But I must say, our more than 100 people become dwarfed when you think of the 30,000 armed troops going in. But our role is to work with the other agencies -- the World Food Programme provides the bulk food. We deal with supplementary foods, health, trying to get schools back together, make sure that the children are immunized, and we work very closely with the non-governmental organizations, who, frequently, we will provide the supplementary food, and groups like Concern and Save the Children would do the actual running of the feeding centres.

LITTLEJOHNS: Appan Menon.

MENON: Yes. Mr. Grant, one of the increasing actions of the UN Security Council, or the UN, is resort to the imposition of sanctions in conflict situations. Now, you went to Iraq and you saw the impact of these sanctions, and I believe you've also expressed your opinion against the imposition of sanctions. Now, do you think there can be sanctions with a human face?

GRANT: Well, this is the challenge. Clearly, the UN system needs a way to put pressure on a country short of war. And that has more teeth in it than just resolutions. On the other hand, it's very clear that sanctions are a very blunt instrument, and that whether it's Haiti or Iraq, the people who primarily feel the burden tend to be those who are already the most vulnerable, particularly children. And that while there are provisions in these sanctions

resolutions for humanitarian actions, there always seem to be many blocks from having it happen.

And so looking ahead, I would say that it's extremely important that the world community develop a more refined sanction technique than we have today.

MENON: Like what, for instance? In legal terms?

GRANT: Well, I myself would have a much broader limitation on using sanctions on food. Historically, when you use sanctions on food, the soldiers, or the bastards, whatever you want to call them, they always get the food. It's those who are the weakest, often the principal victims of a regime, that don't. So at the very moment when we see a massive UN military intervention to Somalia on the right to food, we clearly need to take a closer look at the impact of sanctions on the right of weak and vulnerable to food. I am confident that in due course it can be refined, but at the moment, it's still too blunt.

LITTLEJOHNS: Anthony Goodman.

GOODMAN: Mr. Grant, there's a topic affecting children which I find perhaps more troubling than anything else that UNICEF is involved in, and that is the fact that there are millions of children around the world who are virtually indentured labourers, or slaves, in plain English, slaves. They're sold by their families or they somehow fall into the hands of entrepreneurs who literally work them to death.

Now, can UNICEF, or does UNICEF do anything about this, especially when UNICEF is dealing with governments who may be partly responsible for the situation, and at the same time their

cooperation is needed?

GRANT: Well, clearly the most important thing happening for this category of exploited child labour is the passage of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. And one reason it was held up in India -- India delayed for a long time -- was that there were people inside the Indian Government who were saying we've got a massive problem on child exploitation in the country, and before we go forward on the Convention, let's make clear that we've got our intentions clearly set out, because we would be judged every two years -- every country has to report every two years -- we would be judged as to what kind of progress we're making on this.

So that's a most powerful tool. It means that now in some 130 countries people who want to protest this, whether they're journalists or civil rights groups, have a standard against which they can fight.

GOODMAN: Like other conventions, this Convention has a monitoring community of some sort before which signatories have to report.

GRANT: That's right, there's a group of 10, and every two years each signatory has to report progress. And one of the marvelous things about the World Summit for Children is that having set these twenty-odd goals for the year 2000, that does give a yardstick for measuring whether a country is making the right progress on protecting the health of its children, getting the children basic education. Because what does make the Convention on the Rights of the Child rather difficult to monitor is that many of its aspects are aspirational. Every child has the right to a basic education, every child has a right to health. And against that standard, even countries like the United States very clearly have a

deficiency.

So there is a question really of are you making progress is the key pattern, does this set the direction, and then the question is are you making progress fast enough? And here's where the World Summit for Children was so useful, because in that part of the Convention that was covered by these areas, there is a yardstick.

LITTLEJOHNS: Afsane Bassir Pour.

POUR: Mr. Grant, you've established, and successfully for the most part, weeks of tranquility in different conflict situations. Could you tell us a little more about these weeks of tranquility?

GRANT: Well, the whole concept of week, days, areas of tranquility emerged in El Salvador in 1985, when they discovered that more children died in El Salvador because they had not been immunized in '84 than everybody killed in all the fighting with the tens and tens of millions of bullets and bombs and shells, and land mines. And so they agreed, well, the least we can do is three times a year cease all the fighting, the first Sunday in February, March, and April, we'll immunize our children, and then go back to fighting again.

And from '85 till the war ended, this practice has been continued. And from it then came the concept of corridors of tranquility in the Sudan, where for the first time really in history the government and the rebels came together to agree that the civilians trapped in war -- the prior year, 250,000 had died, 8,000 soldiers, the majority of the 250,000 were children -- and so there was enough international opinion that the concept of corridors of

tranquility. And Lebanon had three days of tranquility at a time to immunize children. And these were honoured.

Now, most recently there was a very ambitious effort in Yugoslavia to get a week of tranquility in early November, the first week of November, in order to bring blankets and clothing to winterize half a million, at least half a million children. And I would have to say it was a week of relative tranquility; in other words, the death rate in Sarajevo, the casualty rate, dropped very sharply for that week, but shooting did continue. But basically, the delivery of half a million blankets and the like was accomplished during the period of November.

But it was this that set the precedent that really has led to the American military offer to intervene in Somalia. Because prior to '89, you really had no major case of this kind of external intervention into civil conflicts.

POUR: Thank you.

LITTLEJOHNS: Mr. Grant, that's all the time we have. Thank you for joining us on this edition of **WORLD CHRONICLE**.

Our guest has been James Grant, Executive Director of UNICEF. He was interviewed here at United Nations Headquarters in New York by Anthony Goodman, of Reuters; Afsane Bassir Pour of Le Monde, and Appan Menon of Inter Press Service.

I'm Michael Littlejohns. Thank you for joining us. We invite you to be with us for the next edition of **WORLD CHRONICLE**.

Transcripts of the programme may be obtained free of charge by sending a stamped, self-addressed envelope to: **WORLD CHRONICLE**, United Nations, Room S-827, New York, NY 10017, USA.

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