Chapter 15

The Year of the Child

On 9 January 1979, the hall of the UN General Assembly in New York was packed with an audience of an unfamiliar kind for a unique occasion. The British media personality David Frost was the Master of Ceremonies.

Performing live on a podium normally reserved for Heads of State, senior statesmen and distinguished diplomats were a galaxy of pop stars. Abba, the Bee Gees, Earth Wind and Fire, Olivia Newton-John, John Denver, Rod Stewart, Donna Summer and other famous names from the music world sang a 'Gift of Song' for the world's children. Held to launch the International Year of the Child, organized by the US Committee for Unicef, the concert was telecast in sixty countries around the world to an estimated audience of 250 million. In spite of a last-minute panic over Rod Stewart's rendering of 'Da Ya Think I'm Sexy?', which did not quite conform to the standard of decorum associated with activities in the General Assembly, the occasion was a triumph. All the artists who performed gave to Unicef the rights of a song, either the one they sang or another, and between the telecasts and the album sales, 'A Gift of Song' raised $4 million. 'Music for Unicef' launched the International Year of the Child in truly celebratory style.

For some of those present, the most dazzling aspect of the occasion was that the International Year of the Child had been launched at all. The idea of such a year, when mooted seven years before, had a distinctly mixed reception. It was the brainchild of Canon Joseph Moerman, Secretary-General of the International Catholic Child Bureau (ICCB) in Geneva. The UN had recently passed a resolution to bring under control the number of international years, decades and anniversaries, and the expensive international conferences associated with them. Member countries were beginning to feel that Years—for refugees, population, women, anti-apartheid, to name but a few—had already punctuated the past two decades to the point of surfeit.

Canon Moerman took a different line. His view was that only a narrow slice of officialdom were weary of Years; people at large were not suffering from 'international year fatigue' because the torrent of words had barely reached them. He had observed that many organizations and individuals expressed compassion towards children but that, as an issue, the child was

in danger of being drowned out by the clamour surrounding more fashionable debates. The lack of controversy concerning children, which worked to their advantage at times of political crisis, lost out in competition with highly-charged subjects like population control and women's liberation. Moerman felt that a year for children might generate a second wind, something beyond the routine of good works and passive good will.

Canon Moerman made his first overture to UN Secretary-General Kurt Waldheim in 1973, and Waldheim was positive. His approval was essential. Moerman recognized that no amount of support from religious and voluntary organizations could compensate for its lack from the UN and its member governments: to be nationally observed, any Year must have their imprimatur. At first Harry Labouisse at Unicef was concerned. If the UN declared a Year for children, the brunt of responsibility, not to mention cost, was very likely to fall on Unicef. He feared that the effort would interfere with Unicef's ongoing work and deflect resources away from its principal mission in the developing world. Few of the parades, galas and gracious appearances which were the main feature of such Years would have much to offer a child herding goats through the grasslands of Africa or living in a bamboo house in a Bangladesh village. Labouisse also feared that putting children on the global agenda invited politicization, a plague which he had spent his career at Unicef keeping its cause away from. The controversies surrounding women's rights and population invariably acted as a magnet for political divide, particularly at the international conferences which were the usual climax of a Year's celebrations. Why invite controversy when there was nothing politically contentious to debate? Central principles were not at stake. There was no grand divide, east-west or north-south, over children.

Labouisse despatched Charles Egger to Geneva to discuss the whole idea with Moerman; upon Egger's return, Labouisse's misgivings began to soften. Moerman—a Belgian Catholic priest—made it clear to Unicef that he was against any move to use a pro-child Year as a platform for anti-birth control or pro-motherhood lobbies. Egger had pointed out Unicef's strong reservations about any international conference about children, and discovered that Moerman was by no means wedded to the idea.

By 1975, Moerman had accumulated a strong phalanx of nongovernmental support. The idea of a Year for the Child appealed strongly to the International Union of Child Welfare which, more than a decade earlier, had led the crusade for the Declaration of the Rights of the Child. The Declaration was the internationally agreed synthesis of the essential rights and needs of children; but in many parts of the world, its fine sentiments were still far from realized in practice. At a time when the process of modernization was loosening, sometimes abruptly, the traditional ties of family life and forcing many Third World children to operate independently in an adult world at an early age, the rights of children needed all the extra

push an IYC could give them. Other nongovernmental organizations of stature—the YWCA, the World Council of Churches, for example—began to join Moerman's band wagon. Some had consultative status with Unicef. The effect of their enthusiasm was felt, through the NGO Committee on Unicef and the medium of one or two strong supporters within Unicef: Jack Charnow, head of NGO liaison and Secretary to the Executive Board; and Jack Ling, Director of Information, who saw in the Year a forceful engine of public goodwill and voluntary fund-raising.

At the May 1975 Executive Board meeting, Mildred Jones of the YWCA, then the Chairman of the NGO Committee, made an appeal on the Year's behalf. She was followed to the rostrum by Moerman himself. Labouisse made it plain that he thought a successful international Year depended on the commitment of governments to offer more than rhetoric, to undertake adequate preparatory work and lend financial support; he also stated his opposition to an international conference. The response of the delegates was guarded. But over the course of the following year, attitudes began to change. Moerman's message began to penetrate not only the NGOs, but governments. Norway, whose representative, Aake Ording, had pushed thirty years ago for a UN Appeal for Children, now became a champion of a Year for the child. Holland was almost as keen, and the countries of eastern Europe were all in favour. So were many from the developing world: India, the Philippines, Colombia, Argentina, and several in Africa. Those who knew that they would have to foot a large part of the bill—the US, Britain, Federal Republic of Germany, Sweden—continued to stand politely back. But as usual, it was difficult to come out openly against something for children. By the 1976 Board meeting, Labouisse had managed to obtain recognition that Unicef would have to bear special strains—financial, in particular—if the IYC were declared, and to receive promises of special support. His condition that there should be no international conference was accepted. The IYC became a *fait accompli*, and it was agreed that Unicef would have to take the lead in much of its activity. The date for the Year was fixed for 1979, the twentieth anniversary of the Declaration of the Rights of the Child. Unicef now set out to make sure that the plans for it emphasized action, and that its administration and budget cause as little harm as possible to Unicef's regular programme of work.

The Declaration of the Rights of the Child provided an internationally sanctioned checklist of what was meant by the dictum: 'Mankind owes to the child the best it has to give'. The operative question for the Year to determine was whether and how far 'the best' was being delivered in countries around the world, and how much closer to 'the best' every country, rich and poor, might reach.

The proposals Labouisse and others engineered through the UN machinery established a character for the Year of the Child which was

different from that of most previous UN Years. It borrowed certain essentials from World Refugee Year, 1959, for which Sherwood Moe, a long-time aide of Labouisse, had been a deputy representative of the UN Secretary-General. Although declared internationally, the style of its observance was to be left to each country to decide, at national or local level. Three main objectives were laid down for the Year: all countries should make a fresh appraisal of the situation of their children; they should be inspired into new efforts to do something for children whose situation needed improvement; better-off countries should be inspired to increase their aid contributions for those whose level of development was far less advanced. National IYC commissions would be set up by, or at the invitation of, governments, and organizations which normally had nothing to do either with the UN or with children would be invited to take part. Each national commission would decide on its own programme within certain guidelines, the main one being that IYC was for all children, not just the special cases, the handicapped or orphaned; nor just for the child victim of poverty and underdevelopment.

In the developing world, Unicef expected the IYC to be a vehicle for the promotion of basic services, a policy going forward for endorsement from the Executive Board to the same General Assembly that would proclaim the IYC. The IYC resolution passed the General Assembly on 21 December 1976. It emphasized that IYC should be a time for studying children's needs and launching programmes that were 'an integral part of economic and social development plans'. This theme dovetailed with the current deliberations on the new international economic order and reflected the ideas Unicef had propounded since the Bellagio conference of 1964. The resolution, rather more modestly, also underlined the moral purpose of the Year, by stating that the IYC would provide a 'framework of advocacy' for children. This, in the minds of its keenest protagonists, was the noble goal: to make governments and people hold up a mirror to their consciences and examine their failures on behalf of their children. In this context, IYC was to surprise everyone.

In 1977, preparations began in earnest. The resolution had recognized that Unicef's regular staff and budget were not expected to carry the administrative load or the budget for the Year and its preparations. Unicef's Executive Director was identified as responsible for IYC co-ordination, but it was understood that Labouisse might appoint a special representative, and solicit special contributions. Norway was the first to pledge a sum of $400,000. The total budget was set at $4 million. Later it was increased to $7·2 million. Labouisse wrote to all foreign ministers of UN member States, asking for contributions and suggesting that they set up national IYC commissions. He also contacted the otheragencies in the UN which could be expected to co-operate actively, and Unicef's own national committees. Then he began to set up the IYC Secretariat.

As Special Representative, responsible for IYC affairs, Labouisse wanted a woman and preferably one from a developing country. He interviewed several, and his choice was Dr Estefania Aldaba-Lim, Minister for Social Services and Development in the Philippines. Dr Lim was a person of considerable experience with the problems of children in her own country, having served for seven years as the Minister responsible for community development, particularly among the rural poor, and having taken a special interest in family well-being, child nutrition and the problems confronting out-of-school youth. Her competence and dynamic personality equipped her for an exacting role, which included a gruelling travel marathon to over sixty-five countries during the course of the next two-and-a-half years. Lim succeeded in enlisting the support of Heads of State, First Ladies, and senior government officials. Her visits and the publicity surrounding them, particularly in developing countries, succeeded in nudging many national IYC commissions into existence and action. She also did the rounds of ambassadors and heads of UN missions in New York and elsewhere, and her own enthusiasm for the Year was infectious. Lim's contribution made a vital difference to the way in which the IYC subsequently took off.

Under Lim, Labouisse placed two senior Unicef veterans as respective directors of the IYC Secretariat's two branches in New York and Geneva: John Grun, a Netherlander whose most recent tour of duty was Regional Director in New Delhi; and James McDougall, a New Zealander who had spent ten years as Regional Director in the Middle East. Their experience overseas and within Unicef provided a firm anchor for the less experienced IYC staff, most of whom were newcomers.

As preparations intensified, the magic of a Year for the Child began to reveal itself. Moerman's idea had touched the hidden spring that, in the business of human compassion, is quite unpredictable. In mid-1977, eighty-five international NGOs formed a special committee of their own for IYC with Canon Moerman at its head. Their network quickly grew; the number of national branches and subgroups of large international voluntary bodies such as the Jaycees, the Lions, Rotary, the YWCA and the Red Cross, as well as hundreds of small independent groups which did something for the Year, reached into the thousands by the end of 1979. On the governmental side, the response was equally electric. The optimists had hoped that around fifty countries would set up IYC commissions; by mid-April 1978, more than seventy had already done so; and by the end of 1979, there were 148 in existence.

The national IYC commissions were as diverse in character as any truly decentralized group of institutions with only a common theme to link them internationally. Some were government bodies with a cross section of membership from different ministries; others were private, with a membership drawn entirely from voluntary bodies; others were a mixture of the governmental and the nongovernmental. Some included repre-

sentatives from national committees for Unicef, and a few—Hungary, Israel, and Norway—were identical with them. In many, the nongovernmental organizations, who mobilized their supporters and volunteer networks, were the life blood of the Year's impending activities. Some reached out to towns and provinces, setting up local IYC support groups to bring the Year right into people's homes.

To help the developing countries set up IYC commissions and embark on programmes, Unicef set aside a special fund of $3 million to be taken up on a project-by-project basis. One of the activities most strongly encouraged, both by Unicef offices and by Aldaba-Lim on her country visits, was for the relevant authorities to undertake a review of existing legislation on their children's status, and examine whether the health and social services adequately met their needs.

This exercise in 'pump priming' also meant that Unicef could help a national commission to hire a full-time secretary and develop information materials. The IYC Secretariat in Geneva published a series of discussion papers on various technical subjects, to serve as resource and information background on salient issues. Other member organizations of the UN family co-operated closely with the IYC preparations. ILO campaigned to enforce the child labour convention. World Health Day 1979 was dedicated to children by WHO, as was World Environment Day by the UN Environment Programme. UNITAR, the UN Institute for Training and Research, joined with the Columbia University Law School in publishing a two-volume survey on Law and the Child, based on monographs produced by lawyers and child welfare specialists in nearly sixty countries.

The success of IYC depended very heavily on the national commissions' programmes of action and the energy they injected into them. Some, unquestionably, only gestured in the direction of IYC observance: a stamp was issued and posters displayed in the capital city. Others took IYC much more seriously, as a lever for fundraising, for calls on government to do more for children, and as an umbrella for many different causes. Several undertook a national diagnosis of their children's situation, some for the first time ever (Guinea-Bissau, Saudi Arabia); others studied their nutritional condition (China, Haiti, Oman), set out to eradicate polio (Malawi), or immunize newborns (Bhutan). Some looked at more specific problem areas; the children of migrant labourers (Luxembourg), 'latchkey' children (UK), street children (Colombia); yet others tried to do more for the orphaned (Chad, the Philippines), the nomadic (Botswana), the victims of war (Nigeria, Lebanon), and refugee children (Finland). Many ran campaigns to start preschools (Benin), get children off the streets and into school (Ghana, Kenya), lowered the age of school entry (Gambia), or abolished elementary school fees (India). Some focussed on care of the handicapped (Vietnam, Korea) and the mentally disabled (Bahrain, Chile, Congo). Several started to put on the statute book a family code (Togo, Barbados),

new legislation on adoption and legitimization (Indonesia), child abuse (USA), child neglect (Liberia), a law against child battering, including all forms of physical punishment including spanking (Sweden), and protection for minors (Dominican Republic). By any reckoning, the list of efforts and achievements was extraordinarily wide-ranging.

The volume of sound made on behalf of children around the world during the Year was almost deafening. As a subject for exhibitions, films, posters and all the visual arts, children are irresistible. Media events designed to increase public awareness of children's needs and rights took place in over 130 countries, ranging from a 100-foot banner proclaiming the International Year of the Child stretched across the road in a remote village in the highlands of Papua New Guinea, to a week-long assembly of gifted children in Sofia under the patronage of Bulgarian First Lady, Madame Zhivkova—and to sophisticated telethons and galas such as the concert in the General Assembly that formally launched the Year. Tens of thousands of articles were published and hundreds of television films were made. Newspapers by and for children were written; radio series on parents' education were produced; colloquia and seminars canvassed views by and about children. The millions of images and miles of press publicity celebrated on the one hand the joys of childhood; on the other, they exposed major problems of young people: drugs, vandalism, child labour, sexual abuse, teenage pregnancy.

The IYC Secretariat ran a referral service to put different organizations in touch to learn from each other's experiences. It had been expected that the organizations of the developing and developed worlds would express interest in markedly different concerns. The IYC discussion papers on Unicef's traditional programme areas—nutrition, health care, water supply, the young child—turned out to be equally sought by industrialized countries where pockets of severe deprivation could be found; while material on child exploitation, children with learning difficulties, urban children, children in the age of television was also keenly sought by people in developing countries. The problems of children turned out to be as universal as they are diverse.

During the International Year of the Child, Canon Moerman's 'second wind' for children unquestionably blew into corners unreached by other Years. The success of the Year astounded the Year-weary; a Year for the Disabled—1981—capitalized on the initial airing of this problem among children during the IYC, and Years for the Aged and for Youth have since been held. None before or since quite entered the hearts of humankind as completely as the Year of the Child.

Many governments increased their allocations to services for children, and set out on new courses of action which would ensure that their children rode the tide of IYC into the 1980s and beyond. Unicef itself benefited directly from the explosion of energy. The response to the Year

forced Unicef to reach into its own pocket and advance $1·6 million to the costs, but it recouped its investment many times over. Private contributions to Unicef from all sources exceeded $50 million during 1979, nearly double the total for 1978. The goal of $200 million for Unicef's total income, set in 1977, was exceeded. Some of the extra generosity was inspired by the emergency in Kampuchea which broke upon the world in the last months of 1979, but IYC had a great deal to do with it.

The special genius of the IYC was to make it a do-it-yourself affair. This approach, on which both Moerman and Labouisse had been so insistent, paid off handsomely. Only because of it were so many subjects picked up, addressed and publicly examined in a way which made it impossible at year's end for them ever to look quite the same again. In October 1979, the Year's activities were discussed at the plenary session of the General Assembly. The debate was unique, not only because of its harmonious spirit. This was one of the very few times that an international Year was considered sufficiently important to warrant such attention. It was a landmark in the continuing saga of trying to elevate the children's cause to the high table of international statesmanship.

Introducing the topic, the President of the General Assembly, Salim Salim of Tanzania, told the delegates, 'No issue touches us more closely, or has more direct bearing on the future of the world, than that of our children . . . For we are keenly aware that those who will inherit our world and manage it in the third millennium are the children of today, and that the shape of that world is being decided, now, by the way in which we are building their bodies and forming their minds'. During the next three-and-a-half days, eighty-six delegates described the ways in which IYC had been observed in their countries and how its momentum would be carried forward. As speaker followed speaker, Labouisse, always inclined to modesty, turned to John Grun, and said, 'You know, I do believe it's worked'.

The International Year of the Child had, indeed, worked.

Once the national commissions for IYC were set up in the industrialized countries, the Unicef national committees—except in the few cases where the committees were invited to be the IYC commission—no longer shouldered the main responsibility for the Year. Nonetheless, many recognized the opportunity it offered for raising Unicef's visibility in their countries, and worked closely with the national commissions in running special IYC campaigns.

Within each country, the Year's main focus was on their own children's problems, but in many industrialized countries this did not mean that the problems of children in developing countries were forgotten. Many focussed on the 'Third World child' in their own midst: the hungry child, the illiterate

child, the refugee child, the immigrant child, the child suffering from neglect because mothers in straitened circumstances were forced to work long hours and had little time to spend on their families. Connections between the plight of such children and others even less fortunate in faraway communities were made almost effortlessly, particularly where television and newspaper series were run over several weeks. The IYC offered Unicef national committees a wonderful information vehicle, a vehicle most effectively used by those committees which, during the previous few years, had taken up a new activity: development education.

The concept of development education, a structured process of learning about change and upheaval in society, particularly in societies where poverty cried out for a more equitable distribution of wealth between rich and poor nations, rich and poor people, was a child of the alternative order. In the recent past, awareness in the industrialized countries about Third World problems had grown considerably. Many factors played a part: the Freedom from Hunger Campaign, the Development Decades, the famine emergencies, the Vietnam years, the fascination of the hippie generation for cultures of the East, international tourism, and the growing number of people involved in the international development industry. Public attention might be volatile, of short attention span, and often unsophisticated; but a new generation of young people were growing up in Europe and North America whose ideas about the societies of Asia, Africa and Latin America were free from many of the colonial perceptions of the past with all their overtones of superiority and racism. Under the influence of social critics such as Paulo Friere, Ivan Illich, E. F. Schumacher, and Barbara Ward, 'development' had become a new way of looking at the world and at all societal relationships, not merely a prepackaged set of skills, information and ideas to be shipped off to develop the poor.

Interest in the alternative society, with its implicit rejection of the material consumption patterns of the West and its dalliance with leftist political doctrine, instilled among a sizeable number of its adherents a sense of solidarity with the poor, both at home and overseas. Sometimes it took the form of romanticism; sometimes anger on behalf of the victims of apartheid or other liberation struggles; sometimes it erupted in boycotts of products produced in conditions of exploitation or insecurity, or inadequate environmental respect by certain countries or by certain multi-national companies. This amorphous collection of liberal humanitarians, political radicals and critics of the establishment, inspired by a compound of ethical, religious and political concerns, were a new force to be reckoned with. They were beginning to make an impression on how the problems of the Third World were conveyed to audiences in the West. Their inspiration had less to do with compassion than with social justice. They talked about the global village, the interdependent world. The image of the helpless African or Asian child, appealing for mindless generosity, offended them

deeply. They believed it offended Africa and Asia as well.

The genesis of development education was in students' movements, relevant professions, and among the better-informed supporters of overseas aid organizations. It was encouraged by those European political parties who looked to public support for liberal international assistance policies. By 1974, UNESCO had begun to support it as a means of promoting international peace. A concept born of such various strands eluded clear definition; but its essence was to spread information, through schools and other learning institutions, and the media, about the process of world development. Its common property was a rejection of crude and simplistic messages, a desire to learn more about the complexities of trying to transform underprivileged societies, an ambivalence about whether development aid automatically conferred benefits, a zeal for new relationships between the developed and developing worlds; and for deeper understanding rather than a deeper dip into the pocket.

Within Unicef, these ideas first expressed themselves among certain European national committees who were unhappy with the information material they were given by Unicef headquarters as campaign tools. They believed that what Unicef was doing in the developing countries must be better communicated in order to win credibility with an increasingly demanding public. In November 1973, a group of their representatives held an information workshop at Eagle Hill, Denmark, under the chairmanship of Arne Stinus, the Executive Secretary of the Danish Committee. Stinus, a Danish parliamentarian with a reputation for trenchant campaigning on Third World issues, was a combative figure. The Eagle Hill report drew strongly on the influence of the representatives from the Nordic countries, where understanding about world development issues had already reached a relatively sophisticated level. They demanded of the Unicef Secretariat a greater sense of partnership in evolving information policy, more substantive treatment of development projects, and material that would enable them to run educational campaigns about children's needs in the developing world.

The Scandinavians believed that attitudes among children about their counterparts in other cultures and societies were being exclusively informed by stereotypes conveyed by the mass media. Their children were growing up with a superficial image of a world peopled by alien, helpless poor incapable of improving their own lives, and dependent on the charity of wealthier nations. Attempts to correct these negative impressions must start in the classroom during a young person's formative years. This meant attracting the attention of teachers and educational planners. The Nordic Unicef committees began to develop teacher's kits, slide sets, pamphlets and educational materials of various kinds. Some received financial or other support from their governments. The Finnish Committee, for example, began an annual distribution of a multi-media kit based on Unicef material

to 8000 schools through the Education Ministry. In 1977, the foreign ministries of Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden co-financed with Unicef a trip for fifteen Nordic educators to Sri Lanka, the first of similar visits by teachers from industrialized countries to witness development in action.

Where the Nordic committees led, others soon followed. In Holland, in Italy, in France, in Canada, in the UK, and the US, the national Unicef committees began to try and take their message to the schools, particularly—as this was Unicef—to the classrooms of younger schoolchildren. Within and between committees, there was some debate about intentions and results. Was development education just a fancy name for information distributed at the time of a fundraising drive among children, like Trick or Treat in the US? Or was it pure education, untainted by any demand that children give their pocket money to the organization whose name was in the textbook or on the wall chart? Viewpoints differed. In France, a four-year experiment beginning in 1977 in seven schools was purely pedagogic: teachers and documentalists worked with pupils to create development education materials for the classroom. In Spain, a special ten-volume textbook series on the Rights of the Child was issued in collaboration with an educational publishing house and sent to 28,000 schools. Other committees which took up development education in its no-strings-attached form included the Dutch, the Belgian, the Swiss and the West German.

Not every committee was enthusiastic, and even Unicef's own information division was reluctant to make an unqualified commitment. Those who saw the principal goal of a Unicef committee as raising funds for children in developing countries had little time for development education unless it clocked up visible financial rewards. Others—the Italians, for example, under the leadership of a Napoleonic figure, Aldo Farina—rejected any dichotomy between fundraising and education; Farina was content with a less tangible currency—visibility for Unicef and its cause. A typical Farina coup was to persuade the organizers of the 1979 International Children's Book Fair in Bologna to mount it under the banner of IYC and give enormous publicity to Unicef. Interest snowballed throughout Italian schools. Farina's tactic was to make Unicef such a household word in Italy that whenever the plight of the disadvantaged child in a poor community came to the surface, it triggered an automatic association with Unicef. Farina's love of fairs, spectacles and public events exasperated more sedate Unicef officers. But in time his strategy paid off. In the early 1980s, in response to a campaign run by the Radical Party and supported through many channels, the Italian Government multiplied its overseas aid contribution dramatically, and became one of Unicef's most important donors. Farina's successful efforts at the grass roots helped to pave the way.

Most Unicef national committees capitalized heavily on IYC. The

excitement generated by the Year gave many a 'second wind' along with their cause. For some, the Japanese for example, IYC raised the image of Unicef to a completely new level. During the first part of 1979, Mrs Sadako Ogata, then in the Japanese Foreign Ministry, was Chairman of the Unicef Executive Board, and in July, during the main week of celebrations for the Year, Harry Labouisse and his wife visited Japan to take part. In Japan, as in Italy, the IYC played a part in raising Unicef's profile not only among the public but in official circles. Indirectly, therefore, it opened up the possibility of the expanded resources for children's programmes from both voluntary and government sources—whether through Unicef or other conduits—that Labouisse had felt must be the benchmark of the Year's success.

When most of the IYC commissions closed down in the industrialized countries, the Unicef committees inherited their sponsors and supporters, a welcome infusion of fresh blood. As a result of the Year, these members of the Unicef family gained a boost to morale and income which helped them move forward into the next Development Decade with a renewed sense of partnership.

When the IYC speeches and celebrations were done, a more sober assessment awaited. At the beginning of 1979, the best estimates of child deprivation around the world suggested that fifteen million children born each year died unnecessarily before they reached their fifth birthday; that forty per cent of those who survived had been affected by some degree of malnutrition; four out of ten never went to school; seven out of ten were outside the reach of professional health care.

At the end of the IYC, in spite of all the activity, it could not be said that anything had happened to alter dramatically this overall picture. 'The International Year of the Child', wrote Labouisse, in a report issued at the end of 1979 on the situation of children in the developing world, 'was not intended to be a high point on the graph of our concern for children. It was meant to be a point of departure from which that graph would continue to rise'. Turning the rhetoric into programmes of lasting benefit for children was a more elusive goal, and there was a long and arduous way to go.

Unicef had hoped that the Year would give a fillip to basic services, that more governments would adopt this strategy as a means of reaching all their children with marked improvements in their lives. There were some positive indications. In March 1979, an IYC symposium hosted by Unicef's regional headquarters in Nairobi brought together ministers and senior representatives of eighteen eastern African countries, who had unanimously committed themselves to the basic-services approach. The phrases 'basic services' and 'community participation' were beginning to crop up all over the place, and a number of countries claimed to have reinforced or

extended programmes during IYC which fell into the basic services category. During the debate in the General Assembly, the representatives of thirty countries stated that the provision of services for children was now an integral part of national economic and social policy.

Encouraging though these commitments were, at this stage they were mostly statements of intent. By its nature, development is a slow, evolutionary process, and any substantial restructuring of, for example, a country's health services into something resembling the primary health-care model could not be achieved quickly. Professional views change slowly. Annual budgets are many months in the making and national plans take years to prepare. The question at the end of the Year was whether the groundwork for action had been adequately laid, and whether mechanisms for carrying it forward were strong enough to survive the 31 December release of pressure.

Unicef was entrusted by the General Assembly with the inheritance of IYC. Grun and McDougall disbanded their staffs. Aldaba-Lim flew off on her last voyage as Special Representative. Canon Moerman put his mind to how the outpouring of interest from the NGO community during the Year could be sustained into the 1980s. The work of the NGO/IYC Committee was absorbed into Unicef's regular NGO Liaison Committee. Some of the IYC national commissions in developing countries remained in existence, while others handed over their functions to successor bodies. Although Unicef's mandate for the most disadvantaged children in the poorest societies remained essentially unchanged, the organization was now charged with providing a framework of advocacy on behalf of children everywhere, in the industrialized world as well as the developing world. One legacy was the heightened sense of the need to act as a spokesman for children and to keep as much information as possible moving down newly-sensitized channels. 'IYC follow-up' was a subject thoroughly examined at the 1980 Executive Board, and many well-intentioned pledges were made.

The fact was that IYC had run its course, and its momentum was by definition a temporary phenomenon. Some of its special publications lingered on, some of its networks continued, some of its research findings were circulated. But however hard its enthusiasts might plead that every year should be a year of the child, that kind of exuberant fellow-feeling linking groups with disparate interests and different energies could not be cultivated on a year-in, year-out basis. A Year is a year. Within Unicef, the information exchanges and referral services described as IYC follow-up spluttered half-heartedly into existence, and died for lack of sustenance. In Europe, under the regional directorship of Aida Gindy, a short-lived attempt was made to run a service for countries in the region seeking advice on programmes for children. It too withered for lack of serious interest and support. IYC was an event. It changed hearts and minds; it dented policies and programmes; it left a vital residue of goodwill both

for children and for Unicef. But once it was over, it was over, and attention moved elsewhere.

When all the dust had settled, however, it was possible to detect some developments which emerged as IYC's direct result. Public and governmental awareness of the needs of children was much enhanced, as well as the knowledge of how to address these needs. Like the Year itself, this awareness grew out of the tenaciousness of certain nongovernmental organizations which took up the cudgels for certain themes. One such theme was the plight of children whose home and whose entire universe was encompassed by the streets of the expanding cities of the Third World.

During their own period of rapid industrialization, the cities of Europe and North America had similarly nurtured their scavenging 'waifs and strays', their street urchins, their gangs of miniature hooligans, abandoned by parents who could not or would not support them. The brutalizing hardship of their existence was familiar from the pages of Dickens, Hugo, and other nineteenth-century writers. The demands of survival could lead to crime, prostitution, violence and exploitation at the hands of the unscrupulous. In some European cities, in Marseilles and Naples for example, they could still be found, the human detritus of urban poverty, deprived of anything resembling normal childhood.

In the second half of the twentieth century, the process of rural exodus had wrought a transformation in the cities of the developing world, and it was accompanied by the uncontrolled growth of urban slums and shanty towns, hardship for most of the new city-dwellers, and the same breakdown of close-knit family life which the Western world had experienced a hundred years ago. In Bombay, Addis Ababa, Mexico City, Cairo and countless other cities, the children of the streets were such a familiar feature of the urban landscape that their presence and life-style was hardly a matter for comment. There were shoe-shine boys, parking boys, pathetic little beggars thrusting wizened limbs at passers-by, street-wise youngsters selling newspapers or chewing-gum through car windows, scruffy imps running errands in the market, *matatu* boys hanging precariously on the back of unlicensed taxis to collect customers and fares. The meteoric growth of the cities of Asia, Africa, and Latin America had propelled their populations of street children skywards.

Concerned individuals, voluntary organizations and government departments estimated that around seventy million children in the developing world fell under the broad definition of 'an irregular family situation', meaning that they lived wholly or virtually without parental support. Many helped to support their families, not by herding goats or gathering fuel as they would have in the rural areas, but by earning cash, casual work, running errands, petty trading, or straightforward theft. Forty million such children lived in Latin America where industrialization was more advanced than in most countries of Asia or Africa. This meant that one in five

Latin American and Caribbean youngsters lived in a state far from that of traditional dependency on family and kin. In Brazil, which harboured close to thirty million, around ten per cent were children whose living, eating, working, and sleeping place was the street, the market, the rubbish dump, the car park and the deserted building. The problem was enormous, and it was growing.

Rarely was it an overnight calamity which forced children—and they included girls as well as boys—into the mud and concrete jungle. A protracted civil war might add its quota of small parentless or abandoned people to the streets and alleyways of Managua or San Salvador. But the more remorseless pattern was one of economic, social and cultural upheaval. The cycle normally began with the family's departure from the countryside in search of a better livelihood in the city. There, the city's glittering promise was revealed in all its squalor: a tin and cardboard shack in a municipal wasteland, with no running water, no roads, pirated electricity, and an ever-present threat of neighbourhood violence. Any available regular work—usually petty trading or construction jobs—was bound to be far away in another part of town. In the new, exclusively money-based economic circumstances in which the family found itself, without familiar networks to sustain and support when times were bad, the effort to bring in enough money was horrendous. It often defeated the father, who might lapse into drunkenness or leave his wife and children to fend for themselves. Beyond the reach of the traditional sanctions which, in the countryside, required adults to obey the rules of marriage and meet their family responsibilities, values were destroyed and the bonds of kinship disintegrated.

An abandoned mother with several children to care for might resort to brewing illicit liquor and 'entertaining' men; her children would be sent off to work in a factory or in a kitchen, to scavenge, steal, pick up a few cents somehow or somewhere. 'Home' was a one-room shack with two beds for five or seven or ten people and only a ragged curtain between them for privacy. An unwanted child might easily decide to stop returning. Before long, he or she would lose contact, become a self-defender out among the bright lights and the money. Psychologically toughened and scarred, many took drugs to make the day seem nicer or the night less cold or the stomach less empty. In Brazil, it was estimated that three million children had reached the final point on the cycle, where they were completely without any kind of home or relative to care for them, open to exploitation by the most vicious elements of society.

At the beginning of 1981, Peter Tacon, a Canadian who had worked with street children in Latin America for ten years and was then working in postwar Nicaragua for the Canadian Save the Children Fund, joined Unicef's staff. He was assigned to travel throughout the Americas and examine existing programmes which helped the children of the streets and

move them, not into penal or disciplinary institutions, but onto a track which opened up to them the possibility of lives as decent, contented, employed, law-abiding citizens while still living with their families, or with alternative family groups. By the end of the year, Tacon was in a position to make a proposal. The Brazilian Ministry of Social Assistance and Welfare had requested that Unicef share in the development of a two-year project in which the other partner was the government's National Child Welfare Foundation (FUNABEM), responsible for abandoned and delinquent children.

Brazil became the leading pioneer of humane solutions for its ragged outcasts. The 1982 session of the Executive Board agreed to the proposal that a regional advisory service be set up to research into, and exchange information about, the problems of street children in Latin America. Funds were provided by the Canadian Government and the Canadian Committee for Unicef. Tacon was assigned by Unicef to work closely with FUNABEM.

The project's underlying philosophy was that, no matter how beneficent its purpose, an institution was a solution of last resort for a child of the streets. The essence of the life lived on the street by children, whether they had chosen it or it had chosen them, was its freedom, its removal from a conventional framework of discipline. For children used to such an environment, a residential institution represented a prison where resistance to the rules of society which put him or her there would harden rather than diminish. FUNABEM started from a different perspective. They tried to intervene in the cycle of poverty and family disintegration which took the child onto the streets, before the link with the family snapped altogether and the child became truly abandoned. Their response therefore involved not only the children, but their families and communities as well. If the children retained a sense of belonging to a home and a neighbourhood, then they would not want to sever their connections. If they could, at the same time, continue to help their mothers to pay the rent and put food on the table, their families would feel no reserve about offering them the love and care they needed.

A growing number of Brazilian communities began to take up the challenge. One was the town of Cachoeira Paulista, a community of 30,000 inhabitants in the State of Sao Paulo. In 1983, a survey showed that one in four children in Cachoeira did not attend school because they were out earning to help support their families. The municipality set up kitchens in community centres to provide free meals twice a day for 1800 children between the ages of three and eighteen years.

The smallest children were looked after at preschools organized by volunteers given a short course. Sports and recreation were organized at the public schools for older children, who were also enrolled in workshops for weaving, ceramics, hand-painting on clothing, leatherwork and carpentry,

and paid for their work. Orders for leather sandals and hand-made dolls helped make the programme economically viable. Odd jobs on the street, like shoe-shining, were organized so that children had their own regular stands with set prices and a cashier. Adolescents were offered work as municipal gardeners and cleaners. A group of monitors were employed to liaise with the parents, whose interest was aroused once the programme began. Community meetings examined the parents' own immediate problems and fostered neighbourhood solidarity. At the end of 1984, the town council estimated that the problem of its street children was close to being solved.

Colombia, Mexico and Ecuador were the first three countries to follow Brazil in a comprehensive examination of the problems of street children and try out on a systematic basis means other than institutionalization for turning their lives around. Unicef's regional advisory service found itself in much demand as town and city councils began to take up the problem all over the hemisphere. Many Latin American church and nongovernmental organizations have become increasingly active, and support has come from outside the region, particularly from the International Catholic Children's Bureau. In 1984, the Unicef Executive Board agreed to a further expansion of the programme.

The initiative taken by Latin America has been infectious. In Asia and Africa, the situation of street children in the Philippines, Thailand, Kenya, Mozambique, Sudan and Somalia is being actively studied, and new projects are coming forward.

Another group of children whose problems were widely aired during the IYC were those with disabilities: hearing, sight and speech impairments, physical and mental handicaps. Many children in the developing world were affected, as was painfully visible in any street or marketplace, where wasted limbs and sightlessness went with outstretched hands and begging bowls.

Once the days of postwar rehabilitation in Europe were passed, Unicef kept a distance from the disabled child. Their treatment, in which special kinds of surgery and rehabilitation were often needed, was expensive and normally available only in an urban institution. Homes for the mentally handicapped and special schools for the blind were too costly on a benefit per child basis to meet Unicef's criteria for assistance. Support for health and social care must be used in ways whereby the maximum number of children could be reached at relatively little cost per case. Tragic though wasted limbs and begging bowls might be, Unicef did not feel it could justify helping the few at the expense of the many. Until the health and nutritional status of the many improved, few developing countries could afford any large-scale conventional programme for the care of the disabled.

In the meantime, special care for special cases was regarded as a luxury best left to the specialist nongovernmental organizations.

Many of those organizations which had pioneered a revolution in attitudes and care towards the handicapped in the industrialized world were active in the developing countries. They and their national associates were beginning to realize that a different approach was needed to the problems of disability in poorer societies. In colonial times, good works in their nineteenth century image had been exported all over the world along with the Christian prayer book and other insignia of missionary devotion, and had left behind a sprinkling of special homes and institutions. At the very most they catered for only a tiny proportion of those in need. Many lived a precarious financial existence, dependent on charitable support from religious or other voluntary organizations overseas.

There were, too, reasons other than cost for questioning the relevance of institutions copied from the Western humanitarian example. Once admitted for a stay of any length in such a place, geographically distant and culturally alien from life at home, the child often became a complete stranger to his or her community, unable to re-integrate. Meanwhile, the opportunities for employment or for leading a reasonably normal life without the help of the extended family were almost nonexistent.

Organizations concerned with the disabled child therefore begn to look much more closely at disability prevention, and ways of helping the handicapped within their own homes and communities. Through its NGO Liaison Committee, Unicef had contacts with a number of these bodies, contacts which had occasionally flowered into co-operation. Sir John Wilson of the Royal Commonwealth Society for the Blind, whose representations in 1971 to Unicef and WHO on behalf of the World Council for the Welfare of the Blind had opened the way for their support to distribution of vitamin A as a blindness preventative, helped move the predicaments of all disabled groups a few degrees closer to Unicef's direct line of sight.

Certain MCH elements helped directly in the prevention of childhood disabilities: care for the mother during pregnancy and birth helped lower the chance of deformity in the foetus or the newborn; anti-leprosy and anti-trachoma campaigns, as well as immunization against polio, helped lower the rate of disabling disease; nutritional rehabilitation for the very young child helped prevent the irreversible effects of severe malnutrition. As the 1970s progressed, some people in Unicef had already begun to ask themselves whether there was something more Unicef could do for children with disabilities in the developing world. Jack Charnow, Secretary to the Board, had long been interested, and was aware of the progressive attitude of some of the NGOs at work in the field. An important push was given by the declaration by the UN General Assembly in 1976 of 1981 as an International Year for Disabled Persons. In 1978, as preparations for the IYDP

began, the theme of 'full participation and equality' was established.

In 1979, Labouisse informed the Unicef Executive Board that he had commissioned a nongovernmental organization, Rehabilitation International, to undertake a special study of measures that might improve the quality of life for disabled children in parts of the world where the vast majority were outside the reach of any rehabilitative services. Norman Acton, Secretary-General of Rehabilitation International, an umbrella organization for those working directly with the disabled, had long been a close associate of Unicef. His Assistant Secretary-General, Susan Hammerman, played a central role in preparing the Unicef report.

For over a year, Rehabilitation International consulted with organizations all over the world. They also made field observations in various countries, including Bangladesh, Brazil, Jamaica, Mexico, the Philippines and Saudi Arabia. The critical characteristic of these visits was that, instead of spending their time in overcrowded and understaffed facilities for the disabled, Acton and Hammerman went to villages and urban slums to interview teachers, nurses, social workers—all those whose work brought them into regular contact with children. They sought out families with an impaired child or children and tried to find out what was happening in their lives. In case upon tragic case, by dint of gentle probing and careful persuasion, they found children unnecessarily banished from a family or community role because they carried the stigma of physical or mental impairment; an impairment which had become far more disabling than it would have been if a little knowledge and understanding could have taken the place of superstition and fear.

Rehabilitation International's report turned much of conventional wisdom on its head. First, the scale of the problem was far larger than many governments or international organizations had dared to contemplate: disability did not afflict a relatively small number of 'special cases'. Studies from different countries and regions showed that at least one in ten children was born with, or later developed, a physical, mental or sensory impairment. This meant, and the estimate was conservative, that of the world's 1·4 billion children, 140 million suffered from an impairment which could easily develop into a disability. Because of the deprived environment and parental ignorance which governed the fate of most impaired children born in the developing world, most of those who lived in poverty did become disabled. Thus, eighty per cent of disabled children were in the developing world.

The second important finding of the report was that special treatment for the handicapped was not the only nor the most important way of approaching the problem. Most impairments were not in themselves necessarily disabling. But if left unattended, or if their victim was kept isolated or over-protected, they could easily develop into serious handicaps. This happened far more often among the children in poor families than

among those with more means and knowledge at their command. A child who had a minor defect of vision, for example, would, in an industrialized society, be given a pair of eye glasses and do as well in school as classmates with perfect sight. But in a village in Asia, that child might do poorly in school and drop out, and no-one might ever have realized why he or she was an uneducatable failure.

Similarly, a child with a partially defective limb would, in an industrialized society, be given special exercises to make the most of its muscles, and a caliper, so as to be able to move around and take part in all regular school activities. In a poor family in Asia or Africa, the limb was more likely to waste altogether from neglect and disuse, and the child become completely immobilized.

During their investigations, Acton and Hammerman discovered case upon case where a child with an impairment had been confined at home, sometimes out of sight, and kept away from school, play, visits to the health clinic, preschool learning, or supplementary feeding programmes. These reactions had interfered with normal growth in ways far more damaging than the original defect. Age-old fears prevented impaired children from receiving their fair share of mental, physical and emotional stimuli, while only their better-endowed brothers and sisters were taken to the health clinic, received vaccination shots, or went to school.

If families reacted harmfully to their child's affliction, most health and educational services were doing no better. Superstition, distaste or simple avoidance was pervasive among teachers, health-care workers and government officials. The impaired child, like the street child, was treated as a burden and an outcast, relegated to society's scrap-heap. Yet there were many ways well within the means of an existing network of basic services and its community volunteers which could brighten the prospects for the impaired child. With a little extra training, primary health-care workers could be taught to recognize the failure of a child to walk, talk or react to stimuli at the normal time in early life, and help a mother compensate for her child's disadvantage. Simple exercises could help a child's motor reflexes. Special feeding might prevent the loss of sight or stimulate physical and mental growth. Precautions could be taken to avoid accidents in the home without having to tie down an epileptic child or confine him or her in ways which restricted other sensory or motor learning. These ideas, which brought care for the child with an impairment out of the ghetto and incorporated it into existing health and educational services, were fundamentally different from the view which held that the child must be plucked from his or her normal environment and placed in a special institution.

This new strategy for the care of children with disabilities was presented to Unicef's Executive Board by Rehabilitation International in May 1980. Like the strategy for basic services, it was based upon a handful of

pioneering experiments in various developing countries whose common threads were woven into a policy with widespread applicability. One of the pioneers who had proved that services for the impaired child did not have to be exorbitantly expensive was a Jamaican pathologist, Dr Molly Thorburn. In 1975, the Jamaica Council for the Handicapped started an early stimulation project for impaired children in Kingston. Thorburn set out to disprove the common conceptions that such children inevitably grow into dependent, non-productive adults and that their education can only be carried out by specialists.

Taking the community health aide as her model, she believed that women with a little education and a mature and understanding personality could be trained to carry out a home-teaching programme. Using a precision method which divided the process of child development from birth to six years old into small sequential steps, Thorburn trained her first batch of child development aides from candidates currently sweeping the streets in a government scheme for the unemployed. Each aide made regular weekly visits to the homes of around twelve children, working with the mother or grandmother and using simple toys and games to stimulate the child. Tests carried out two years after the project began showed that mildly and moderately impaired children had gained almost as many skills as a normal child would have done over the same period. Costs averaged only $151 per child per year: a very modest amount compared with residential and specialized care. The mothers in the programme were so encouraged by their children's progress that their own morale had radically improved.

The Jamaican example of an alternative approach to dealing with disabilities was one of as yet a bare handful in different developing countries. By 1980, a similar programme was underway in the Philippines with Unicef support, as were others in Panama, postwar Nicaragua and rural Mexico. All were still on a very small scale. The challenge, as expressed by Susan Hammerman, was to transform rehabilitation for the disabled child into a movement: 'many miracles for the few' must become 'few miracles for the many'.

The Rehabilitation International report to Unicef was a model of progressive wisdom, and its recommendations were regarded as a breakthrough. WHO joined the endorsement, and the Joint Committee on Health Policy discussed ways in which the two organizations could together promote its suggestions. Rehabilitation International continued their close association with Unicef as advisers on new initiatives for the prevention and early detection of childhood disabilities. Public awareness about the problems of the disabled, particularly their determination to overcome prejudice and minority status, was given a perceptible nudge during the International Year of Disabled Persons, 1981. But it will take many years, perhaps decades, before attitudes and practices towards the impaired child radically change throughout the world. The general extension of primary

health care will make an important difference. Little by little, curricula in medical, social, and educational training programmes will be adjusted to include the range of simple measures which can prevent impairment deteriorating into disability and handicap. Like so many other issues allied to the business of social and economic development, these changes will probably take place by almost imperceptible degrees. But when reckonings come to be made, the approach first articulated by Rehabilitation International for Unicef, in the wake of the Year of the Child, will be seen as a turning point.

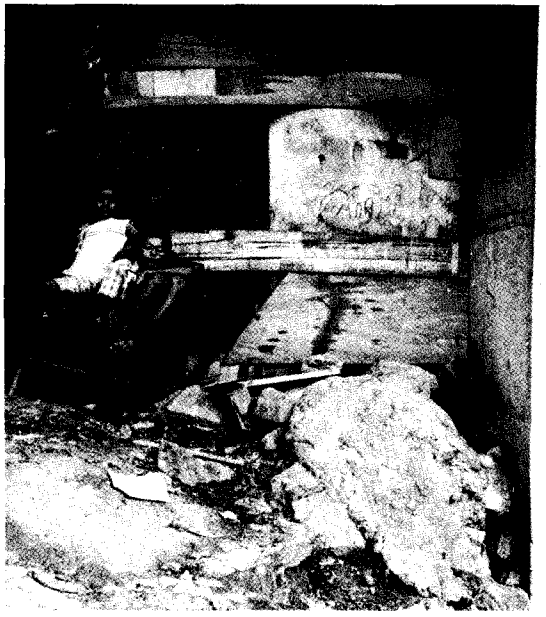
The celebration of the International Year of the Child left one other important legacy. In February 1978, the Polish Government submitted to the UN Commission on Human Rights a proposed text for a Convention on the Rights of the Child with a view to its adoption during 1979. Their text was based on the 1959 Declaration of the Rights of the Child, transformed into legal provisos. Canon Moerman, addressing the Commission, asked for a postponement of its consideration. While the observance of the rights of the child left much to be desired in many countries, he believed that changes in international law could not be rushed. A Declaration was a statement of principles, whereas a Convention was a legal instrument binding on any government which signed it. Its text, therefore, must be radically different. He suggested to the Commission that the IYC might throw up new insights into the nature of children's rights, and that discussions held during its course might pave the way for subsequent work.

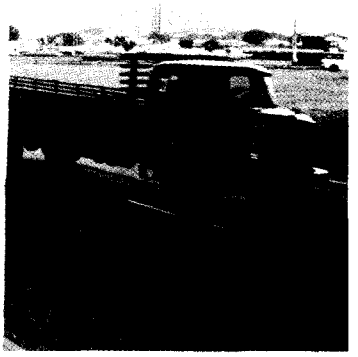
At the end of 1978, the UN General Assembly decided that a working group within the Human Rights Commission in Geneva should be set up to draft a Convention, but that it should not be subject to any time limit for submitting the results of its deliberations. By implication, this might become a forceful tool, or it might become a symbolic gesture, depending on the attitude of the governments participating. The working group first met during 1979.

During IYC, many national commissions used the Declaration of the Rights of the Child as a main theme of educational campaigns. Many people became aware for the first time that children were so widely exploited in the labour force, and that the Declaration provided such flimsy protection against this and other forms of child abuse. Once the issue was raised, it did not lightly go away. But rights are an exceptionally tricky cause to handle, and not a cause that is easy to take up with inter-governmental mechanisms. Encouraging governments to meet children's needs by providing services is one thing; demanding that they respect children's rights and be legally held to account for any infringement is quite another. The first requires some tactful criticism of economic and social policy, and constructive suggestions for change in which programmes

Water supply projects sparked home-gardening activities. Here in Keur Momar Sarr, Senegal, a women's co-operative collects water to cultivate their home-grown produce. (*Unicef/Murray-Lee*)

The year 1981 was the UN-proclaimed International Year of Disabled Persons. The Year gave special attention to the prevention and rehabilitation of childhood disability. (*Unicef/Solmssen*)





The problem of abandoned children living on the streets is acute in San Paolo, Brazil. These two had been living under this motorway bridge for five years before a Unicef-assisted programme reached them. (*Unicef/Edinger*)

Opposite:
Part of the international effort to assist drought-stricken countries in Africa: Unicef's Goodwill Ambassador Liv Ullmann visiting the Sahel region to increase public interest in malnourished children. (*Unicef/Danois*)

Thailand 1979: the special malnutrition ward at a camp for Kampuchean refugees. Many small children arrived in a state of chronic hunger and disease. (*Unicef/Danois*)

Unicef's Executive Director James P. Grant at a refugee camp on the Thai/ Kampuchean border. (*Unicef/Danois*)

The exploding shanty-towns of Third World cities: an open sewer is all there is for drainage in this densely-populated slum in Visakhapetnam, India. (*Unicef/Sprague*)

of international co-operation can play a part. The second treads on much more dangerous ground. Whatever Unicef might morally feel, it was not anxious to take up issues which might thrust it into the political arena, hamper its good relations with governments, and thereby undermine its chances of influencing and assisting health and educational programmes for children.

In February 1980, the Polish Government submitted a revised version of their original text to the Human Rights working group. Now the group began work in earnest, using this draft as their working document. It became clear that the issue of children's rights was not going to evaporate now that the IYC was over; the nongovernmental organizations were not willing to let the matter drop. During the IYC, under the chairmanship of Canon Moerman, they formed an umbrella organization, Defence for Children International, to maintain pressure at the international level on issues of children's rights. DCI began to build up a membership among organizations around the world and developed its own international programme, commissioning studies on child labour, sexual exploitation of children, abandoned children, children in adult prisons, and children caught up in the turmoil of war. It also provided a vehicle for co-ordinating the nongovernmental input into the Convention on the Rights of the Child, nudging and pushing its elaboration forward within the official international establishment.

Unicef, which had kept in the background when the original Declaration was drafted twenty years before, started by taking a back seat. But the tide of opinion began to flow too strongly to resist. Not only the Polish Government but others including the Canadian and the Swedish, were beginning to express active interest. By 1983, it began to seem as though there was enough genuine commitment to ensure that obstacles would be navigated rather than allowed to bog the process down. Within the Human Rights Commission, governments were making strenuous efforts to avoid ideological confrontation on the eternally difficult question of how far, and at what point, the machinery of the State should intervene in family affairs on behalf of a child at risk. Children were once more playing their one political card: their innocence of the political divide. It might take some years, but a Convention was in the offing. Such were the signals when the NGOs asked Unicef to take a more active part in the steps leading to the drafting and ratification of the Convention.

Unicef took up the challenge. In April 1983, Nils Thedin, delegate of Sweden and senior statesman on behalf of children, raised at the Executive Board an issue which had inspired in him a lifelong commitment ever since he witnessed the suffering of children during the Spanish Civil War. He proposed what sounded like an old man's dream: that children be declared 'a neutral, conflict-free zone in human relations'.

In a violent world, a world in which military strife and conflict increasingly

invaded civilian life, children should be internationally protected—in their homes, in institutions, in the provision of health care, food, shelter and basic services. To Thedin, as to Moerman, and increasingly to others, it was no longer possible to draw a dividing line between meeting children's needs and protecting children's rights. The care and nurture of children, the humanitarian cause to which Unicef's existence had been devoted, could not stop short at measures to improve children's health and well-being.

The UN has always upheld that rights in the civil and political sphere, and those in the economic and social sphere, are equal, indivisible and interdependent. In the case of children, economic and social rights may provide a path to those in the civil sphere, rather than, as in the case of nations, the other way around. The 1984 Unicef Executive Board commissioned a study on children in specially difficult circumstances, a euphemism for the range of sensitive subjects which include victims of labour exploitation, abandonment, sexual abuse and conflict.

Unicef also began to put its weight behind the drafting of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. It is more than possible that, by the end of the decade, a Magna Carta for children will have passed into international law. Whether it does reach final draft and ratification, and whether governments all over the world genuinely try to abide by it, is a barometer of Mankind's aspirations for its children, and a minor test of twentieth century civilization.

Main sources

Unicef: 'International Year of the Child 1979 in Perspective', report prepared by Joan Bel Geddes, September 1981.

Unicef Executive Board: proposal for an International Year of the Child; note by the International Catholic Child Bureau and the International Union of Child Welfare, January 1975; proposal for an International Year of the Child; note by the Executive Director, March 1975; reports of the Unicef Executive Board, May 1975, May 1976; progress reports of the Executive Director, 1975–79.

Interview with Canon Joseph Moerman of the International Catholic Child Bureau conducted for the Unicef History Project by Edward B. Marks, October 1983; other interviews for the Unicef History Project, notes and memoranda of staff members and other principals.

Carnets de l'Enfance/Assignment Children: 'IYC a New Focus on Policies and Children', issue 47/48, Autumn 1978; 'The Disabled Child: A New Approach to Prevention and Rehabilitation'; issue 53/54, Spring 1981; *Unicef News:* issue 94/1977/4: 'Education in a Changing World', issue 97/1978/3: 'International Year of the Child 1979', issue 102/1979/4: 'IYC: End or Beginning?', issue 105/1980/3: 'Exceptional Children'.

Memorandum to national IYC commissions, national Unicef committees, Unicef field offices and NGOs on the IYC debate in the UN General Assembly, 15–18 October 1979, prepared by the Unicef Information Division, New York.

'Development Education in Unicef', by Jeanne Vickers; Unicef History Series, monograph I, April 1986.

'A Historical Perspective on National Committees for Unicef in Europe', by Doris Phillips, Unicef History Series, monograph II, May 1986.

'The Situation of Children in the Developing World', a report for Unicef at the conclusion of the International Year of the Child by Peter Adamson, Unicef Consultant, with a foreword by Henry R. Labouisse, Executive Director.

'My Child Now! An Action Plan on Behalf of Children without Families', by Peter Tacon, policy specialist for Unicef, 23 September 1981.

Unicef Executive Board: 'Childhood Disability: Its Prevention and Rehabilitation', report of Rehabilitation International to the Executive Board of Unicef, March 1980; other programme recommendations and special reports on programmes for alleviating childhood disabilities and for abandoned children, 1981–85.

'Children in Situations of Armed Conflicts; Exploitation of Working Children and Street Children', reports presented to the Unicef Executive Board, 1986.