

File Sub: CF/EXD/SP/1993-0038

Article by Mr. James P. Grant
Executive Director of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)
and
Ms. Joyce Green

"A Worldwide Alliance of Broadcasters for Children"

for
Moving Pictures Bulletin
August 1993



UNICEF Alternate Inventory Label



Item # CF/RAD/USAA/DB01/2002-01132

ExR/Code: CF/EXD/SP/1993-0038

A Worldwide Alliance of Broadcasters for Children , by Mr
Date Label Printed 21-Aug-2002

cover + 7pp + ob

w/ Joyce
Green

A worldwide alliance of broadcasters for children

James P. Grant, Executive Director, UNICEF

article for Moving Pictures Bulletin
August 1993

Two years ago, I asked broadcasters to set aside one day each year to focus on the concerns of children. Their enthusiastic response led to the first observance of International Children's Day of Broadcasting last December.

More than 200 television and radio stations in over 80 countries took part, making broadcasting history. But their participation was the start of something yet more momentous. I believe it was the beginning of a worldwide alliance of broadcasters for children.

Now, throughout the world, major broadcast unions and professional groups, along with individual television and radio stations, have demonstrated their commitment to children by participating in the International Children's Day of Broadcasting.

Perhaps the most striking example of this worldwide endeavour comes from Latin America and the Caribbean. Less than a year ago, radio and television executives from 11 countries in the region formed a solidarity group and promised to help save and protect their children and young people. They signed a declaration and a letter of commitment acknowledging their responsibility to use the power of their media to help solve the most acute problems affecting children - especially poor children - in the Americas. They have been working towards that end ever since.

This month, the solidarity group will meet in Lima, Peru, to discuss plans for the next International Children's Day of Broadcasting, to be observed this year on 12 December.

Others, too, have become part of this worldwide movement. The International Council of the National Academy of Television Arts and Sciences - the powerful networking group that links many of the world's major television, cable and satellite stations - has supported the Day from its inception, urging its members to take part and provide logistical help to UNICEF.

The Commonwealth Broadcasting Association, the Asia-Pacific Broadcast Union and others have also helped. Last month, Caribbean Broadcasting Union stations, at their annual general meeting, welcomed the opportunity to participate in the second International Children's Day of Broadcasting this year.

The Crianca Esperanca (Hope for Children) television and radio campaign by Rede Globo of Brazil, which raises so much money and broadcasts so much vital information about child survival and children's rights, will soon take place also in Peru, and it is hoped that other countries will follow Globo's - and now Peru's - example.

These stations, networks and broadcast groups are a shining example of what can be done when television and radio put their power behind children. The broadcast media have a major role to play in shaping our future. As we approach the 21st century,

we have the capacity as never before to save and enrich people's lives. Yet practical will to do so is often in short supply. Broadcasters can help and are helping to generate that will.

Through the media, we all know about the 'loud' emergencies - natural disasters and armed conflicts which kill, displace and disable millions of children. War, famine, floods, cholera outbreaks and the AIDS pandemic cause widespread physical and psychological suffering and massive disruption of family life. In the past 12 months alone, wars have cost the lives of some 500,000 children.

These 'loud' emergencies draw the attention of the news media almost daily. But broadcasters must not forget the other emergency, the 'silent' emergency - the death of 35,000 children every day from causes related to poverty, illiteracy and lack of basic, inexpensive, life-saving technologies in the world's poorest communities. No war or famine has ever cost the lives of 35,000 children a day, but diarrhoea alone kills 3 million children in slums and poor villages each year, while acute respiratory infections such as pneumonia claim the lives of 3.6 million children a year.

In 1990, world leaders met at the United Nations in New York at the World Summit for Children, setting concrete, measurable goals for child survival and development for the 1990s. These goals include a one-third reduction in under-five mortality rates, a halving of child malnutrition, 90 per cent immunization coverage and control of the major childhood diseases, the eradication of polio, a halving of maternal

mortality rates, 80 per cent primary school completion, the provision of safe water and sanitation for all communities, and the universal availability of family planning services.

Convinced that these goals can be reached, using appropriate technologies, proven strategies and at relatively low cost, countries all over the world are implementing plans of action to achieve them. It is estimated that an additional US\$25 billion a year would be sufficient to attain the goals in developing countries, and that most of this money could be found by restructuring national budgets and official development assistance (ODA) to give children first call on available resources.

At present, only about 10 per cent of government spending in developing countries is allotted to basics such as nutrition, health care, water supply, sanitation, primary education and family planning. Industrialized countries also apportion less than 10 per cent of their ODA to meeting these basic human needs. UNICEF estimates that if developing countries directed 20 per cent of their budgets to these needs, and industrialized countries did the same with ODA, some 50 million young lives could be saved this decade.

UNICEF and the World Health Organization are now working with organizations and governments everywhere to reach the year 2000 goals - and have selected some of them for accelerated achievement by the end of 1995. These mid-decade goals include:

- **Elimination of neonatal tetanus** which can be achieved through immunization of

all women of child-bearing age. The vaccine costs only 4 cents per dose, yet 440,000 infants die annually from neonatal tetanus;

- **Reduction of measles deaths by 95 per cent and of measles cases by 90 per cent.**

At present, one million children die annually from measles worldwide and millions of others suffer from illnesses, disabilities and malnutrition to which measles opens the door;

- **Raising immunization coverage to 80 per cent or more in all countries;**

- **Elimination of polio in selected countries - globally, over 100,000 children are still paralysed by polio each year;**

- **Achievement of 80 per cent usage of oral rehydration therapy as part of the control of diarrhoeal diseases;**

- **Achievement of the baby-friendly hospital initiative in all countries - to promote breastfeeding and end the provision of free supplies of infant formula in hospitals and maternity facilities in the industrialized world by June 1994. Seventy-one developing countries have already taken action to end the distribution of free and low-cost supplies of infant formula;**

- **Universal iodization of salt to prevent new cases of iodine deficiency disorders,**

which are the main cause of mental retardation and underdevelopment in the world;

- **Elimination of vitamin A deficiency**, currently responsible for approximately 250,000 cases of blindness in young children each year. Providing a vitamin A capsule to children twice a year will also help lower child deaths by about one third in many parts of the world; and

- **Eradication of guinea worm disease**, which occurs in remote areas of sub-Saharan Africa and in parts of India and Pakistan

Most of these goals relate to child survival. But children are entitled to more than mere survival. This year's International Children's Day of Broadcasting has as its theme the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which gives a clear and comprehensive legal and ethical expression of what the world community wants for its children. The Convention guarantees social and economic as well as civil and political rights. Universal ratification of the Convention by 1995 is also one of the mid-decade goals.

The Convention recognizes that children are individuals with the right to develop physically, mentally and socially to their fullest potential, and to express opinions freely. It came into force within nine months of its adoption by the United Nations General Assembly in 1989 - the fastest response by the international community to any human rights treaty. As of September, 146 countries had ratified the Convention, more than in

the case of any other rights treaty.

To make the Convention a reality, to better the situation of children and allow them not only to survive, but to develop and flourish, the children need you, the broadcasters, actively on their side. In the past year, since the first International Children's Day of Broadcasting, many of you television and radio executives, producers and reporters have recognized that you have the power to help change things for the better, to help society respond to the needs of children, both in your local area or around the world.

I very much hope that you will join the many television and radio stations participating in this year's International Children's Day of Broadcasting on 12 December. But I also hope that you will take that commitment one step further, by enhancing programming on children's issues year round, and promoting the cause of children through your professional associations and broadcast groups. You, too, can be part of the growing worldwide movement to help our children face the challenges of the 21st century.