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Message from Mr. James P. Grant
Executive Director of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)
on the occasion of
The Catholic Hospital Association of India Golden Jubilee

25 October 1993



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Message from Mr. James P. Grant
Executive Director of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)
on the occasion of
The Catholic Hospital Association of India Golden Jubilee

On behalf of the UNICEF family, I would like to congratulate the Catholic Hospital Association of India (CHAI) on your Golden Jubilee. The entire UNICEF family celebrates alongside you, as partners in the ongoing effort to improve the health and well-being of the Indian people, in particular children and women. CHAI and UNICEF are strong allies in the struggle to achieve the year 2000 goal of Health for All through the strategy of primary/community health care.

In the 50 years of existence of the Catholic Hospital Association of India, there have been major improvements in the health and quality of life of the Indian population, and the Association has contributed abundantly to these historic successes. We know that CHAI shares UNICEF's conviction that the basic benefits of modern science and medicine can -- and must -- be extended to each and every individual, no matter how poor or what their social status might be.

Today there are low-cost technologies and practices that, with the help of modern communications and social mobilization, are saving the lives of many millions of children and helping millions more

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reach their intellectual and physical potential. India provides an excellent example of what can be done, having gone from only 1 per cent immunization coverage in 1985 to 86 per cent in 1991, a rate that exceeds that of several industrialized countries, including Japan and the United States.

India, which has ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child, is working hard to reach the goals set forth at the 1990 World Summit for Children and which are adapted to the Indian reality in the country's National Programme of Action. If these goals are to be achieved, India must double the rate of progress in child survival, from an annual 3 per cent reduction in child deaths (the average over the 1980s) to 6.2 per cent. Recently, a series of mid-decade goals to be reached by the end of 1995 have been set, to help accelerate efforts to save and improve children's lives. Each state in India has agreed to transform these goals into State Programmes of Action for Children. This highly specific and detailed set of activities provide a blueprint for progress for children for the coming years. I count on CHAI to give its full support in each state where its members are located.

India's annual child death toll of 3.2 million constitutes a quarter of all under-5 deaths in the world, the vast majority of them easily preventable. Therefore, achieving the goals in India will not only save millions of lives in India but also contribute in a major way to global success.

That is why UNICEF calls upon CHAI to help maintain and accelerate progress for children and women in India, working in cooperation with government, international agencies, and the wide range of non-governmental providers of health care. I am convinced that together we can reach the 21st century and the 3rd millennium, having banished forever the scourges of mass ill health, malnourishment and ignorance which are abject poverty's worst symptoms. Again, allow me to warmly congratulate the Catholic Hospital Association of India and each and every one of your staff for long and dedicated services to the cause of health and children.