# Chapter 1

# Children: A Cause Comes of Age

Not long ago, the idea of statesmen sitting at a conference table to discuss the well-being of children would have been greeted with amazement, if not with derision. Compared with the waging of wars, the strength of the dollar, the price of oil and the signing of NAFTAs and Maastrichts, the subject of children is trivial. Or so it was thought if not spoken. At elections, babies might be kissed and rhetoric about 'our children, the future' flow freely. But to expect a Prime Minister to take an interest in nursery education or a President to concern himself with infant diarrhoea was to imagine the absurd. Times have changed.

Over the past few years, children's emergence as a topic of public and political concern has been striking. At national and international levels, leaders in all parts of the world have begun to identify themselves with family and children's issues. In this process, the World Summit for Children, which took place in New York in September 1990, was a landmark. The Summit was a symbol of the way in which children had gained a new degree of prominence in public affairs, and it also served to consolidate their presence in political and social debate. At this meeting, 71 Heads of State and Government signed the World Declaration on the Survival, Development and Protection of Children and a Plan of Action for its implementation by the year 2000. No higher level of political commitment to children could be given.

The year 1990 was the year before the Gulf War, the year in which the end of the cold war appeared to usher in a new era of international cooperation. This was still a time in which many believed that a 'peace dividend' would release large-scale resources for investment in human development worldwide.

But if much of that spirit of regeneration in international affairs has since evaporated, and if the expectation of a revitalized initiative to end world poverty has been dashed, the new recognition of the importance of children is still with us. There are no doubt still leaders and national policy makers around who cavil at being asked to take the subject of children seriously—as seriously as peace talks, as seriously as turmoil in the financial markets. But they are fewer than they were.

It would be wrong to suggest that children have been ignored by policy makers in the past. But the frameworks within which their problems have traditionally been noticed have tended to be confined to humanitarianism and social welfare. In both these contexts, children's profile has risen over the course of the 20th century. In times of war and disaster, the situation of 'innocent' and helpless children is today an axiomatic target of humanitarian concern. This has by no means always been the way of things: in some settings, the non-fighting and weakest members of the population used to be regarded as the least valuable and most expendable[1]; in a few, this may still be the case. However, the principle of 'children first' as recipients of relief in emergencies—first proposed in the wake of the First World War—has gained so much moral and intellectual ground over the century that it is today almost universally accepted as a norm.

Within the social sectors—health, education, welfare—children's condition has naturally been at the centre of policy focus in modern times. In the 19th century, their removal from the mines and factories of the Industrial Revolution and their universal presence in school were targets of lengthy campaigns in Europe and North America. In this century, along with the growth of the State's involvement in the provision of social services, many professions and sub-professions have developed around the nurture and care of children. Some of the members of these professions occupy formalized versions of roles traditionally played by family members: baby-minders, nursery school attendants, mother's helpers. Others—educationalists, paediatricians and child psychologists—enjoy considerable status in the post-Freud, post-Piaget, post-Spock era. Children have always been important, too, as objects of charitable concern. The orphaned child, the abandoned child and the disabled child have been for centuries primary targets of religious and secular philanthropy.

However, efforts to project the condition of children as seriously significant in economic or political terms were not until the very recent past greeted with much success. Education might be counted an exception: that their children should have prospects of doing well in the world is an issue of immense importance to parents. A well-educated teenager is also a potential voter; a

disaffected and underqualified youth, a potential rebel and miscreant. But in most contexts, children were politically neither seen nor heard. For many leaders' macho tastes, they conjured too soft an image to complement the battle fatigues or the executive suit. No politician or policy maker would be unwise enough to suggest that he or she was less than positive about children: the universal sympathy their cause evokes has been one of children's most potent weapons. But few figures in positions of authority were prepared to cast themselves in the nurturing and mothering light that caring for children implies. At best, children were regarded in the national and international policy-making arena as under-age adult subsidiaries, or—because of their frailty—as sensitive barometers of distress in the general population.

Today, children are the target of much more serious attention. And this is not simply because they play an important part in demographic statistics or constitute a significant charge on the social budget. This attention is accorded to children not as a subset of something else but as a category of humankind who deserve consideration in their own right. Children are still minors, still under age, still dependent on adult care, guidance and economic support. But what is happening to them—from their earliest moments of supreme vulnerability, through the long voyage from infant, to toddler, to youngster and adolescent—is today subject to intense public and professional scrutiny[2].

In every country, rich and poor, developed and developing, children are constantly in the news. Stories about them no longer consist of pretty or poignant distractions from the real issues of the day. Children are among the real issues of the day, *en masse* and as individuals. Child safety, child survival, child health; child victims of violence and warfare; child heroes, child criminals; schoolchildren, street children, marginalized children, girl children, abused and displaced children—the list goes on and on. Behind the scenes, a growing number of researchers are examining the drama of modern upbringing and childhood. The world, it seems, is looking at its offspring—at their tragedies, their promise, their expectations—in a new light and with a different order of commitment.

Subjects have a tendency to ebb and flow on national and international agendas. This year, the environment. Next year, population and human rights. The combination of forces pushing one or other topic out in front is not always easy to analyse—it may be as whimsical as fashion. A sudden rash of concern about the environment may be triggered by a global scare—the discovery of the hole in the ozone layer, for example. In another case—women's rights—the gradual evolution of an issue into a whole new perspective on human affairs may result from campaigning by the affected group. Cataclys-

mic events such as famine, mass emigration and the fall of the Berlin Wall play their part in thrusting issues forward. International bodies can play an instrumental role in promoting this topic or that; a United Nations Conference or a 'Year of ...' both rides and helps to build an existing wave of public preoccupation.

Of course, children are notionally part of all such subjects—because they are such a large subgroup of the general population. But counting children in is no longer enough, any more than counting in women, or the disabled, or the poor, or the ethnic minority, is enough. Why have children become so prominent? Are they just the latest cleverly marketed designer concern due for their moment in the sun, which will be swiftly followed by prolonged eclipse; or does their new-found visibility stem from some profound shift within human values and behaviours?

Long-term changes in the make-up of society must provide part of the answer[3]. Everywhere, fertility is in decline. And where families are deliberately planned, smaller and nuclear, each child is more precious and parental investment, and love, more focused. The threat of the loss of a child, or a child's failure to reach maximum potential, is more significant in family affairs. Childhood must no longer be left to chance. Services that promote healthy childhood development, not only for treasured sons but for less-treasured daughters, are everywhere gaining in demand. At the same time, the period of childhood dependency is lengthening. In the industrialized and industrializing State, life prospects are incumbent on education and training, so more children everywhere are spending more time in school. Where parents can afford it, their children enter the world of work and employment later, and they marry later and start their own child-bearing later as well[4].

Thus the increased importance of the individual child—which reverberates on the public policy agenda—stems from a number of converging factors. These include changed parental expectations and levels of investment in childhood and the impact on society of the modernization and industrialization process. These combine with the ongoing transformation in gender relations that has marked recent decades, and—of even longer duration—changing personal and state reactions to the vastly improved rates of child survival that have marked the 20th century.

Whatever the underlying trends that have altered social values and perceptions in what could be called 'the century of the child'[5], their encapsulation at the international level in certain events and documentary expressions has played its own role in the advancement of children as an issue. There has been in the period since the 1979 International Year of the Child—one of the more

successful 'Years' dedicated by the United Nations system to a given subject—a sustained and concerted effort to promote children's concerns. If there has been an underlying ground swell of change, its expression has been actively generated by movers and shakers championing the child. Some of their efforts derive from an elevated consciousness of the 'child in distress': not since the 19th-century social and legislative actions that removed children from the sweatshops of Europe and North America has such reforming zeal been demonstrated on behalf of children. This effort connects with another: the determination by activists for children to articulate and codify their rights to match a vision of childhood acceptable in all cultures and across all ideological and religious divides. This was achieved by the passage in 1989 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, which has subsequently been ratified by an extraordinary number of States—181 at the last count.

And then there has been the worldwide campaign for child survival. This campaign had its roots in the post-colonial humanitarian preoccupation with mass poverty and underdevelopment in the third world. Spearheaded by Unicef, the campaign has focused on the major threat to child survival and health still posed to millions of children every year by the most common or garden infectious diseases. In an age of technological sophistication in which the scientific frontier moves constantly forward, a huge slice of the world's population—upwards of one billion—still live according to pre-industrial norms, outside the modern social economy or marginalized or rejected at its edges. The children of these people, the 'absolute poor', still suffer sickness and death from conditions that in most parts of the industrialized world have long since ceased to pose the threat of significant loss of life or widespread impairment: measles, whooping cough, tetanus, diarrhoea, pneumonia, tuberculosis, iodine deficiency, vitamin A deficiency or plain malnutrition. Every year, around 12 million children under five die, almost all from causes that are easily preventable.

The campaign for child survival reversed conventional wisdom about infant and young child mortality. Previously seen as a measure of a country's state of economic and social development, Unicef proposed a direct attack on infant and child mortality as an instrument of development. Partly by instinct, partly by skill, Unicef picked a cause and a campaign strategy that found an extraordinary degree of worldwide resonance. The bandwagon whose momentum began to grow from 1983 onward carried the children's cause up the national and international agenda, bringing in its wake an increased awareness of children's issues other than those tightly connected to survival and health. In the years since 1990, this momentum has continued to carry

forward the children's agenda in spite of the strains experienced in almost every area of international affairs.

If the resonance of 'children first'—with parents, with communities, with governments, with Presidents, with organizations, with donors and with great-hearted individuals—made the campaign take fire, Unicef has been responsible for stoking the furnace and kindling the flames. It is fair to suggest that without that catalytic and transforming effort, children would not today be as high on the political and public agenda—even in industrialized countries—as they currently are. The basis for that effort did not materialize overnight: the ground was laid over three and a half decades of solid experience and of a particular type of institutional growth unique within the United Nations system. But unquestionably, the arrival of a particular leader at the head of Unicef in 1980 was of fundamental importance. Without Jim Grant in the driver's seat—without his vision, energy, persistence and strategizing knack—the historical context, the idea for the campaign and the resources, both human and financial, would not have come together.

The 1990 World Summit for Children grew out of the child survival campaign and represents its apogee. It also represents one of the proudest moments in Unicef's history. This book, written to celebrate the organization's 50th anniversary, traces the story of what led up to that moment, and what has since grown out of it. The period on which it concentrates begins immediately after the 1979 International Year of the Child and at the moment when Jim Grant began his directorship[6]. In addressing the Unicef experience of these 15 years, the book draws upon and recapitulates its evolution in the past. It also engages with many of the trends in social thinking and international affairs connected with the rise of the children's cause.

At Unicef, the World Summit was seen as the moment when a solemn promise was made to children that they would be given 'first call' on human resources and attention, and that by the end of the millennium the basic survival, health and educational needs of all, or at least of the vast majority, would have been met. Since that moment, a great distance has been travelled. But this and other quests on behalf of children, nationally and internationally, are still far from over.

The image of the suffering child is one of the most potent images of the 20th century. The child in distress is often used as a visual symbol of far larger issues: war, famine, pestilence, catastrophe, poverty, economic crisis. The evolution of Unicef in the decades after World War II reflected the response of

humanity to such issues, and to many of the new versions of such issues that now crowd the international agenda: environmental depletion, population growth, women's rights, urbanization, food security, health and education 'for all', structural adjustment and debt.

The creation of the United Nations in 1945 represented the coming of age of an ideal of international cooperation. Although the immediate inspiration was the carnage of the Second World War, behind this lay a longer-term desire to promote harmony between the nations on a range of issues and within a variety of different institutions. There was, however, no idea of setting up within this constellation a special organization for children. The creation by the UN General Assembly in December 1946 of a UN International Children's Emergency Fund—an 'ICEF'—came about as an accident of cold war politics.

The postwar emergency in Europe and the Far East was very protracted, and in the bitter winter of 1946-47, millions of people were still without proper shelter, fuel, clothing or food. Children in particular were suffering: in some famine-affected areas, half of all babies born alive died before their first birthday[7]. But the descent of the Iron Curtain doomed the continuation of relief and rehabilitation under the auspices of the UN. In 1944, when the 'United Nations' still constituted the Allied powers, they had set up the UN Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (UNRRA). UNRRA's aid went to all countries devastated by war on both sides of the growing East-West divide. In late 1946, the United States refused to go on bankrolling this kind of neutral relief operation, later substituting the Marshall Plan for Western Europe only.

However, at the final session of UNRRA in Geneva, voices—particularly those of the delegates of Poland and Norway—were raised in protest at the fate of Europe's children. For children, an exception had to be made. The proposal that UNRRA's residual resources should be handed over to a special fund for children was accepted. This idea went forward through the new UN machinery and on 11 December 1946, resolution number 57(I) of the UN General Assembly brought Unicef into being. There was no idea at the time that this 'ICEF' was anything other than a temporary expedient for the postwar emergency. Fortuitously therefore, Unicef became a part of that great experiment in international cooperation that has since constituted the structured anarchy of the United Nations system.

Exceptionally, there were to be no restrictions about where 'ICEF' aid might go on grounds of ex-enemy status or the deepening East-West confrontation. Coincidentally and almost unnoticed, a principle of postwar international relations had been agreed upon: children were above the political divide. This principle was quickly put to the test. Not only were some of the most impor-

tant early programmes supported by Unicef based in Eastern European countries—Poland, Yugoslavia, Romania—but in the late 1940s, Unicef provided relief assistance on both sides of the civil wars in Greece and China, and in the Middle East to children uprooted by the creation of Israel.

The most important figure behind the creation of Unicef was Dr. Ludwik Rajchman, a pioneer in international public health. Maurice Pate, Unicef's first Executive Director, was a veteran of ex-President Herbert Hoover's many postwar European relief initiatives. Pate both leaned on the US administration in his efforts to build a solid financial base for 'ICEF' and managed to harness public and political compassion for children from sources all over the world. Rajchman—who had made sure that the founding resolution allowed the fund to support 'child health purposes generally'—was determined to develop a permanent niche for Unicef in the cause dearest to his heart: large-scale disease control and prevention. The opportunity came in 1948 when the Scandinavian Red Cross Societies requested support for a mass immunization campaign with BCG vaccine—the first campaign of its kind—against a widespread epidemic of tuberculosis in postwar Europe.

Although the impulse that brought Unicef into being was the desire to help countries mend the lives of children damaged by war, the organization stayed in existence to help improve the lives of children damaged by poverty. There had been no intention on the part of UN States to prolong Unicef's life beyond the postwar emergency. But when the time came in 1950 for the UN to close down its 'ICEF', a successful lobby was mounted to save it. This time, it was the voice of the new nations of the 'developing' world that spoke up. How, asked the delegate of Pakistan, could the task of international action for children be regarded as complete when so many millions of children in Asia, Africa and Latin America languished in sickness and hunger not because of war, but because of age-old poverty? Again, the plea did not go unheard. This was the crucial turning-point in establishing Unicef as a fixture in the UN firmament. Its permanent status was confirmed by the General Assembly in 1953, and the International ('I') and the Emergency ('E') were formally dropped from its title.

In the 1950s, campaigns to control or eradicate epidemic disease became the predominant motif in international health. And their thrust moved far beyond Europe, to Asia, Africa and Latin America. They were among the first, and were certainly the most spectacular, extensions of international assistance to beneficiaries other than those suffering the after-effects of war—not only World War II but the other wars that gradually erupted in its wake. The geographical extension of Unicef's programme to countries in the Middle East,

the Indian subcontinent, the Far East, Latin America and eventually sub-Saharan Africa, and its conceptual shift from emergency first aid to long-term health promotion for children, were the decisive factors in its survival beyond the temporary purpose for which it was set up. New medical technology seemed to offer the prospect that age-old scourges could be swept away: penicillin conquered yaws in Asia; mass onslaughts were pursued against tuberculosis, leprosy and trachoma; and at least for a while, the malarial mosquito seemed to be succumbing to DDT.

In almost all these campaigns, Unicef's 'material assistance'—vehicles, vaccines, injectors—was decisive. It also served to fix Unicef's character as a field-based, hands-on organization: the selection, receipt and deployment of supplies and equipment had to be properly overseen in the countries of destination. Gradually, the country office became the locus of Unicef's main programme activity, and a vital influence on policy. This was not the case for most UN organizations, whose field operations were ambassadorial or existed to carry out the orders of governing bodies and headquarters. The principal architect behind the special characteristics of Unicef's development was E.J.R. (Dick) Heyward, Senior Deputy Executive Director from 1949-81, to whom the solidity and decentralized nature of Unicef's organizational foundations are owed. Heyward, a figure held in immense respect, was also the intellectual powerhouse behind much of Unicef's policy and programmatic thinking.

The fact that Unicef did not automatically receive assessed contributions to its budget from UN member states meant that fund-raising machinery had to be developed. This had the effect of keeping the organization sensitive to the public mood and made Unicef well known to a degree enjoyed by no other member organization of the UN family. Although part of the international bureaucracy, Unicef always emanated a driving sense of its humanitarian mission—one to which names in show business and the arts attached themselves and which they promoted: in the early days and enduringly, Danny Kaye, later joined by Peter Ustinov; much later on, Liv Ullmann, Harry Belafonte, Audrey Hepburn and many others. A network of autonomous National Committee affiliates was built up in Europe, North America, Japan and Australasia from the late 1940s on, as well as the Unicef Greeting Card Operation and a strong public information programme.

Early in the 1960s, Unicef's concentration on child health gave way to a wider set of childhood concerns. This evolution came about in response to the great crusade of the post-colonial era: the movement to end world poverty. At a strategic level, the new enthusiasm for 'aid' was a reaction to the arrival of

many newly independent countries—especially in Africa—onto the world stage and fear in the West of their assimilation into the Soviet camp. But it was also a movement fuelled by moral and humanitarian purpose. The word 'development' began to accumulate extra layers of significance; it became an academic discipline, an offshoot of economics, as well as a political cause and a focus for popular philanthropy. Accordingly, Unicef began to adapt its mission for children to the needs of underprivileged people in what was now described as the 'developing' world.

The result was a decisive shift in the way Unicef defined its mission. A central orthodoxy of 'development' in the 1950s and 1960s was that it must be planned: an idea copied from the example of economic transformation in the Soviet Union and other socialist states. In 1960, Unicef commissioned a special survey into the needs of children, in which the specialized agencies of the United Nations participated: the World Health Organization (WHO) on the health needs of children; the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) on their nutritional needs; the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) on their educational needs; the UN Bureau of Social Affairs on their welfare needs; and the International Labour Office (ILO) on work and livelihoods. The subsequent report on *Children of the Developing Countries* set out the case for considering the needs of children—not just the health and nutritional needs but the 'whole' child's physical and intellectual needs—within the context of national development plans[8].

Child victims of poverty, according to this view, should not be seen merely as objects of welfare; children were part of a nation's incipient human capital, they were its 'most precious resource', and an investment in them was an investment in a country's future. Hitherto, attention given to children within the allocation of national resources had confined itself to special cases and casualties. Now, Unicef suggested, national policies for children should embrace all children, and do so across sectoral lines—health, agriculture, education, water and sanitation.

Children's well-being should be a target of investment and a major concern of the whole development effort. Their situation should be discussed with Ministries of National Planning, no less; it should be contemplated by research institutes and within national surveying and planning exercises—activities which Unicef would henceforth be willing to support. This zest for planning made a major contribution to the development by Unicef of its 'country approach', whereby programmes to benefit children, which Unicef would support, would be integral to social sector planning as a whole. But the idea that

children should be a target of broader economic and social policy did not spread far beyond a Unicef-led inner circle.

Also ahead of its time was the idea that investment in people—human development—was a quintessential component of the development planning mix. At this juncture, the trinity of capital investment, technological transfer and growth was still held up as the means of propelling pre-industrial societies into the modern world. Not for another decade did people-centred development strategies begin to command serious attention; and not for another generation did 'children first' in contexts other than war begin to reverberate widely. In the meantime, under Henry Labouisse, its second Executive Director, from 1965-79, Unicef succeeded in winning for itself a place at the table of development cooperation. Its growing expertise, and its emphasis on taking its cue from field-based realities rather than from some detached vision of technical excellence derived from Western norms, won it respect and greater autonomy within the UN system. The formal recognition that Unicef was a development rather than a welfare organization came in 1972, when for the first time its work was reviewed as part of the economic and social, rather than humanitarian, activity of the United Nations.

By the 1970s, faith in the power of technology and capital transfer to dispense with poverty had begun to wane. Development was not a technological puzzle with a formulaic answer, analogous to putting a man on the moon. Nor was it something that could be conjured into being by the equivalent of a Marshall Plan. Economic growth had propelled some countries and some people forward. But far from 'trickling down' to the substrata of the population, the benefits had largely circulated among the privileged few whose occupations and lifestyle were integrated with the Western economic system[9]. Traditional economies had become depressed, even as the numbers depending on them rapidly swelled. The growing body of development analysts in universities, government departments and aid organizations began busily to diagnose what had gone wrong, and a quest for alternatives began.

In 1972, Robert McNamara, then President of the World Bank, made what was seen as a landmark statement. Governments in developing countries, he said, should redesign their policies so as to relieve directly the poverty of the poorest 40 per cent of their people. An explicit attack on poverty—albeit one mounted in such a way as not to damage economic prospects—was emerging as the cornerstone of the new development strategy. 'Redistribution with growth' and 'meeting basic needs' were its economic slogans.

The search for ways to realize the new development mission focused on projects and programmes in which things had gone right for people, especially

for poor people, irrespective of their country's wealth. 'People-centred development' became the new catch-phrase. This contained the idea that people, not economies, were the object of development and were, too, its principal agents even if they were poor. In 1976, Unicef produced its own alternative philosophy for meeting 'basic needs', the 'basic services approach'. Fundamental to the concept was the recognition that if the poverty-stricken people of the developing world had to wait until they were reached by conventional forms of social infrastructure—roads, schools, hospitals, waterworks, credit institutions—they would wait indefinitely. The fruits of economic growth were too thin to support such investment, and 'aid' could never fill the gap. The 'basic services approach' suggested instead that ordinary members of the slum or village community should be trained to become front-line workers in the spread of services.

Some of the inspiration for this approach came from the 'barefoot doctor' idea pioneered in the Republic of China; the rest from community-based non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and the spirit of voluntary effort their projects and programmes captured and depended upon. The facilities provided by 'barefoot sanitarians', 'barefoot midwives' or 'barefoot teachers' might be modest but they would at least address the community's essential needs. Basic services chimed well with other elements of the evolving new orthodoxy: 'appropriate technology', 'development from below', 'popular participation' and emphasis on the role of women. In time 'empowerment' and 'democratization' would be added.

The new thinking had a dramatic impact on the field of public health. In the late 1970s, WHO—with Unicef collaboration—began to elaborate a strategy of 'primary health care'. Dr. Halfdan Mahler, then the Director-General of WHO, was deeply identified with this revolutionary attempt to make a UN specialized agency match its expertise and clout to the challenge of underdevelopment. The approach was a reaction to the typical pattern whereby high-technology curative services absorbed up to 90 per cent of a developing country's health budget while serving a small, city-based élite. Fundamental to the 'primary health care' philosophy was the notion that health care in the form of a service whose outer arm everyone could reach was a basic human right that the State has an obligation to fulfil. As with 'basic services', ordinary people would be enlisted in their own preventive care. Primary health care (PHC)—the alternative order in health—gained international endorsement at a 1978 International Conference in Alma-Ata, USSR, sponsored jointly by WHO and Unicef. This meeting set an extremely ambitious goal: 'Health for All by the Year 2000'.

During the first two 'Development Decades', so engrossed was Unicef with the need to demonstrate that working for children was part of a much larger social and economic movement that there was some loss of child-centred focus within its activities. This was less the case in the emergency context: Henry Labouisse strove quietly and diplomatically to advance the principle that 'children are above the political divide' by providing relief on both sides in countries torn by civil war. He managed to uphold this principle during the Nigerian Civil War (1967-70), thereby providing a channel for multilateral aid into starving Biafra, an enclave technically ineligible for aid from UN member organizations since it was in revolt against a UN Member State. Even more ambitiously, given US disapproval, Labouisse managed to organize the provision of Unicef assistance into communist Indo-China while the Viet Nam imbroglio was still at its height, uniquely supplying aid to both North and South Viet Nam. But outside the emergency context, the emphasis on 'development' meant that the special needs of childhood, and the needs of certain disadvantaged child groups, suffered some eclipse. The turning-point in the rediscovery of children as a special group came in 1979 with the International Year of the Child (IYC).

The initiative for a children's 'Year' came not from Unicef but from international children's NGOs. Their starting point was not 'the child in development' but simply 'the child', whose cause—they felt—was being drowned out by the clamour surrounding more fashionable debates. Unicef was hesitant about a 'Year of the Child', disliking the language of rights and fearing a loss of focus on development. But eventually the UN General Assembly agreed to an 'IYC' on the basis that this would be a Year of practical action, not of cosmetic events, and that there would be no crowning international conference.

The degree of enthusiasm for children's issues was wholly unforeseen. This was the first indication that child-consciousness could be made a feature of the international agenda; to an extent, it followed in the footsteps of international consciousness concerning women. No fewer than 148 countries established national IYC commissions, under whose auspices research was commissioned into children's issues, celebratory events conducted and new programmes initiated. The volume of media attention to children was deafening. Some of it exposed problems—drugs, abuse, vandalism, children in prostitution—whose sensitivity normally kept them under wraps. After the IYC, these issues did not go away. New child-related NGOs came into being in both the North and the South, and existing ones were fired up in new directions. The IYC also paved the way for the 1959 Declaration of the Rights of the Child to be replaced, 30 years later, by the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

IYC was a watershed year: it both revealed and enhanced the growing importance of children in the public mind. It was also a watershed year for Unicef: in 1979, the organization's income rose from $211 million (1978) to $285 million—over 25 per cent in a year—and the upward trend continued[10]. Towards the Year's end, Unicef was appointed lead agency within the UN system for the emergency in Kampuchea following the destruction of the 1975-79 Khmer Rouge regime and its expulsion by the Vietnamese army. This assumption of the lead agency role was a mark of the organization's increasing international prestige, and served to enhance it further. At the end of 1979, Labouisse retired. At the beginning of the new decade, Unicef and the children's agenda were poised to achieve an extraordinary momentum.

More than a decade separates the IYC from the World Summit for Children—a meeting far more ambitious than the international conference that no one wanted in 1979. That decade in Unicef was stamped by the drive and personality of one man: Jim Grant. The journey Unicef undertook over the next decade was shaped by the strategic thinking and operational style Grant brought into an organization that he was determined to propel onto a new plane of activity.

James Pineo Grant had already dedicated not just a career, but a lifetime, to the service of an ideal: the harnessing of modern ideas and modern technology to the benefit of all members of the human race. A lifelong commitment to 'development' was rare in a person of his generation, born into a world still governed by empire and locked into a value system whereby the poor, the darker-skinned, the subject peoples were irretrievably fixed in their firmament, while the rulers and the better-off remained fixed in theirs[11]. The explanation for Grant's particular brand of internationalism lay in his background and upbringing.

Born in China in 1922, he was the son of Dr. John B. Grant, a leading figure in Asian public health. His father's close associates included Dr. Ludwik Rajchman, then chief of the League of Nations Health Section, later the founder of Unicef. Visitors to the Grant household in Peking were passionate politicians of disease warfare; the ideas his father promoted in China, and later at the All-India Institute of Hygiene and Public Health in Calcutta, anticipated by some decades the evolution of the primary health care strategy and the goal of 'Health for All'[12]. All this had a strong influence on the young Jim, who inherited his father's energy and sense of mission, but chose law in preference to medicine as his own gateway to a career in international public life.

Grant's career took shape in the 1950s when he worked for the International Co-operation Administration (ICA), the precursor organization of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), first in Sri Lanka—then Ceylon—later in Washington[13]. Thus he was based in Washington in 1961 when President John F. Kennedy gave an inaugural address that signalled a new sense of moral purpose in international affairs: 'To those peoples in the huts and villages of half the globe struggling to break the bonds of mass misery, we pledge our best efforts to help them help themselves.... If a free society cannot help the many who are poor, it can never serve the few who are rich.' These words of enduring inspiration struck responsive chords all over a world shaking off the dust of the colonial past. Grant was a member of the up-and-coming generation already in a position from which to influence such a crusade. Through all the twists and turns of this and subsequent Development Decades, Grant never lost sight of the mission President Kennedy outlined.

In the mid-1960s, Grant went to Turkey as local Director of USAID. There he oversaw the introduction of 'Green Revolution' technologies—an experience that transformed food production output in Turkey and had a lasting influence on his own approach to fostering the developmental transition from old ways to new[14]. It was evident that the merits of a new technology—in this case, high-yielding crop strains—which could make a profound impact on the fortunes of people bound by the traditions of peasant life, would not be sufficient to recommend themselves on a large scale without an intensive programme of persuasion and social organization. These were provided by guaranteed credit, financial inducements, mass training and insistent propaganda. In an authoritarian setting, the new technology also needed strong backing at the highest political level. And conversely, the leader who showed his country's numerous farming families the way to double and treble their farming yields himself reaped a harvest of political popularity. Turgut Ozal, then Prime Minister of Turkey and later its President, became a friend of Grant's and a staunch ally.

In 1969, Jim Grant became President of the Overseas Development Council (ODC) in Washington, a private think-tank he helped found to foster US understanding of third world problems. During all the reappraisals of aid and development policies in the 1970s and the search for an alternative order, he was active in the professional and intellectual circles where conventional wisdom was being thrown aside.

In particular, he was among those who advocated the dethronement of economic growth, measured by gross national product (GNP) per capita, as the yardstick of a country's capacity to provide a decent life for its citizens.

History taught that wretchedness, squalor and ill health succumbed only to the material prosperity brought about by economic advance. But some countries—notably in Asia, but to some extent elsewhere—had flouted history and shown that much could be done without prosperity and before the advent of the economically 'developed' country. At the same time, other developing countries had experienced rapid rates of economic progress; yet their new prosperity had barely touched the poor.

Grant was an early proponent of the view that human progress was what mattered. Investment in health and education was not simply a social charge with no developmental implications. Equity—affirmative action for the poor—was not necessarily economically inefficient. Grant believed that a wide-ranging analysis of development experience in countries as politically and ideologically divergent as Cuba and Taiwan, Mexico and Sri Lanka, Egypt and Viet Nam, taught lessons about investment in people which could be widely applied in favour of the poor. In the years before his appointment at Unicef, he wrote and spoke widely on this theme. A main text was the 1976 Report to the Club of Rome, 'Reshaping the International Order', to which he contributed. This called for the setting of global targets in infant mortality, life expectancy, literacy and lowered birth rate to be reached by the end of the century. At this time, Grant became a great believer in these targets and goals both as measurements of reductions in poverty and as a way of popularizing issues and creating political will behind social and economic programmes.

Under Grant's leadership, the ODC became a respected and influential voice in US development assistance policy, and he became a natural candidate of the Carter administration for a top position at the United Nations. Henry Labouisse had made plain his wish to retire from Unicef. But from 1976 to 1979, UN Secretary-General Kurt Waldheim procrastinated about the Unicef succession: he did not wish to cause affront to the Nordic countries—now leading Unicef donors—who were fielding a Swedish candidate. So Grant, a member of the US delegation to the Unicef Executive Board, had ample time to contemplate what he would do should he inherit Labouisse's mantle. He finally did so when Sadako Ogata, the 1979 Chairman of the Board, forced the issue with Waldheim[15].

From the outset, Grant saw Unicef's mission for children as part of the larger development crusade in which he had so long been active. He believed that, against the demands of this crusade, the resources Unicef spent annually in the developing world were too tiny to be significant. Unicef's assistance should therefore be targeted in such a way as to contribute to larger global objectives. Unicef's cooperation in 'basic services' was fine as far as it went. But

since it could not go very far, it must be used as a springboard. He wanted to employ a cadre of experts to analyse and synthesize the 'basic services' experience in an effort to persuade governments, research institutes and big donors to put their combined weight behind people-centred strategies in a revitalized development movement[16]. He also wanted to increase the prominence given to advocacy and social communications as key methods of invigorating this movement. To this end he wanted greater emphasis within Unicef on external relations, the importance of which was recognized by the creation of a top-rank post to promote it. He had already invited an old friend and associate to serve in this new Deputy Executive Director position: the distinguished Sri Lankan journalist, at that time Director of Information at the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), Varindra Tarzie Vittachi.

Grant's desire to deploy Unicef's skills and expertise to buoy up the world-wide development movement in no way meant that he ignored the need to build up its own resources. A very hopeful prospect of expanded income lay in the Middle East, where a strong local contact had been forged during the IYC between a brother of King Khaled of Saudi Arabia, Prince Talal Bin Abdul Al Saud, and Unicef's country office[17]. In April 1980, Prince Talal visited UN Headquarters in New York at Grant's invitation and met UN Secretary-General Waldheim. As a result of Talal's subsequent initiatives, seven Arab governments joined forces in an Arab Gulf Programme for the United Nations Development Organizations (AGFUND), set up in April 1981. Although a generous contribution of $40 million was initially pledged by AGFUND for Unicef with the promise of more to follow, this sum was nowhere near as large as had originally been hoped. Over-optimism concerning these financial prospects from the Arab world played a part in the set-back to his plans Grant then experienced.

In 1981, when he submitted his ideas for reshaping the organization he wished to lead to Unicef's Executive Board, together with an extremely ambitious financial plan, Grant was rebuffed. Even the creation of his new Deputy Directorship for External Relations was postponed. Whether or not the members of the Executive Board fully understood his wider purpose, the prospect of a cadre of headquarters experts was enough to put them off. Unicef had always been a practical, down-to-earth, field-based operation. The Board did not want it to turn into a headquarters-based repository of wisdom, the pattern of many—some would say too many—other UN organizations. Its programme—the bird in the hand—was what many members liked best about Unicef, and its own expansion was the limit of their ambition. The birds in the bush that might be won by advocacy among the wider development and donor community were decidedly suspect. Grant's proposals came at a time, too, when the

effects of global recession were beginning to bite, and coupled with the air of apathy and disillusion that had greeted the Third Development Decade, the mood in the Board—and internationally—was not conducive to grand plans and dramatic revitalizations.

Jim Grant was a visionary. This temporary set-back did not deter him from seeking a way of making Unicef's experience and Unicef's programme do far more to eliminate poverty and improve child well-being than their simple quantification could ever suggest. In retrospect, his failure to convince Unicef's governing body to commit itself to his proposals can be seen as a litmus test of whether a worldwide campaign with 'basic services' as the spearhead would have achieved the regeneration of the development crusade he was seeking. It probably could not have done so. It caused him to narrow his focus, to go back to the 'child health purposes' at the core of Unicef's original mandate and deeply etched in his personal background.

Many elements of inadequate child health and the consequent high levels of child mortality were symptoms of gross poverty—what Grant called the 'silent emergency'. If a worldwide campaign could be mounted to tackle these problems, not only would the results be immensely worthwhile for children but they would provide a point from which to broaden the front into other social and economic areas at a later stage. The reversion to a concentrated focus on child survival can be seen as a strategic decision to '*reculer pour mieux sauter*': there was no serious change of direction, simply a postponement until the position from which to propel development forward had been adequately secured.

In the late summer of 1982, Grant spent time in Haiti with his friend and colleague, Dr. Jon Rohde, who was based there with USAID. Rohde started the process of persuasion and illustration at field level that led Grant to believe that the technologies to avoid a large number of child deaths existed, that in many settings the basic health infrastructure to spread them was in place and that only the political will was lacking to put them to work on a significant scale[18]. In September 1982, a meeting of leading international health and nutrition experts took place at Unicef headquarters. Grant challenged the group to come up with a short list of interventions that were suitable for widespread promotion at a time of severe recession. They had to be low-cost, practicable and important for child survival and well-being, and their spread had currently to be inhibited only by lack of consumer knowledge and political inertia.

The group produced four, which swiftly became known by the acronym 'GOBI': child growth monitoring to indicate tell-tale signs of undernutrition in the very small child; oral rehydration to treat childhood diarrhoea, the

largest cause of childhood death; breastfeeding, a practice currently on the decline in the developing world; and immunization against six vaccine-preventable diseases: tuberculosis, poliomyelitis, diphtheria, tetanus, whooping cough and measles. To these were attached two 'F's—interventions that also had a major impact on child health, but did so indirectly: food supplements and family planning; a third 'F'—female education—was later added. Fantastically, as many believed, Grant saw in GOBI the child health equivalent of the hybrid seeds that, 20 years before, had been the centrepiece of the 'Green Revolution'[19].

In December 1982, he launched the 'child survival and development revolution'. This drive was intended to reduce by half, by means of the GOBI formulation, the estimated annual 15 million deaths of children under five. The vehicle he used was his annual report on *The State of the World's Children*, a publication that had already become his main advocacy platform. His collaborator, a British development writer called Peter Adamson, had an exceptional ability to present the Unicef vision within the framework of an authoritative *tour d'horizon* of social and economic trends in developing countries. *The State of the World's Children* reports deduced global policies from an analysis that was grounded in, but did not necessarily derive from, Unicef's assistance programme. By proxy, the reports assumed the role that would have fallen to the cadre of experts—if Grant had been allowed to take them on. But it did so in a far more accessible and widely publicizable format.

In the past, Unicef advocacy had largely been seen as a public relations task, something necessary for fund-raising and to inform donors and the public about what Unicef was doing. As far as the programme and policy makers were concerned, it was not a task held in much esteem. Now, under Tarzie Vittachi's guidance, advocacy was elevated to another realm altogether. Every part of the organization—from the national NGO support organizations known as National Committees for Unicef in the industrialized countries, to the Unicef country offices in the developing world—benefited from Unicef's enhanced profile, and there was widespread enthusiasm for *The State of the World's Children* reports. But there was also a sense of shock in December 1982 when such an important new initiative as the 'child survival and development revolution' was launched not in a closely argued policy paper put to the Executive Board, not as a distillation of Unicef programme experience, but as an advocacy statement addressed to the world. This was indeed a different way—and a highly unconventional one in the UN system—of doing things.

For the immediate future, the four elements of GOBI were to become areas of chief concentration as far as Unicef programmes and advocacy

were concerned. This sudden reductionism from 'basic services', not just to 'primary health care' but to certain selected elements of child-related PHC, caused tension not only within Unicef, but in Unicef's relationship with WHO and with some leading members of the international public health community. On the plus side, a wide range of allies—national, international, bilateral, non-governmental—enthusiastically came on board. They found the call to support this 'child survival and development revolution' concise, unambiguous, affordable and appealing—although some dropped the word 'revolution'. A programme of worldwide social mobilization began. This was aimed at bridging the gap between the existence of these low-cost technologies and their widespread use by those—the poor—whose children's lives were being lost.

Of the four GOBI components, immunization was the one that eventually captured most public and political attention. By the second half of the decade, in spite of economic recession, spiralling debt, the advent of 'structural adjustment', a succession of crises in Africa, the onset of AIDS, declining health service expenditures and growing despair about development set-backs, the immunization story was shaping up to be a success on a par with the eradication of smallpox in the 1970s. By 1986, some 75 developing countries had embarked on accelerated immunization drives, and coverage levels—which in most had been less than 10 per cent at the beginning of the decade—now averaged nearly 50 per cent. The impact was showing up in marked declines in measles, tetanus and polio, and Unicef estimated that 1 million children's lives a year were being saved[20].

In 1985, an all-out effort backed at the topmost international level and led by the then UN Secretary-General, Javier Pérez de Cuéllar, was set in motion to reach the target of universal child immunization (UCI) by 1990. To push GOBI and UCI, Grant visited Presidents and Prime Ministers by the score and stood on podia at national events in every corner of the world. Somehow he never tired of the repetition—the similarity of the ceremonies, the mantra of the 'child survival' message—and he never missed an opportunity to consolidate relations with political leaders. A large number, especially in Africa and Latin America, were attracted to the idea that their personal identification with the children's cause was a political winner. It began to seem as if commitment to children was a stronger political 'goer' than anyone—including Grant—had actually imagined. And undoubtedly, offering cheap, populist and doable solutions that a leader could visibly endorse—for example, by dropping polio vaccine into the mouth of a baby in front of the television cameras—was a decisive ingredient.

In spite of what looked like an obsession with vaccination and child survival, Grant always thought in terms of reducing child mortality as a fillip to development: by tackling the worst manifestations of poverty, new energies would be released to combat poverty itself. After health, education: in 1988, plans for an International Conference on 'Education for All' backed by UNESCO, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the World Bank and Unicef crystallized, and it seemed that the social development front was really beginning to broaden. 'Basic services' were not advancing as a phalanx, but they were advancing one by one and with a reasonable degree of synchronization. The conference on 'Education for All', intended to achieve for basic education what the 1978 conference on 'Health for All' had done for basic health, was held in Thailand in March 1990. It laid stress on female education: one of the 'F's identified alongside GOBI.

Amidst all the excitement generated by universal child immunization and the extra resources and visibility Unicef's involvement with 'child survival' generated during the 1980s, there was a strong sense in Unicef that a phoenix was rising. But alongside the new concentration on children at the frontier of social development, in the wider community a new concentration on children simply as children had also begun to emerge. This parallel development was a product of very different forces. It derived from the immense stress on the social fabric—and the consequent child distress—caused by economic setbacks and development failures, and from the burgeoning movement for children's rights.

The story of the international movement for children's rights begins in 1924 with the adoption by the League of Nations of the World Child Welfare Charter[21]. This document had been first drawn up as a Declaration of the Rights of the Child by the Save the Children International Union (SCIU), an organization founded in Geneva by a remarkable Englishwoman, Eglantyne Jebb. Jebb had set out to establish as an international principle that there was no such thing as an 'enemy child'[22]. The 1924 Declaration or Charter laid down five principles: the child's right to the means for material, moral and spiritual development; to special help when hungry, sick, disabled or orphaned; to first call on relief in distress; not to be economically exploited; and to an upbringing that instilled a sense of responsibility towards society.

In 1946, at the end of another World War, the International Union of Child Welfare (into which the SCIU had been merged) began to press the Economic and Social Council of the newly formed United Nations to endorse the Decla-

ration of 1924. Approval in principle was given, but work on a modified draft was delayed until work on other human rights instruments was completed. In 1957, the Human Rights Commission took up the task of producing a new Declaration of the Rights of the Child, and in 1959, this was brought to the UN General Assembly and unanimously passed. The new Declaration included several new rights. One was a prohibition on discrimination 'on the grounds of race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status'. Another was the right to 'name and nationality'. A third change was a much fuller elaboration of the child's social needs, including the right of parents to support for children's upbringing; and children's right to education, health care and special protection.

From its inception, therefore, the international movement for children's rights derived its force and inspiration from the voluntary and non-governmental community, particularly from a hard core of international child-related organizations based in Geneva. In this movement Unicef played little part, or was at best passive. It did not wish to embroil itself in the controversial field of human rights in such a way as to antagonize its governmental partners and jeopardize what had become its main activity since the advent of the development era: cooperation in child-centred development programmes.

Accordingly, when the NGO children's lobby pressed the UN to declare 1979 an 'International Year of the Child', the proposal evoked a sense of unease at Unicef. It feared a diversion of energy and resources away from 'development via basic services'—as yet making only limited headway. The NGO community felt, by contrast, that much of what passed for 'development' was having a negative effect on childhood and it was time that a child-centred focus was resuscitated. An IYC might soften the focus on 'development', but it would sharpen it on 'child'. Eventually, the NGO lobby brought around to their point of view both UN Secretary-General Kurt Waldheim and the Unicef Executive Board.

As well as helping raise the profile of children nationally and internationally, the IYC sparked off a move to articulate a new international human rights instrument on behalf of children. In February 1978, the Polish Government had submitted to the UN Commission for Human Rights a suggested text for a Convention on the Rights of the Child for adoption during the IYC. The text was simply the 1959 Declaration of the Rights of the Child recouched in legal parlance. This proposal was deflected in the Commission on the grounds that it was premature. But the UN General Assembly agreed that a working group should be set up within the Human Rights Commission to embark on a drafting process for a Convention.

This body might easily have met occasionally and pursued a debate on the irreconcilability of various ideological and religious positions vis-à-vis abortion, birth control, childhood, parenthood and the difficulties involved in awarding human rights to minors. There were many obvious opportunities, too, for confrontation on questions associated with how far, and at what point, the machinery of state should intervene in family affairs on behalf of a child at risk. But the Poles, who were in the chair, took the task in earnest[23]. Defence for Children International (DCI), an umbrella NGO group, lobbied hard for the Convention and pushed the process forward. The Canadian and Swedish Governments began to express active interest. Unicef, caught up in the 'child survival and development revolution', helped facilitate NGO input to the drafting process but was otherwise not deeply involved during most of the decade.

Meanwhile the dynamics that had prompted heightened NGO concern on behalf of children before and during the IYC were more than ever conspicuous in the 1980s. Damaging things were happening to childhood as a product of rapid rates of industrialization and urbanization coupled with recession, debt and structural adjustment. Population growth and low agricultural commodity prices were forcing people off the land; lack of employment was undermining livelihoods and changing the terms of childhood and family life. An increasing number of households were headed by women alone, and these households were almost invariably poor. One obvious symptom of social stress and family breakdown was the increasing number of children working—and in some cases living—on the street. Some of these 'street' children became brutalized and descended into crime.

These were phenomena similar to those that had sorely exercised 19th-century social and labour reformers in Europe and North America and had prompted into existence a host of charitable children's societies to deal with human waifs and strays. The late 20th century rediscovered the child victims of these phenomena as 'street children'. The phenomenon was at its most acute in Latin America where, in the early 1980s, millions of children were reported to be eking out an existence on the streets with little or no support from their families, some living in the streets by day and by night[24]. Gradually, NGO activists and social reformers began to identify street children not only as a subject for humanitarian concern, but as a product of the havoc development was wreaking in towns and cities in Latin America and all over the developing world.

In 1981, Unicef took its first step towards examining the predicament of child casualties of the urbanization process. A Canadian activist on behalf of street children, Peter Taçon, was invited to travel throughout the Americas and

examine existing programmes for children of the streets. Gradually, both the international development and human rights communities began to recognize street children as a category of children in distress demanding something more coherent in terms of policy and programmatic action than a simple welfare response.

Over the next few years, mainly at the promptings of child rights activists, other categories of children damaged by forces beyond those embraced by the general rubric of 'poverty and underdevelopment' began to gain similar recognition. Nils Thedin, Chairman of Radda Barnen and long revered as a Swedish elder statesman of Unicef, had for many years promoted the idea of 'children as a zone of peace'. This was taken forward by Unicef and others in various ways, including special attention for child victims of mass violence and warfare. Children with disabilities, who like the orphaned and abandoned had previously been seen as individual targets of welfare, also began to be embraced in the language both of rights and of primary health care. Children suffering from exploitation—as workers and labourers, as objects of commercial sexual gratification and private sexual abuse—were similarly gaining in visibility. By the mid-1980s, Unicef had coined a term to cover all categories of disadvantage extra to poverty itself: 'children in especially difficult circumstances' (CEDC).

Since 'children in especially difficult circumstances' was not a discrete group, it was difficult to advance public policy on their behalf in the same way as, for example, in health or education. However, the CEDC designation indicated a heightened perception of children and childhood being subject to special problems of deprivation beyond those of the natural physiological vulnerability of the very young. It also pointed in a different direction as far as responses were concerned. Relieving 'difficult circumstances' required not only rehabilitative care for the victims; it required preventive action to stop exploitation occurring, confirmed by legislative action to bring perpetrators to book. Unicef was initially more concerned with analysing CEDC situations and—*sotto voce* so as not to offend governments—developing public policy perspectives. The key international NGOs—Radda Barnen, DCI, Anti-Slavery International, the International Catholic Children's Bureau—were more concerned with advocacy and legislation. This was the force propelling forward the Child Rights Convention[25].

By 1987, Unicef had begun to recognize the potential convergence of the worldwide campaign for child survival with the thrust for children's rights. Grant, previously sceptical that governments would accept that children had independent rights of their own, came fully behind the Convention with the proviso that the rights to survival and development be

given their due weight within the text. A timetable was set for completing the draft Convention and orchestrating its tour through the necessary international committees and machinery of the UN approval system. Although the Commission on Human Rights was administratively and technically responsible for this process, Unicef's role in mobilizing support for the Convention's adoption was extremely important.

The Convention on the Rights of the Child was adopted on 20 November 1989, the 30th anniversary to the day of the adoption of its precursor, the Declaration of the Rights of the Child. On 26 January 1990, it was opened for signature at UN Headquarters, and 61 countries signed on that day. No human rights treaty had ever gathered so much support so early in its career. By September 1990, some 20 countries had ratified, enough for the Convention to enter into international law. Partly by luck, partly by design, this moment—at which a binding treaty setting out an internationally agreed-upon vision of childhood came into force—took place almost coincidentally with that other international signal of how high the children's cause was flying: the children's World Summit.

The idea of the World Summit for Children when first mooted was regarded by many of those consulted both inside and outside of Unicef as ambitious, audacious and unrealistic—a typical Grant pipe-dream[26]. The fact that it not only took place, but was a notable success, has earned for it a central place in Unicef folklore that is unlikely ever to be surpassed. The Summit also set an agenda for Unicef's country-level activities over the forthcoming decade, and work on its follow-up dominated the final four years of Jim Grant's leadership—and of his life.

The idea was first publicly floated—very carefully—in December 1988 in the 1989 *State of the World's Children* report as a suggestion of which Unicef strongly approved, not as a definite proposition. Grant hoped that the idea would be picked up by those who could run with it, but the question of whether it would be thus picked up was not left to chance. Informal overtures had already been made to Swedish Prime Minister Ingvar Carlsson and to President Robert Mugabe in Zimbabwe. Personal statements of approval for the Summit idea from Carlsson and Mugabe were issued on the day the report was launched.

Grant had invested time and energy over the period of the 'child survival revolution' in developing close associations with the upper reaches of political establishments all over the world. These contacts now stood the idea of the

Summit in good stead. Early in 1989, he sounded out West African leaders and he also began to expound on the Summit idea in public speeches wherever he found an opportunity. The case he made was by now a Unicef stock-in-trade: the technological and financial means for making a dramatic improvement in children's lives were available if the world chose to apply them; what was needed was an injection of political will. The price-tag put on preventing 50 million unnecessary child deaths before the end of the century was no more than $2.5 billion[27].

Most leaders in developing countries welcomed the Summit idea. But it quickly became clear that there would be resistance among donor countries. Some feared a 'cheque-book conference'—an occasion leading merely to extra demands on their aid budgets; others had become very resistant to Unicef's involvement in public relations extravaganzas of which they regarded this as another example. There were even those who thought the idea preposterous. Summit meetings were normally reserved for major political and economic decisions, and confined to a handful of participants: Reagan-Gorbachev, Carter-Sadat-Begin, or at most the Group of Seven. There had never previously been a Summit to which every Head of State of every country in the world had been invited. If all leaders of North, South, East, West and every political persuasion were so invited, did the notion of 'Summit' become diluted? The idea that national leaders of the Bush and Thatcher calibre would be willing to sit together with scores of less newsworthy leaders to discuss issues relating to children seemed fanciful. And if they would not attend, then the Summit would not be a truly momentous occasion.

In April 1989, the Unicef Executive Board discussed a far-reaching policy document: 'Strategies for Children in the 1990s'[28]. This was the product of more than a year of intense consultations throughout Unicef, in its country and regional offices, with other allies in the UN system—especially WHO—and with other allies in the international public health community. It listed quantifiable goals the world should aim to reach by the end of the century: significant reductions in infant and child mortality, malnutrition and illiteracy; improvements in diarrhoeal disease control and immunization levels, and reductions in acute respiratory infections; increases in access to clean water and family planning services, and in protection for children in 'difficult circumstances'. These 'Goals' were the centrepiece not only of the document, but of an attempt to apply 'management by objective' ideas to the international agenda.

In most UN documents, goals and objectives are expressed in the most general terms: they are neither time-bound nor specific. Almost all these child-

related 'Goals' were both, and their articulation coincided with a shift in Unicef's own operational philosophy to what amounted to a 'goal-led' approach. The approach, and the actual list of 'Goals for the year 2000', was developed only after a long process of widespread consultation with WHO and other members of the international health and educational communities. Most of the 'Goals' had already been set in other fora, such as the World Health Assembly, ensuring that they needed no further debate. The list in its earliest form had first emerged in 1988 in a consultation of the International Task Force for Child Survival, a top-rank multi-agency group[29].

The 1989 Unicef Executive Board discussion on 'Strategies for Children' was to prove a vital piece of the pre-Summit jigsaw. It provided a preliminary answer to the question of what the substantive part of the Summit agenda would consist of, showing that it was in no way conceived as a purely celebratory event.

In the early part of 1989 the omens for the Summit were still very mixed. Grant—taking soundings in Moscow and Washington—felt that he was heard with empathy, but there was not enough push for the Summit idea to take wing. Gradually, prospects brightened. By the summer of 1989, Unicef had begun to use its established presence at regional fora where Heads of Government congregated—the Organization of African Unity (OAU), the annual meetings of the Non-Aligned and Commonwealth Movements—to talk up the children's cause and encourage support for favourable resolutions. The first of these came at the Francophone Summit in Dakar in May 1989, when Presidents Traoré of Mali and Diouf of Senegal put their weight behind a resolution stating that Africa wanted a World Summit for Children. Similar statements emerged from the OAU in July and the Non-Aligned meeting in Belgrade in September.

By now not only Mali, but Egypt, Pakistan and Mexico had begun to express active enthusiasm. The most important convert, however, was Joe Clarke, the Canadian Foreign Minister, who offered both political and financial support for the Summit so long as the event was substantive, inexpensive and took place in New York. These five countries and Sweden came together as an 'initiators group', which included representation from both North and South and from all geographical regions. In November 1989, UN Secretary-General Javier Pérez de Cuéllar gave permission for the Summit to be held at UN Headquarters in New York.

As with so many of Jim Grant's initiatives, the procedures used to enable the Summit to reach this point of lift-off were highly unorthodox. Within that amalgam of entities known as the 'United' Nations, there is such a wide

divergence of perspectives and interests that consensus building via established channels is extremely painstaking and time-consuming. Grant did not trust the conventional apparatus of international affairs to demonstrate sufficient forward thrust to conquer the scepticism and prevarication that he knew might mire the Summit. So his operational approach was to circumvent 'normal channels', inspiring the creation of ad hoc mechanisms by planting ideas in friendly places and using positive responses to overcome resistance in others. The 'initiators group' was a case in point: this mechanism set up to guide the Summit preparations was independent, outside regular UN diplomatic or bureaucratic mechanisms.

The problem with this approach—however justifiable—is that official mechanisms have a history, and that history is closely associated with matters such as representation, accountability and the consultative process. The World Summit for Children nearly failed to clear the obstacle of the special Unicef Executive Board meeting called to discuss it in December 1989. It was unthinkable that such an event could take place without the Unicef Board's imprimatur, but the failure to consult the Board more actively at an earlier stage provoked considerable antipathy. They refused to agree upon the Summit budget. After protracted negotiations, some limited agreements were achieved, thanks mainly to the lobbying of African delegations. But it was clear that some Europeans would not be returning to their capitals with the idea of impressing on their Heads of State the urgent necessity of attending.

In early 1990, planning began in earnest. There was no previous Summit example to copy: matters such as attendance, content and format all had to be invented. By the spring, a draft Declaration and Plan of Action based on 'Strategies for Children in the 1990s' were already in circulation[30]. Suggestions for Summit 'themes' had been sought from governments; the most widely requested was education and literacy, followed by protection of children 'in especially difficult circumstances', child survival interventions and the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The Convention—now awaiting ratification by a sufficient number of countries to enter into law—was a useful boost to Summit interest, and the process of its ratification gathered momentum as a result of the Summit preparations.

Invitations to the Summit were sent out by the UN Secretary-General in February. Pessimists did not believe that more than 20 acceptances would be forthcoming. Many recipients inevitably held back until they saw who else had accepted. By the spring, Unicef country offices, National Committees and a large number of NGOs had begun to mobilize allies around the Summit, using its prospect as a stimulus for activity on behalf of children. Some of this

activity was designed to promote Summit attendance: seminars with parliamentarians, media, religious leaders and professional groups could put pressure on a country's leadership. As in the case of the IYC, Unicef's presence all over the world could be used to maximize the potential of the Summit, turning it into a high point in an overall effort. All this activity, which gradually built to a crescendo over the summer, helped swell a tide of interest and expectation.

Until the summer of 1990, the prospects of a successful meeting were still doubtful. Then, in June, at a meeting of the Group of Seven in Houston, Texas, Canadian Prime Minister Brian Mulroney managed to obtain promises of attendance from four key leaders: George Bush, Margaret Thatcher, François Mitterrand and Giulio Andreotti[31]. After this coup, acceptances suddenly soared to 60 and then 65. As the meeting grew in significance, the organizational dimensions—security, protocol, media arrangements—became correspondingly more complex. The Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) chamber had to be remodelled and a special circular table built so that Presidents, Prime Ministers and monarchs could sit non-hierarchically. Plans were drawn up for the arrival at the UN building of legions of motorcades in an orderly sequence without causing gridlock in midtown Manhattan. Never before had the UN had to accommodate a meeting that included even half the number of Heads of State now proposing to attend.

For 24 hours, starting on the evening of Saturday, 29 September, through Sunday, 30 September 1990, the needs of children claimed the exclusive attention of 71 of the world's assembled leaders. At this time, this was the largest such gathering ever to have been convened. Altogether, representatives of over 150 countries were involved. Around the world, thousands of candlelight vigils, religious ceremonies and special events were held to swell the throng of wishes and prayers that the Summit would deliver positive results for children.

The day of the Summit delivered all that anyone dared anticipate. For Unicef, the occasion was both nerve-racking and euphoric. For Grant, it was the unachievable achieved, the undoable done.

The joint chairmen were Brian Mulroney and Mussa Traoré, President of Mali. Altogether, 64 Heads of Government made statements. Brian Mulroney spoke of a 'better world for children'. Ingvar Carlsson, of a 'new era... a new commitment'. President Carlos Salinas of Mexico talked of a 'new age' and invited leaders to 'put a new look on the faces of the world's children'. For Robert Mugabe, the Summit represented a 'new level of consciousness and a new dedication to the needs of the child'. Giulio Andreotti spoke of a 'new solidarity' giving 'life to a united and determined world coalition'. Several leaders from the South pointed out that some of the problems their children

faced stemmed from factors beyond their control: the adverse global economic climate, heavy burdens of debt and structural adjustment, intractable wars and environmental stress.

One of the more striking statements came from Vaclav Havel of Czechoslovakia: 'A thousand times I have heard people defend their servitude to a hated regime by the argument that they were doing it only for the children—to be able to feed them, to make it possible for them to study. . . . How much evil has already been committed in the name of children?' Yoweri Museveni of Uganda also struck a political note, laying responsibility for much child suffering in Africa on the 'prevalence of authoritarian, top-down styles of government' and the 'oppression of man by man'[32].

The lofty and often poignant language not only captured the misery endured by many millions of children in poverty-stricken countries, but recorded the plight of those in broken families and brutalized urban communities in the richer, industrialized lands. In the end what was striking was not so much the individual statements—for rhetoric about children tends to sound hackneyed to some degree—but their sheer concentrated mass and the fact that they came from such participants. Many referred to the Convention on the Rights of the Child as the embodiment of a new set of principles on which national legislation and action should be based; some took the opportunity to append their signatures to the treaty.

All over the world, media interest in topics concerning children was heightened[33]. Many reports focused on the opportunities for saving lives, which Unicef had done so much to publicize. Others looked at special predicaments of childhood and youth—drugs, juvenile crime, marginalization, child exploitation. There was no doubt that the Summit achieved its purpose—at least temporarily—in claiming for children the high ground in public policy debate, which had been the original intention. Unicef articulated this claim as demanding for children 'first call' on society's capacities as a normative principle of human affairs—in good times and bad, in peace and in war, in prosperity and in recession.

Much was being made at the time of the great changes taking place in international affairs as a result of the end of the cold war and of an incipient 'peace dividend'. Although the Gulf crisis was brewing—and was the main subject to which the Heads of Government were due to turn their attention in the General Assembly the very next day—still there was an air of optimism that the end of superpower confrontation would enable the nations to spend more of their energies making the world a better place to live in. Because of its timing, the Summit captured and encapsulated this atmosphere of promise.

The high point of the Summit was the joint signing of the World Declaration on the Survival, Protection and Development of Children and the Plan of Action for implementing the Declaration over the next decade. Here was the substance demanded of the Summit. Taken together with the Convention, these documents constituted an ambitious agenda to achieve measurable and time-bound improvements in children's well-being by the year 2000. The Declaration included seven major goals—four related to health, two to education and one to child protection—and 27 supporting goals with specific disease control, service coverage and educational objectives. To fulfil these obligations would require major national programmes of action. As Prime Minister Brian Mulroney told the closing session: 'The real work starts now.'

The glow then emanating from the 'new world order' was soon to lose its brilliance. Certainly, some problems that had long seemed intractable were to yield in the face of diplomatic pressure uncluttered by the old superpower rivalries. But a rash of ethnic and nationalist conflicts were soon to erupt, or to emerge from hibernation, in Europe, Africa, the ex-USSR and in parts of Asia. Far from succumbing to a new climate of peace, 'loud emergencies' would once more intrude, edging out the 'silent' and derailing longer-term developmental plans.

In the international arena, the children's agenda would begin to recede as other issues took their turn: the environment and 'sustainable development' in 1992, human rights in 1993, population in 1994, social development and women in 1995, the human habitat in 1996. On the other hand, because it came first, the Declaration to which world leaders had given their agreement in New York in 1990 provided a means of ensuring that all these discussions embraced the children's cause as well. More important, it also provided a renewed inspiration for action at country level on behalf of children and on the kind of progress that elevated the condition of humanity to priority position.

To Jim Grant and to Unicef, the Summit seemed to represent a watershed moment. It was the high point of a campaign that, viewed historically, had begun not in the 1980s, but way back in the 1960s when Unicef first took up the challenge of world poverty and development from the perspective of the child. Many of the goals and strategies for which it had won endorsement were those that had begun to emerge in the 1970s 'era of alternatives', when primary health care, basic services and participatory approaches had won widespread endorsement. The course of this campaign in the period before and after the Children's Summit is at the heart of Unicef's story between 1980 and 1995.

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