Chapter 5

City Streets and Children's Rights

During the early part of the development era, organizations concerned with poverty in the developing world as it affected people rather than as it affected nations concentrated their efforts in the countryside. Convention held that poverty in its most grinding form was to be found in the lined face and prematurely ageing bodies of the peasant farmer and his wife, working in the fields from sun-up to sundown in everlasting backwardness and ignorance. Rural life was regarded as invariably harder than town life since all work demanded unremitting toil, prospects were severely limited, services were fewer and disease rates and illiteracy noticeably higher. Some of these assumptions have been increasingly challenged in recent times by those championing the urban poor[1]. But two decades ago it was received wisdom that children born into poverty-stricken rural families were automatically much worse off in terms of exposure to disease and malnutrition, as well as educationally, than their counterparts in town.

This view was substantiated by the historical reality that cities had always been both the products and the engines of wealth. The laws of productive enterprise demanded that resources for development investment were skewed in favour of metropolitan centres, the sites of industry, government and intellectual life. That cities had poor neighbourhoods was an inevitable part of the process of wealth creation, which beckoned the go-getting and the disenfranchised from the countryside, offering paid jobs, casual work or petty entrepreneurship in the 'informal sector'. Slums had been a feature of everyone's industrial revolution and while they presented public health and security hazards, the expansion of the city would in time act as an absorbative, devouring

its problems in a continuing process of more wealth creation. That at least had been the experience of the Western world.

In the early 1970s, it became apparent that cities in the developing world were growing far too fast for the usual assumptions about patterns of urbanization to apply. It took London over a century—1800-1910—to multiply its population by seven to 7.3 million, a growth rate now being achieved by many third world cities within a generation[2]. It was in Africa especially, and in Asia, that growth rates were highest: the process had begun earlier in Latin America, where the urban presence of two thirds of the population was causing increasing social and economic strain[3]. Urbanization was taking place at a speed out of any synchronization with the rate of expansion in employment, housing or services. The result was a proliferation of barrios, *favelas, bustis, bidonvilles*— squatters' settlements of flimsy shacks in disused nooks of the city centre or wastelands on its edge. These blots on the municipal escutcheon were growing at a pace far faster than that of the cities themselves, in which half the population might typically live in slums[4].

The widespread alarm felt by demographers and planners about the phenomenon of 'exploding cities' led to the first international conference on human settlements, HABITAT, held in Vancouver in 1976. Some of the leading cities in the developing world were growing at rates of between 7 and 10 per cent a year[5]. Although 60 per cent of the city 'explosion' was attributable to high birth rates among existing urban residents[6], the phenomenon was mainly associated with the exodus from countryside to town. This was universally frowned upon, as if urban newcomers consisted mainly of ne'er-do-wells drawn by bright city lights. The reality was that the average pioneer opting for urban migration was typically driven by poor agricultural prices, landlessness, lack of employment, debt, drought or flood disaster—forces far outside his or her control.

The typical municipal reaction was to regard squatters and shanty-town inhabitants as transients who had strayed temporarily from home. The migrants constructed 'temporary' shelters out of waste materials and occupied— illegally—vacant land that was usually low-lying, precipitous or hazardous in some way. Treated as marginal to the city's economic life, slum-dwellers endured an imposed culture of impermanence. Tenure, security and amenities were withheld on the basis that service availability would attract more rural indigents into town. The only welfare available—food hand-outs, medicines, second-hand clothes—came from religious orders and charitable institutions. Extreme measures—bulldozers and mass evictions—were often used against the urban poor, and still occasionally are.

These policies proved futile. As fast as slum-dwellers were trucked away to new settlements on the outskirts of cities such as Nairobi, Metro Manila and Delhi, their places along the railway tracks, beside the river bed and around the municipal garbage dump were reoccupied. For all the indications that they were not wanted, those exchanging agricultural life for the mud and garbage of the slum were not prepared to go away. Work, cash and amenities beckoned the new city-dwellers. The squalor, the high cost of city life, the loss of traditional community ties and the resultant changes in family life were a price that they were willing to pay for a foothold on the ladder to the modern world.

By the late 1970s, the proportion of slum and shanty-town residents in many cities was between 30 and 60 per cent, and in some was spectacular: in Addis Ababa, 79 per cent; in Calcutta, 67 per cent; in Bogota, 60 per cent[7]. Poverty was well on its way to becoming as much an urban as a rural phenomenon. Between two thirds and three quarters of this rapidly expanding group— the 'urban poor'—were women and children[8]. The poorest households were those headed by women, which in some cities constituted a third of the total[9]. Encumbered with child-rearing responsibilities and without skills or access to salaried employment, such families were totally dependent on cash for items that, in the countryside, were supplied from the fruits of stream, field and furrow. Childhood malnutrition, infection and general ill-health were the rule rather than the exception.

Striking as the evidence of urban misery was becoming, many observers remained locked into the perspective that poverty as a development rather than a welfare issue was a rural phenomenon, and that where it intruded into town the best policy was to leave well alone. Unicef, however, took the line as early as 1961 that if need was its principal criterion of assistance, there was no justification for excluding urban children from its assistance[10]. Although it was more than another decade before urban activity began in earnest, Unicef never allowed itself to be deflected from the problems of childhood in the slum by the false assumption that all those who live in cities are better off than those in the countryside simply because almost all the better-off people live in town, thereby skewing comparative statistical analysis.

In 1971, the Executive Board gave its approval to the social policy recommendations of a special study into problems of urban poverty[11]. Gradually a portfolio of projects for deprived urban areas—in Egypt, Ecuador, India, Indonesia and Zambia—was assembled. In 1978, a second report— 'Basic Services for Children of the Urban Poor'—was prepared[12]. This report came at a time when enthusiasm for new, people-centred doctrines was at its height and reflected the 'alternative' thinking of the time. Thus the develop-

ment of a coherent Unicef approach towards children in slum neighbourhoods and the creation of a worldwide programme with a shared perspective was very much a part of the emerging 'basic services' approach then dominating Unicef's perspective.

One of the landmark programmes in the formative years of 'urban basic services' was to be found in the *bustis*—pocket slums—of Hyderabad, India's fifth largest city. First supported by Unicef in 1976, the project was run by Hyderabad's municipal staff, which included veterans of India's community development experience[13].

The Hyderabad team concentrated on building a spirit of *busti* cooperation before trying to upgrade housing and other physical amenities. They fostered human development: welfare committees, youth clubs, women's self-help groups. Their resources were extremely slim—a factor to which much of their success was later attributed: they could not afford to do things *for* people, only *with* them, but they did not stint on time and energy, especially in the early stages. Whatever activities they undertook had to be sounded out with the community via a representative and democratic mechanism in which not only men but women participated. The role in slum development played by the Hyderabad municipal team was that of 'facilitator', then a relatively novel role for project managers.

No activity proceeded without there first being a clear statement of neighbourhood need and commitment. Welfare and economic activities took the lead: preschools (*balwadis*), women's mutual aid, cooperatives for rickshaw drivers and *papad* makers, loans to informal sector workers such as washerwomen. *Busti* committees were formed and training provided. In time the project was expanded to cover all Hyderabad's 450 slums (500,000 inhabitants) and housing improvement was added. Those 'squatting' on government land were given deeds to their plots and low-interest loans from the banks. By 1984, around 13,000 new houses had been built, all but 10 per cent of the cost being provided by the householders[14]. This could never have happened unless a spirit of self-help and community endeavour had not first been created.

The Hyderabad project was one of those linchpin projects that help to fashion an entirely new approach to a major social problem. Within India, this strategy for slum improvement was rapidly taken up as a model, and over a brief period of years became a blueprint for nationwide urban renewal. Unicef played an important facilitating role in developing the Indian urban basic services strategy. Between 1981 and 1984, it was extended to 42 towns and

cities; then to 168 towns during the seventh Five-Year Plan period (1985-89); and finally, during the eighth Plan (1990-94), to 500 new towns and cities[15].

Over 15 years, Unicef's role in funding has been progressively reduced and taken over by central and state governments. The community-based methodology has been consistently refined, and new interventions—immunization services, for example—introduced[16]. What is now known as the Urban Basic Services for the Poor (UBSP) programme is a remarkable example of Unicef's involvement in a pioneering approach sensitive to the needs of women and children that is later adopted and absorbed into the public policy mainstream. Today, Unicef continues to provide support to UBSP, but in more of a 'back room' way: funds for training and monitoring cells at the state and national levels, and the preparation of information and educational materials.

The Hyderabad project not only had future ramifications within India; it provided a forceful illustration of the fact that slums and squatter settlements were not parasitic growths on the city fit only for condemnation, but a response, often a very adequate response, to their inhabitants' situation. Many slum residents were determined and upwardly mobile. Far from getting in the city's economic way, they were anxious to work hard in petty trading, manufacturing or service ventures—as drivers, domestic servants, fast-food vendors, stall-holders. That they met their own needs for jobs, housing and utilities against official hostility was an indication of resourcefulness, not a black mark against them. What was needed was to channel their energies and resources, to build on an existing community base, however fragile, and to remove obstacles—insecurity, lack of tenure, underemployment—standing in people's way.

Up until this time, typical programmes of slum improvement had mainly consisted of tearing down flimsy dwellings and resettling their inhabitants in 'low-cost' (actually quite expensive) high-density mass housing or 'sites and services' schemes for self-help house construction. No attempt was normally made to take into account the views of slum inhabitants. Like standard water and sanitation programmes, slum clearance and urban renewal were dominated by the physical planners and engineers. Their responsibility was to boards of public works rather than to any representative body of those whose habitat was being altered. The results were predictable. Not only did the installations they provided suffer from lack of maintenance and quickly become as dilapidated as their original setting, but in some places—the squatter compounds of Lusaka and slum communities in Madras, for instance—the inhabitants actually organized against them[17].

Unlike most municipal authorities, and donors such as the World Bank and bilateral agencies, Unicef did not see the 'software' of urban basic services as an

extra, and somewhat inferior, component compared to the glories of buildings, roads and drains. Community consultation and organization were the foundation on which multisectoral service delivery could be built. Physical improvements should be introduced only when the community was ready. This kind of reversal was very difficult to put across to local engineers and those used to centralized planning and pre-established schedules. To them, community involvement was simply a means of ensuring local people's cooperation in construction and maintenance, a source of cost recovery and free labour for installations pre-planned on their behalf. They did not see it as the precondition of a successful transformation of the squalid, cramped and unhealthy urban scene.

Unicef's commitment to 'planning from below' demanded that priorities be established by the community and that the 'facilitating partners'—from different sectors and administrative levels—respond on a flexible basis. Such ideas epitomized the ideological correctness of the late 1970s that elevated people to the centre of development. But their application in schemes rather larger than the NGO micro-project had still to be worked out. Unicef and its implementing partners—usually government and statutory bodies—were obliged for reasons of budgetary planning, forward purchasing and fiscal transparency to work out expenditures ahead. Unicef's urban programmers had to find ways of resolving the tension between this requirement and 'planning from below'. One innovation was the introduction of the 'block grants' concept—originally in the Kampung Improvement Programme in Indonesia[18]—whereby money was allocated ahead of time to 'block grants' and called upon when suitable proposals emerged from community organizations. Another move was to develop links with NGOs working in slum neighbourhoods which were more able or willing than the municipality to run services such as credit schemes and preschools.

These approaches were an extension of Unicef's commitment to flexible and decentralized programming—and they worked. One example was a scheme for Environmental Health and Community Development in what were known as 'the gardens'—slums—of Colombo, Sri Lanka[19]. The Ministry of Housing had become convinced that community motivation was an essential ingredient of any significant, and permanent, upgrading of 'garden' life, so the new scheme was heavily biased towards health education. 'Health wardens', motivated young men and women, were recruited from 'the gardens' and given a two-month training course. Once they had gained the confidence of their local communities, the wardens persuaded them to set up Community Development Councils. These Councils provided the bottom layer of a three-tier consultative and

management system: 'garden', district and city. Within three years, 291 Community Councils had been set up, and many hundreds of local men and women were responsible at the community level for the maintenance of taps and toilets and other preventive health activities. From these beginnings they could in time move on to other issues: women's income-generating activities and reducing the high level of school drop-out.

The fundamental goal of setting up this network of Councils was to wean the slum communities from an attitude of passivity. Their meetings were a forum to which any local resident could bring topics of common concern. The Councils also reinforced the activities of the health wardens, backing their immunization drives, nutrition demonstrations and 'little mothers' classes' for unmarried teenaged girls. Members were elected to sit on the District Development Councils and on the City Development Council. On many occasions, their feedback convinced city officials to change the course of a project to accommodate the views of the garden residents. Not only did the scheme manage to raise immunization coverage to 80 per cent in 23 council wards and bring about the mass legalization of unregistered marriages; it also helped promote participatory democratic institutions.

In 1982, a further report—'Urban Basic Services: Reaching Children and Women of the Urban Poor'—was submitted to the Executive Board[20]. This report contained a thorough and definitive statement of 'UBS' strategy, and was accompanied by case-studies of Unicef-assisted UBS programmes. In some countries, the Unicef strategy and its special emphases on flexibility and on multi-level coordination were actually beginning to have an impact on overall urban policy for low-income areas. Urban basic services had earned recognition in terms of cost, effectiveness and all-around social and economic benefit.

As the 1980s progressed, experimentation in urban basic services continued. The ingredients of programmes were similar, but the 'entry point' varied according to diversities of setting, as did priorities. In several Latin American schemes, the provision of day-care services or nutritious breakfasts for the children of working mothers predominated; a project in Baldia township, Karachi, selected soak-pit latrines as the starting-point, and later established home-based schools for girls[21]; in slums in Dhaka and other major towns of Bangladesh, a squalid and dirty environment was usually seen by slum inhabitants as their number-one problem, and initial action centred on path-laying, washing and laundry facilities, and handpump tube-wells[22]. In many schemes, the predicament of women without sufficient money and time to care for their children was high on the list.

The declaration of the 'child survival and development revolution' at the end of 1982 was a mixed blessing from the urban basic services perspective. In one sense, there was a great potential for the conjugation of forces: the existence of a basic services network in an urban area meant that an immunization campaign or any other preventive health intervention could be organized on a house-to-house basis relatively easily. The density of shanty-town populations, their accessibility and their proximity to electricity and water supplies eased logistical problems. Mass communications made it possible to put across information and 'messages'. The city of Addis Ababa was just one of many examples where an existing involvement in community development in slum *kebeles* (neighbourhoods) could be used as the launch pad for a full-scale metropolitan immunization effort[23]. Urban primary health care was integral to UBS; child survival interventions could ride on the back of urban basic services programmes, and this was the strategy that many Unicef country programmes adopted.

However, there was a fundamental difference in the underlying philosophies of the basic services and child survival approaches, a difference that had already emerged in the debate over 'selective' versus 'comprehensive' primary health care (see Chapter 2). This difference had to do with whether programmes should ultimately be led by universalist analysis and prescription, making few accommodations as to 'what' should be done—GOBI, in the case of the 'child survival revolution'—but adjusting the 'how' according to local circumstances; or whether both the 'what' and the 'how' of programmes should depend on a local situation analysis, preferably one that reflected both the subjective and objective reality of the target population. Both approaches recognized the need for services to be demand-led, but in the first case, demand would be created by social marketing techniques aimed at bringing about attitudinal change to support GOBI interventions; in the second, demand was primarily expressed by the community's articulation of its existing felt needs. In this scenario, meeting these needs provided an 'entry point' for a range of interventions mutually agreed upon between providers and recipients, in which child health and survival measures would tend, but could not be guaranteed, to rank high in the list.

At the zenith of ideological 'alternative' thinking, so discredited had doing things *for* people become that the pendulum had swung to an extreme antithesis: the only things, or the priority things, that should be done were those that the people themselves were able to articulate—in consumer parlance, those for which there was already demand. To many for whom 'basic services' and 'primary health care' had represented an important ideological shift, the CSD

approach, because it was prescriptive, appeared a regression to the old, discarded way of imposing solutions on people rather than doing things with them. They found it difficult to perceive that a push for preselected activities could be interpreted not as an opposite and outworn strategy, but as a useful corrective to the shortcomings of the new approach. In this interpretation, the overriding purpose of CSD was to put the benefits of modern science and technology at the service of the poor. Since these were by definition people who, because they knew nothing about the benefits of modern science, did not feel an existing 'demand' for its products, it was necessary to provide them with the information both to sense and to articulate one.

Without doubt, Unicef's UBS strategy as expressed in 1982 was very much in tune with the 'alternative' thinking to which GOBI and CSD were counterposed. Until the early 1980s, Unicef had supported a policy of identifying particular groups of children especially affected by poverty—in backward areas, in urban slums, among ethnic minorities—and focusing services on them. The 'child survival revolution' signalled a decline for this kind of selectivity, as well as for the 'let the community decide' approach to service delivery. But whatever the prominence given to GOBI interventions throughout the 1980s, most country programmes represented a mix of inspirations and strategies. Although in some countries UBS and 'area-based' services found themselves eclipsed, in others they were adapted to become vehicles for CSD without losing their integrity. Certain UBS programmes—those in India, the Philippines, Bangladesh, Ethiopia, Sri Lanka, Central America and Kenya, for example—flourished. UBS programmes helped to keep alive within Unicef the concepts of community participation and 'basic services' that were such an important inheritance of the 1970s[24].

The quality of these programmes and their effectiveness gained Unicef credibility with Ministries of Local Government and Municipal Authorities—partners with clout and resources. These relationships were to prove fruitful for child survival advocacy. In 1990, an initiative of the Italian Committee for Unicef with 300 mayors of Italian cities set in motion the idea of creating a worldwide movement of 'Mayors as Defenders of Children'[25]. At the global level, this initiative was launched jointly by Unicef and the Mayor of Dakar in Senegal in January 1992, at a ceremony that included 20 mayors and municipal leaders from 16 different countries. They pledged to take up the challenge of preparing municipal Plans of Action in line with the national programmes of action currently under development as an outcome of the World Summit for Children. A second colloquium of Mayors was held in July 1993 in Mexico City, and a third in

Paris in December 1994 at the invitation of Mayor Jacques Chirac, in collaboration with the French Committee for Unicef[26].

In the final decades of the 20th century, whatever the position of the urban child on Unicef's organizational agenda and however muted the enthusiasm at headquarters level for strong promotion of the urban basic services strategy, every day a higher proportion of the world's people were becoming city-dwellers. Urban children had to be included as a Unicef programming target, whether as part of a universalist strategy or as a specific group. And among urban children, one group was becoming daily more visible: those who had taken to working and living on the streets.

During the 1980s, the structural problems of poverty prevailing in most cities of the developing world were exacerbated by economic crisis and recession. Here was a new strain to add to the existing configuration of rapid population growth and rapid urbanization[27].

In an attempt to plug the economic dike, many countries adopted drastic measures as part of International Monetary Fund (IMF) rescue packages. Subsidies and price controls on food and other essentials were removed; employment in government and municipal establishments was reduced; public investment programmes and social expenditures were cut. The brunt of 'adjustment' was borne disproportionately by the urban poor. One result was a mushrooming growth in the number of people seeking work in the informal sector—as market porters, street vendors, stall-holders, street-walkers, car-washers, rickshaw drivers, scavengers, fast-food suppliers—and an increase in the number of people forced to seek work in servile and unprotected occupations. A conspicuous feature of this volatile, disorganized and statistically elusive workforce was that it contained a high proportion of women and youth. Some of its participants were no older than five or six, and many were in their early teens[28].

The growth of cities in the developing world and the increasing hardship experienced by many of their inhabitants were altering the terms of family life. In the traditional rural setting, children participated in the daily working round on the land or in the household as an integral part of their upbringing. As soon as she could walk, the small girl in rural Asia or Africa collected twigs for fuel or carried a tiny water jar. The young boy herded goats or assisted his father in the workshop. Few occupations in the modern city lent themselves to a parallel process of learning and working under family tutelage. But the need for all members of the family to contribute to the household economy was as

severe, if not more so, because cash was needed for all basic necessities: food, shelter, water, fuel. So as soon as the child accompanying her or his mother to the market stall in Lagos or Lima, Bombay or Brazzaville, could carry a tray, run errands or mind the stall, earning became part of daily routine.

Even if the youngster's working life began at a parent's side, it rarely stayed that way. In most cities a hierarchy of informal occupations developed, some of which were dominated by the young—usually by boys but occasionally by girls as well: flower girls, parking boys, vendors of newspapers or chewing-gum through car windows, scavenging on city garbage heaps, collecting fares on taxis, selling artefacts to tourists. Many such occupations exposed youngsters to hazardous influences, especially accidents[29]. As the children became caught up in the street world, their peers often began to exert more affective influence than parents. As the bonds of family life weakened, children might gravitate to a lifestyle centred on the street, the railway station, the promenade or the dazzling shopping complex. Some became separated from their families altogether, taking up an open-air or doorway abode, sleeping rough, living rough and sometimes descending into drugs, alcohol and crime.

During their own period of rapid urbanization in the 19th century, the cities of Europe and North America had similarly nurtured their populations of barrow-boys, waifs and strays, and their gangs of miniature hooligans. Until a relatively advanced stage of the urbanization and industrialization process in the developing world, the presence of children on the street and in the market-place was so familiar a feature of the urban landscape that it had barely attracted notice. But as their numbers rose, and as in some cities their presence began to feel not only ubiquitous but threatening, the late 20th century rediscovered these child victims of poverty-stricken urban sprawl as 'street children'. This label principally described the venue in which they were noticed and their dirty and unkempt appearance; it implied a mix of abandonment, vagrancy and youthful criminality.

The phenomenon was most evident in Latin America, where by the end of the 1970s two thirds of the population was urbanized. Some estimates—much of the early information about street children was speculative—put the number of children living wholly or partially without parental support in Latin America and the Caribbean in the many millions. Of these, between 5 and 10 per cent were children whose living, eating, working and sleeping place was the street, the rubbish dump, the car park and the deserted building[30]. Whatever the true dimensions of the problem, the numbers implied that the city was becoming increasingly antithetical to childhood and that the scale of family dislocation within the urbanization process demanded a public policy response. Most

efforts to respond to the urban child in distress were still limited to religious and charitable social welfare, or outdated systems of institutional incarceration that amounted to an even worse abuse of childhood than street life itself.

During the International Year of the Child in 1979, many problems relating to children—exploitation, abuse, child prostitution, children on the streets— that had previously been denied or ignored by city authorities projecting a travel poster image were given an international airing. One of those impercep- tible changes in the moral climate began to occur. The exposure of child maltreatment—which happened in industrialized as well as developing coun- tries—might cause national embarrassment and offend national pride, but even quite touchy governments were beginning to acknowledge that such practices were wrong and that steps should be taken to stop them. Reluctantly at first because it had feared antagonizing governmental partners, Unicef began to assist in the exposure of these child protection issues by providing fora— publications, meetings—in which they could be discussed[31]. Fuelled by Euro- pean NGOs, the debate moved rapidly forward and Unicef found itself under pressure to get programmatically involved. Street children were the obvious starting-point.

In 1981, Peter Taçon, a Canadian who had been working with street chil- dren in Latin America for several years, was appointed by Unicef to conduct a situation analysis on street children in the Americas region and recommend a course of action. Taçon was instrumental in gaining recognition for street children's perception of their own reality: that they were workers, not vaga- bonds, and not out of choice but of necessity; that their values were the values of survival, not of conscient criminals and thugs. Taçon did more than any other single person to speak out sympathetically for street children and put their cause on the international map. He was an advocate, and exemplar, of the thesis that such children needed, above all, support in their working and personal lives, not adult rejection and condemnation. Street children needed to stay with their families or be offered alternative family settings, not to be thrust into corrective institutions whose likely outcome was to harden their resistance to the rules of society, completing their marginalization and making their delinquency a foregone conclusion. Taçon left Unicef in 1986 to set up Childhope International, an organization dedicated to the street child's cause.

The problem was at its most prolific and its scariest in the cities of Brazil. In 1981, Peter Taçon accompanied Brazilian officials from the Ministry of Social Assistance and Welfare and FUNABEM, the national body responsible for abandoned children, on a visit to NGOs around the country working with street children in unconventional ways[32]. The result was a project funded by

CIDA and the Canadian Committee for Unicef, initially for two years: the 'Alternative Programme for Street Children'. This was the first Unicef-assisted, government-backed effort to offer technical support to NGOs working with street-based children and their families. The project team saw themselves as facilitators of community responses to a social problem, not as a new street children's organization. They held meetings and workshops for NGO personnel, offered training, brought isolated groups into communication with one another and enabled the members of a growing network to build a strong organizational base[33].

To counter the official inclination to view the street child problem from a delinquency perspective, the project managed to create a 'policy dissonance, instituting within the public sector a counterweight to its own existing policies and programmes in order to challenge and change them'[34]. It also helped build up an attitude of public ownership of the street child issue. By 1986, voluntary bodies made up of individuals and organizations acting on behalf of street children had been set up in many Brazilian cities to defend them from abuse, maltreatment, even murder. These bodies were able to mobilize resources for all kinds of activities—street education, soup kitchens, sports and recreation, preschools—as well as mount vigorous campaigns on behalf of children's rights.

An increasing number of Unicef country offices—in India, Kenya, Ecuador, Guatemala, the Philippines and elsewhere—were becoming exercised about urban children in distress. Although the 'child survival revolution' was just getting into its stride and the Unicef upper echelon was anxious that organizational energy and resources not be swept hither and yon, some contemporary issues concerning children could not be ignored. In the aftermath of the International Year of the Child, certain Unicef Executive Board members were not prepared to let issues it had brought into the open fade away, nor did the international political and economic climate give any cause for complacency. One of those who persistently championed the protection of children from the fallout of man's inhumanity to man in all contexts in which children's vulnerability laid them open to special deprivation was Nils Thedin, the leading delegate of Sweden and a senior statesman of Unicef.

In 1984, on the fifth anniversary of the IYC, an NGO forum was held alongside the Unicef Executive Board annual session, meeting in Rome[35]. This created pressure on behalf of street children and other categories 'in especially difficult circumstances'. The Board therefore asked that a special policy review be undertaken on programmes relating to children suffering from disadvantages typically associated with poverty, but extra to poverty itself. A two-year process of study and collective review began. After discussion, it was decided

that the catch-all phrase 'children in especially difficult circumstances' (CEDC) should cover street and working children, abused and neglected children and child victims of armed conflict[36]. Among these categories, street children were the most prominent as a new target of Unicef programming. This was not because they were necessarily the worst off, but because they were highly visible, there was growing public and philanthropic interest in their plight and they had become a symbol worldwide of the rediscovery of children outside the health and survival framework as an international *cause célèbre*.

Economic stress and the necessity of children working to help support their families were now increasingly seen as the dynamics behind the street child phenomenon. As a result, the Unicef policy review was prepared with the cooperation of the International Labour Office (ILO). This partner organization within the UN system had long been concerned with the abolition and regulation of child work, primarily via advocacy and international labour conventions. The policy review also provided an opportunity for multi-organizational discussions on child protection in different parts of the world. Increasingly, NGOs were being seen as the front-line organizations for CEDC, with Unicef helping to bring government and municipalities into a technically supportive role—the pattern pioneered in Brazil.

Unicef could also play a role alongside ILO at the international level in advocacy and research, helping to act as an instigator and facilitator of local child-centred NGO associations and occasionally to act as moderator between campaigning NGOs and the officialdom they challenged. Unicef's engagement in programming and advocacy on behalf of street children presaged a deepening of the relationship with the NGO community commenced under UBS—a relationship that was less paternal and ceremonial, more equitable and respectful of NGOs' comparative advantages than had often been the case in the past.

The 1986 report to the Board on 'Children in Especially Difficult Circumstances' took the line that child work per se was not the problem; that work was a natural part of growing up. It stated: 'It is largely through work, usually in a family context, that children become socialized and learn adult skills and responsibilities. But child work becomes *exploitative* if it threatens his physical, mental, emotional or social development.'[37] Research showed that most street children were neither abandoned nor runaway; they turned out to be living at home, even if 'home' was not the safe and protected haven that childhood deserved. A distinction was drawn between 'children *on* the street'—children working in the open-air economy and still integrated with their families; and 'children *of* the street'—the 5 to 10 per cent who had run away from home or been rejected. Families stressed by poverty to the point of sending a 12-year-old

son off to shine shoes or scavenge trash needed an approach different from children reduced to begging and petty theft as a means of independent survival.

In countries where programmes for urban basic services existed, the candidate families in the slums were the same families whose children had a tendency to drop out of school and ended up roaming shopping malls looking for ways to earn money. In such settings, urban basic services and efforts on behalf of street and working children naturally converged. This was the case in the Philippines, where a UBS programme had been taking shape in experimental form since 1983[38].

During the early 1980s, as economic recession bit deep into Filipino urban pockets, the phenomenon of children adopting public spaces as their regular haunts began to grow more conspicuous. To begin with, the civic authorities greeted the increasing presence of children on the streets with old-style punitive responses, flinging these young transgressors into jail. Gradually, the Department of Social Welfare began to realize that—as with the eviction of squatter populations from illegally occupied land—the forces propelling children onto the streets were not susceptible to the coercive removal of the victims. In 1984, senior child welfare officials visited Brazil at Unicef's invitation to see what happened when a programme was sensitive to the street child's world view and repudiated institutionalization in favour of family and community reintegration. This marked the beginning of an attitudinal and policy transformation.

In 1986, sweeping political change came to the Philippines with the election of President Corazon Aquino. The new administration pledged to do much more for the poor—and much more for children. With some behind-the-scenes prompting from Unicef, a 'Year for the Protection of Filipino Exploited Children' was declared for 1986-87. The Council for the Welfare of Children was revitalized and given the task of reforming Philippine policies towards street and working children. In a society with a deeply ingrained view of poverty as antisocial and reprobate, such changes could not take place overnight. Police who overzestfully rounded up 'truants' needed re-education; antiquated laws that imprisoned children alongside adult offenders needed replacement; and city halls had to be persuaded that policies towards the urban child in distress would be more effective if they were more humane.

Just as the cause of street children gained ground in the new political environment, so did urban basic services. A Presidential Commission on the Urban Poor was set up to coordinate programmes for slum improvement. Between 1988 and 1992, the Unicef-assisted urban basic services programme targeted over 1 million children under six years old, over 200 mothers and

35,000 street children in the poorest *barangays* (neighbourhoods) in 10 cities. As well as each city hall, the Presidential Commission for the Urban Poor and hundreds of NGOs and urban poor associations were involved[39].

The participatory process at the heart of UBS in the Philippines was centred—as in the case of all successful Unicef-backed initiatives—on the fabric of people's lives. Instead of officialdom making an assessment of what the community needed and then delivering improved roads, drains and buildings, the community itself was responsible for assessing needs and drawing up appropriate plans. The hallmark of the process in a neighbourhood or sub-neighbourhood (*barangay* or *purok*) was evidence of community self-monitoring: the presence in a prominent place of a large board on which were displayed the demographic and social indicators of the locality. These included the number of families and children, immunization coverage, the number of mothers receiving livelihood loans and the number of children enrolled in the scholarship programme that kept them away from the lure of the streets. Community assessment, service delivery and monitoring were matters fully in the public domain.

Based on its initial survey and analysis, the Barangay Development Committee drew up an improvement plan. Once completed, the plan was forwarded to the city authorities, and after the necessary consultations with health, education and other departments, it entered the overall city plan for urban basic services. When the necessary resources had been allocated from various budgets and from Unicef, the plan could go into implementation. With guidance and material inputs from the appropriate departments, the Barangay Development Committee and its subcommittees for health, sanitation and so on carried it out. Technical guidance—training, advising, capacity-building—was often provided by an NGO.

In Olongapo, a city notorious for a 'hospitality industry' set up to cater to the off-duty needs of American servicemen at Subic Bay, twin programmes for UBS and street children emerged in the late 1980s. Among the *barangay* subcommittees set up in the communities was one to deal with street children. Within UBS, families with street children were among those identified for special loans and scholarships. At the same time, street educators from a project known as 'Reach-up' worked directly with the 400 or so children who had lost contact with their families. They provided basic education and a cheap daily meal, and helped child workers form occupational associations: plastic bag vendors, pushcart boys, scavengers and bus-washers 'unions'. The entry point for preventive and protective work directed at children under stress was both the street and the family; the combination meant that the epidemic of children lured into street life could be checked.

For many NGOs around the world working with street children, the imme-
diate concern was loss of education. The Undugu Society of Kenya, one of the
earliest organizations to work with Africa's street children, in this case with
Nairobi's parking boys, regarded children on the street primarily as out-of-
schoolers and set up community schools at which they could make good their
loss of educational opportunity[40]. The Underprivileged Children's Educational
Project (UCEP) in Bangladesh similarly focused on basic education, leading on
to vocational training in carpentry, electronics, tailoring and secretarial skills[41].

Shelter was a concern of many NGOs. A great number of small, local
philanthropic organizations all over Asia and Latin America ran drop-in cen-
tres for street children where they could wash, cook themselves a meal, play
board games and attend literacy classes if they wished. Another priority was
health: Project Alternatives (*Projecto Alternativos*) in Tegucigalpa, Honduras,
took as its entry point 'street PHC', alongside basic education, psychosocial
counselling, and community kitchens. Many NGOs also worked with the
families of street children, trying to support parent-child relationships and
help cash-starved mothers create a better domestic base. In the Philippines,
Brazil, Kenya and India, national and city fora of street children's organizations
began to work with police training institutions to reduce police violence
against street children. In Syria, the police themselves initiated programmes of
street child activity[42].

An increasing number of Unicef offices began to develop working rela-
tionships with the growing number of NGOs—both new ones brought
into existence by the problem and old ones newly taking it up—providing
services for children on the streets. In most cases, the approach adopted
was similar: elastic, unstructured, aimed at building networks and capacity
among NGOs, welding their existing efforts into the equivalent of a rather
anarchic programme, guiding technically and topping-up financially but
not superimposing an unwanted managerial direction. Sometimes this
worked well as an enabling and motivating process; sometimes it did not.
Bringing diverse NGOs together—Moslems with Christians, soft-spoken
nuns with activist firebrands, highly professional executives with untrained
amateurs—to develop a joint action plan was difficult enough, let alone
persuading them to work with officialdom and vice versa. Sometimes dif-
ferences were irreconcilable and the role of the coordinating body—arbi-
ter? manager? clearing-house?—never crystallized.

In India, Unicef felt its way slowly into a strategy, fostering the establish-
ment of NGO fora on street children in the large cities. These were open and
democratic grass-roots networks of organizations involved with street children.

In Calcutta, it took until 1992 to make the city NGO Forum on Street Children fully operational[43]. At a workshop convened by Unicef, 45 assorted NGOs pooled information about their activities and capacities. Out of this a citywide picture of what was being done for street children emerged, as well as a plan of how different groups could supplement each other's services. The NGOs were gradually able to expand their total reach among the many thousands of street children in Calcutta geographically, demographically and by type of intervention, at very little extra cost. Unicef's role in all of this was to underpin, facilitate, pay some joint costs, mediate and make sure that city hall and its departments duly shared responsibility.

By the early 1990s, Unicef had developed methodologies for researching the situation of children in the streets (leading to studies in Dhaka, Mexico City, Quito, Bombay, Madras and elsewhere) and had accumulated a large body of programmatic knowledge. What had evolved was a loose-leaf approach, not a tight policy with systematic guidelines. NGOs small and large, some of which had previously kept aloof from government and Unicef, had discovered the usefulness of enrolling an intergovernmental organization in their cause[44]. On its side, Unicef had entered into a new kind of partnership with the NGO community, initially via UBS but more thoroughly and pervasively through the street child issue.

Although at headquarters level Unicef was still reserving its most powerful guns for child survival and was therefore a rather muted champion of children in especially difficult circumstances, this was an issue whose star had risen independently, developing an international momentum of its own. Urban poverty was one part of the picture. The other was the fact that CEDC were, above all, children in need of protection. Their cause was therefore right at the heart of the effort to articulate, and carry onto the international statute book, the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

During the period in which Unicef began to recognize that the pervasiveness of children working on city streets required coherent policy and programmatic action, the child-related NGO community was becoming increasingly vocal. The IYC had prompted research into the plight of many disadvantaged groups, and these predicaments the NGOs now sought to bring further into the international and media spotlight. The two most prominent categories of children attracting their attention were street children, whose multiple predicaments ran the gamut of child protection problems: abandonment, homelessness, exploitation, hazardous work, risk of sexual enticement, drugs, vagrancy, crime,

trouble with the law; and child victims of warfare and other types of emer-
gency[45]. The language of child-related protest was changing in tone. To the
traditional emotionalism of appeals on behalf of children was being added the
vocabulary of social justice and human rights.

Not surprisingly, therefore, the NGO community saw an international
convention on children's rights as a key instrument and campaigning basis for
the protection of childhood from the stresses of the contemporary world.
During the 1980s, the NGOs maintained strong pressure on the post-IYC
intergovernmental drafting group set up under UN auspices to develop a text
for such a convention[46]. As more governments—notably the Swedish and
Canadian—began to give their backing, by the mid-1980s the realization of a
convention appeared a distinct possibility.

Through Defence for Children International, the NGOs' umbrella body on
child rights, human rights organizations and specialists in international law
became involved. The NGOs also asked Unicef to take a more active part in
the process: it had, after all, been designated by the General Assembly as lead
agency in the UN system for IYC follow-up. Nevertheless, Unicef's position
throughout the first half of the 1980s remained that of passive observer. It
helped the NGOs by convening meetings and offering facilities in Geneva,
which allowed them to hammer out their positions. But the idea of a conven-
tion was not one to which Unicef was itself—initially at least—institutionally
seriously committed[47].

Under Jim Grant's leadership, Unicef had become much more involved
in—and professional at—advocacy, especially in support of the 'child survival
revolution'. However, this was not the same kind of campaigning advocacy in
which many activist NGOs engaged. To Unicef, delivery of concrete benefits
to children was the most important task; the advocacy it engaged in was
normally an attempt to leverage certain principles and practice—those exem-
plified in its own programme—into broader public policy. Advocacy to Unicef
was not a matter of exposure, critique and campaigns for political or legislative
reform.

The campaigning NGOs operated in a very different culture. In the case of
many rights issues—sexual exploitation, abuse and neglect, servitude, eco-
nomic exploitation—their standard response was to undertake advocacy on
behalf of civil liberties, or on versions of civil liberties not yet universally
absorbed into cultural and legal systems. Unicef was inhibited by its intergov-
ernmental character from engaging, or wishing to engage, in this kind of
confrontational campaign. Its emphasis was on programming, and in the case
of CEDC, its programming approach was still embryonic. It had yet to view

an incipient convention on children's rights as an instrument that could support existing programmatic activity or open up new programme opportunities.

What perhaps was not understood in Unicef's New York headquarters was the degree to which, within the European perspective, the language of human rights had already begun to be co-opted into the development discourse. Campaigns on what in the US were traditionally seen as two quite separate sets of issues—the one political, the other social and economic—had on the other side of the Atlantic begun to converge. A structural analysis of poverty in the South had, by the early 1980s, come to dominate development thinking in intellectual circles and leading NGOs, not only in Europe but in Latin America and elsewhere[48]. This suggested that without the kind of democratic changes that would unsettle the domination of power in much of the South by élites— class élites, racial or ethnic élites, élites fashioned economically by the workings of the Western capitalist system, or politically by the machinations of both Eastern and Western blocs—the development process would continue to discriminate against the poor. This was the era of heightened international opposition to South African apartheid and US intervention in Central America, and the establishment of safeguards for human rights was seen in such settings as a *sine qua non* of equitable human development. But these settings were only the most conspicuous instances of the natural convergence of the rights and development agendas; the principle was general.

If the development debate was moving on, so was the debate about childhood. The terms of family life and upbringing were undergoing seismic change, especially, but not exclusively, in the developing world[49]. One of the fundamental influences was the 20th-century decline in infant mortality, made possible by rising prosperity and the spread of life-saving medical and public health technologies. This decline had already made the brunt of its impact felt in the industrialized world. In the poorer parts of the world, as Unicef's call for a 'child survival revolution' had underlined, this transition with all its potential impacts on family structure and reproductive behaviour was far from complete. Increased child survival led to a preference for small families; this in turn led to a much larger parental investment in each individual child.

At the same time had come a corresponding demand from parents that the State should fulfil its share of the raising of the new generation by investing in maternal and infant care, education, child care, family planning and family support. In the past 50 to 100 years, childhood had undergone an expansion in every direction. It had lengthened in years and become more protected; it had become in the eyes of society a vitally important passage in which investment could not be skimped; children's upbringing had become a major target of

social policy, scientific inquiry and popular debate. A revolution had occurred in which the child had become the quality product of the industrialized and industrializing society[50].

At the same time, many pressures on family life were ambiguous at best in terms of their outcome for children—especially since children had now become the repository of high levels of parental hope and expectation. The growth of commercialism and material expectations that accompanied rapid urbanization and the drive for educational qualifications exacerbated individualism and pressures on the family purse. Evolution in labour and employment markets was everywhere making the future for young people potentially more exciting, but also much more uncertain and insecure. Women's demand for equality with men was helping to reduce male oppression within the family and society; but there were repercussions on the stability of homes and married life. The number of women raising children on their own was rising all over the world, as were divorce rates; there were increases in reported domestic violence, drug use, alcoholism and juvenile crime. There was also an effect on family structure of the new preoccupation with the individual's rights over his or her sexuality: precocious sex, postponement of marriage, and more frequent, or more frequent exposure of, child sexual abuse. Since the advent of the middle-class industrial society in the late 19th century, childhood had been mythologized as an idyll of pre-adult bliss, governed by the postponement of maturity in a cocoon of discipline, innocence and love. Now childhood was in turmoil. It was increasingly apparent that a large number of children, even in well-heeled societies with their growing 'underclass', experienced childhood as a time of deprivation, psychosocial distress and broken promise.

The pursuit of rights as a rallying cry helped redefine the children's cause. It provided a framework in which to view childhood universally, across cultures and societies, across the North-South, rich-poor divides. It stripped away the welfarist connotations that had clung to the children debate in spite of the efforts of Unicef and some others to centralize it in a world poverty and development perspective. In most intellectual settings, such an idea had never been truly persuasive. In spite of the common use of the suffering African or Asian child in charitable appeals, children were mostly seen by development analysts and campaigners for solidarity with the South as too sentimental an object for serious attention. The rights dimension gave a much sharper edge to the children's cause and the inherent value system associated with championing the child. The chord it struck brought on board a new and wider constituency.

The pressure from the European NGOs and some of the National Committees for Unicef to be more active on behalf of child rights and the incipient

Convention was communicated strongly to the 1984 Executive Board meeting by the parallel NGO Forum[51]. This thrust to widen the Unicef agenda was not altogether welcomed by the Unicef secretariat at a relatively early stage in the promulgation of GOBI and the 'child survival and development revolution', which was after all a purposeful attempt to narrow the focus in a very different direction. Grant was personally sceptical at this stage of events that governments—especially the US Government—would really, when faced with it, be willing to back an international instrument that entitled children—by definition minors who do not vote—to claim rights, independently of parents and adults[52]. However, the mood of the Board itself was more positive. It was this same Board meeting that set in motion the study into 'children in especially difficult circumstances'.

The turning point in Unicef's willingness to throw its weight behind the Convention came during 1985-86. The handful of those in Unicef who passionately believed that the passage of a Convention deserved Unicef's wholehearted support finally convinced Jim Grant that the time had come to get more actively involved. An important ally was Philip Alston, a lawyer who had been on the staff of the UN Centre for Human Rights and made a specialization of the application of international human rights legislation to children; he now became an influential Unicef adviser. Grant sent his Deputy Executive Director for External Relations, Tarzie Vittachi, to the 1986 drafting group session to indicate a different level of Unicef intent. And the debate on the CEDC review at the 1986 Executive Board meeting gave an important boost to organizational involvement: the Board Chairman, Anwarul Chowdhury of Bangladesh, an advocate of the Convention, managed to obtain the passage of a resolution committing Unicef to greater involvement in the drafting process[53].

The critical point of persuasion as far as Grant was concerned was that a Convention could be used to underpin the 'child survival and development revolution'. He had perceived the Convention as heavily emphasizing the protection of exploited and abused children, and believed that many governments would be antagonized by an international legal instrument that confronted them with their failures. Once he was persuaded that rights on behalf of child survival and development could be included, he became attracted by the idea that signatory countries could be obliged to shoulder mandatory obligations to undertake immunization campaigns and other child survival actions. However, for this potential to be realized, the draft Convention needed considerable amendment.

Up until 1987 the draft contained no mention of 'the child's right to survival', and less than adequate mention of rights to health care, food and

nutrition, education and minimum standards of social provision. If these rights could be fully articulated, the Convention would become an enduring mechanism for gathering political will behind GOBI, CSD and subsequent child-related human development campaigns. During 1987, suitable amendments were introduced into the draft text, and a target date of 1989—the 30th anniversary of the Declaration of the Rights of the Child and the 10th anniversary of the IYC—was set for the Convention's passage[54].

Over the next two years, Unicef threw the formidable powers of advocacy it had originally developed to promote the 'child survival revolution' behind the movement to pass the Convention into law. Grant pushed the Convention at ECOSOC, at other intergovernmental fora, within the UN system, and by personal initiative among Ambassadors at the UN of the more reluctant member states. He also began to bring it into his speeches at meetings of all kinds and on every continent, enlisting the support of First Ladies, professional associations, parliamentarians, NGOs, the press and television media. It was at this time that the Unicef *State of the World's Children* reports began to talk of a 'new ethos for children, a new worldwide awareness and concern, a powerful "sea-change" in what world opinion considers to be morally acceptable and what it does not'[55]. Both the gains of the 'child survival revolution' and the forthcoming Convention were attributed to the 'onward march of ethics with awareness, morality with capacity'. This was a theme that Grant was to develop in the period leading up to the Children's Summit and far beyond.

Within Unicef, a Convention Task Force developed contacts with government delegations, set up an information service for country offices and National Committees, and generally saw that the Convention was internally perceived as having a high priority for advocacy. Unicef Goodwill Ambassadors were encouraged to mention the Convention in their Unicef public appearances. A combined Unicef/DCI Information Kit was produced and widely distributed. Some National Committees were important movers and shakers for the Convention from a relatively early stage. One of these was the Italian Committee led by the energetic Aldo Farina. With the NGO Committee for Unicef, the Italian Committee hosted a meeting in Lignano in September 1987 that attracted the participation of 120 representatives of NGOs and National Committees. This meeting helped to recruit to the cause a wide NGO constituency and bring on board some of the Unicef National Committees that were still hesitant about engaging in such a potentially controversial area as children's rights[56].

One of the most important tasks perceived by Unicef was to mobilize support for the Convention in the developing world. Unicef representatives all

over Africa, Asia and Latin America made approaches at senior levels in government and simultaneously developed programmes of events to sensitize the general public. As a result of these approaches, a number of new national bodies were created to examine the text of the Convention from a technical, legal and cultural perspective, and conferences, workshops and symposia were held. Examples included a meeting on Children in Armed Conflict in Kenya in July 1987 under the auspices of the African Network on Prevention and Protection against Child Abuse and Neglect (ANPPCAN), followed by another on Child Rights the following year; 1988 saw the formation of an intersectoral group on the Convention in Mozambique and of an Asian Task Force on the Convention in Bangkok. In Buenos Aires, NGOs from all over Latin America met to review the proposed Convention and drafted a Latin American Charter on the Rights of the Child. In Egypt, a National Council for Childhood and Motherhood was set up with First Lady Suzanne Mubarak at its head, and a national conference on the Convention was held in Alexandria in November 1988. All of these activities brought in new partners on behalf of children, especially lawyers and academics for whom the championship of childhood was a novel concern.

They also helped build support within government, which was translated into diplomatic backing for resolutions at international meetings. Special fora on children's rights were held among established regional groups of countries such as the OAU (Organization of African Unity), ASEAN (Association of South-East Asian Nations) and SAARC (South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation); the Summit meetings of SAARC were the first to endorse the Convention at such a prestigious level. In all this activity, close cooperation was maintained with the Centre on Human Rights, whose administrative role vis-à-vis the Convention had to be duly respected. This was not a Unicef product, even if Unicef inevitably became the UN agency most visibly associated, given its mandate for children and its worldwide capacity for advocacy and social mobilization.

In 1988, the Working Group met for two extended sessions to complete the review of the text and the drafting process. Prior to these meetings, Unicef organized informal consultations that allowed NGOs and others not members of governmental delegations to make an input in the run-up to a finished text. The Article that caused the most friction during these final stages concerned the involvement of children in armed conflict, in particular the age of recruitment into the armed forces. In spite of some delegations' reservations about settling for weaker protections than those already enunciated in other international instruments simply in order to achieve consensus, the final text was

adopted unanimously in the Working Group and therefore went forward to its formal procedural fate—through ECOSOC, the Third Committee (on social and humanitarian affairs) and to its final staging post in the UN General Assembly—without need for further debate. There is no question that it is a major triumph, one often overlooked, to achieve consensus among upwards of 160 nations on a text, particularly one due to pass into international law. The transcendence of children as an issue—their big political card—helped to work its magic.

During the months before the 1989 General Assembly, Unicef offices accelerated their promotion of the now definitive text and tried to pave the way for the adoption of the Convention in the General Assembly, and the subsequent ratification process. At Unicef headquarters, a rearguard diplomatic initiative was conducted to head off any threat by one or other government to reopen debate on the text, which—fortunately—did not materialize. After safe passage through the Third Committee, the Convention was adopted in the UN General Assembly on 20 November 1989, 30 years to the day on the anniversary of the adoption of the Declaration of the Rights of the Child. A huge party, attended by 300 children as well as UN delegates and officials and Convention-supporting NGOs, celebrated the victory.

On 26 January 1990, the Convention was opened for signature and 61 countries signed. This was the highest number ever to indicate an intent to ratify a human rights instrument at the very first opportunity. In February, Ghana became the first country to ratify the Convention. Over the next few months, as part of the lead-up to the World Summit for Children in September, a sufficient number of states ratified—20—to enable the Convention to come into effect as an internationally binding treaty.

What in fact had the nations of the world accepted on behalf of children? They had agreed upon a set of universal norms and standards to be upheld vis-à-vis the upbringing and care of children, by parents and guardians, by teachers and caregivers, by their substitutes where normal family and community mechanisms had broken down, in appropriate consultation with children themselves; these norms were to be sanctioned and pursued by ratifying states via national legislation and its implementation, and their performance in so doing was to be monitored by a panel of international experts constituting a Committee on the Rights of the Child.

Apart from general articles supporting non-discrimination and the 'best interests of the child' as overriding principles, the rights set out by the Convention fell essentially under four headings: survival, development, protection and participation. Survival rights included the rights to life and life-protective

interventions (unspecified, but understood to mean GOBI-type interventions) and to assistance from the State in times of emergency. Development rights included those to nurture, love, food, health care and education; and the duty of the State to support parents' responsibilities in these contexts by social service provision. Protection articles established the child's rights not to be abused, neglected or exploited economically, sexually or in other ways. Participatory articles conferred on the child the right to be consulted in matters that affected his or her well-being, for example, in custody cases, and to have a voice in the wider society. Not only did the Convention place new obligations on adults vis-à-vis children, especially on the State; it took children a significant step away from the traditional view that the young not only are the dependants of parents (or adult substitutes) but are subject to their absolute control until they reach the age of majority.

In one or two countries around the world, the voice of child claimants to these rights had already made itself resoundingly heard.

Within Unicef, the rise of concern with children's rights was closely associated with the rise of concern surrounding street children. Although the protection of children in war- and emergency-related situations also fell within the scope of a rights rather than welfarist framework, these were situations in which Unicef had always been programmatically involved. To those who had difficulty understanding what the advent of rights meant for their work and the children's cause more generally, the need to develop programmes for children on and of the streets was the easy path to comprehension of the changes expected. As a result, for many years the misperception lingered in some parts of Unicef that issues of children's rights were exclusively to do with street children, who themselves were synonymous with CEDC. Although this confusion was irritating to those articulating a much more significant change in the concept of childhood and in adult-child relationships, the fact that it was so pervasive led in part from its substance.

Children who lived on the streets often suffered abuse at the hands of the police and in government institutions; many were unjustly deprived of their liberty and endured blatant violations of human rights. On their own side, they might yearn for love and affection, desire skills and education and deeply regret the childhood and protections they had lost; but few were willing or able to return to structured dependence on adult control after months or years of independent and unstructured living. The freedoms and protections in connection with children forced into a premature assumption of adult responsi-

bilities and pitted against an unfriendly adult world have adult connotations inapplicable to the child growing up in the traditional household or 'modern', middle-class home. Not surprisingly, therefore, the issue of children's rights surfaced most prominently around confrontations between children on the streets and repressive—or protective, from which it is sometimes indistinguishable—adult authority.

Perhaps the first stirrings of this confrontation should be dated from the 1976 youth rebellion in Soweto, South Africa, but this uprising of school-goers against the injustice of an apartheid curriculum was too early to be analysed in terms of children's rights. So the story starts instead in Brazil a few years later[57]. During the early 1980s, the Brazilian military regime was preparing to make way for civilian rule after around 20 years in power. The epidemic of children on the streets was coincidentally reaching crisis proportions, and as a result the expression of demands for children's rights became integrally associated with the stirrings of legalized democracy. Apart from the numbers of children involved (not as many as the 30 million often then quoted but still a very large number) and extreme actions taken against some of them, including targeted murder, this connection occurred because of the organizational networking of those trying to support them. The process had been started by the 'Alternative Programme for Street Children' in which Unicef had been instrumental[58].

The street child in his or her twin guise of social menace and victim was a symptom of the ingrained poverty not only tolerated but structurally reinforced by the old patriarchal and militaristic order. To many Brazilians, this child appeared a potent symbol of a society in need of radical change. Boys and girls who had not passed school age, in many cases had not passed puberty, had been let down by their families and society and were now undergoing brutalization and criminalization on the streets. At a time of feverish political activity, the acutely deprived and socially damaged child became a burning issue, and one around which disparate groups rediscovering the joys and travails of democratic participation managed to coalesce.

In 1985, voluntary state bodies on behalf of street children elected the first National Commission of what was to become a National Movement for Street Boys and Girls. The following year, representatives from street and working children's groups assembled in Brasília for the First National Street Children's Congress. The event, which gave its participants a chance to voice their concerns, particularly the increase in violence against them, resulted in a blaze of publicity. For the first time, street children were projected in something other than a negative light—as potential contributors to society. The meeting also positioned the National Street Children's Movement and its progenitors within

the ranks of popular forces claiming a democratic role in the redrafting of the Constitution, a process currently being advanced by a special Constituent Assembly. From the perspective of Unicef, the drafting of the new Constitution provided an ideal opportunity to secure democratic involvement in establishing a framework for children's rights; this would underpin the continuing need for major improvements in public policy towards children.

Unicef was making every effort at the time to use the democratization process in Brazil to open up a children's dimension within political debate[59]. This was vintage Jim Grant strategy: when a country is in a process of rapid transition in whatever direction—right to left, left to right, military to civilian regime or vice versa—new or aspirant political leaders are casting around for popular causes with which to identify themselves. A swift move and a persuasive presentation may enable children to advance rapidly up the domestic policy agenda. In Brazil, this strategy was enormously successful. Unicef's reputation in the country has been greatly enhanced by its championship of the child as the ultimate target of social policy, an idea which ever since the mid-1980s has struck a responsive public chord. Its political mileage owes much to the way in which the children's cause is seen as untainted and incorrupt; in Brazil, children have been powerful politically simply because they are above the political divide and disassociated from the type of adversarial politics synonymous with intrigue, scandal and sleaze.

In September 1986, a National Committee on the Child and the Constitution was created by interministerial decree[60]. Its purpose was to invite submissions on how problems facing children could best be tackled in the new constitution. Apart from six ministries, including those of Education and Health, a number of important non-governmental bodies were represented, including the National Front for the Defence of Children's Rights, the Paediatrics Association and the National Street Children's Movement. The Committee campaigned intensively to gather a wide spectrum of opinion and to make their concerns politically important to members of the Constituent Assembly. Unicef worked with the Committee in a number of ways, providing a secretariat and technical assistance, recruiting advertising and publicity support worth $1.8 million and helping widen the net of groups and organizations involved. National meetings took place, as well as public debates, mass gatherings of children in front of the National Congress and in major cities, public hearings, the distribution of pamphlets, and meetings with individual members of the Constituent Assembly.

Discussions held in schools all over Brazil and meetings with local and state chapters of national NGOs and the voluntary 'commissions' produced the

substance of two constitutional amendments. These were presented to the Constituent Assembly accompanied by a petition signed by 1.4 million Brazilian children and adolescents, which had itself been endorsed by a petition signed by some 200,000 registered voters. These texts became the constitutional chapter on children's rights. A full year before the Convention on the Rights of the Child was passed by the UN, the principles it would establish formed the basis of Article 227 in the new Brazilian Constitution. Inspired by this success, the movement for children's rights launched another even more far-reaching effort: the drafting of new legislation that would replace the existing Minor's Code with something consistent with the new Constitution, abolishing the old corrective and anti-childhood national child 'welfare' policy. After a year of intensive lobbying and debate, during which considerable opposition was mounted and a number of revisions were introduced, the National Congress adopted the Act and it was signed into law by President Fernando Collor on Children's Day, 12 October 1990.

During this whole experience of collusion between the democratization process and the child rights movement, Unicef's office in Brazil was charting an entirely new—quite sensitive and complex—role for the organization. In a real sense, Unicef Brazil was obliged to pre-empt the evolution of organizational policy to suit the era of rights-dominated development thinking, the era of the post–cold war. This was a country in which Unicef programmatic resources had always been minuscule in proportion to the scale of governmental services and inputs, and it was a country, therefore, in which Unicef had already had to carve a pioneering role vis-à-vis policy advocacy and development. Now it had pioneered another sort of engagement: advocacy for, and engagement in, the development of reforming legislation on behalf of the child. The legal and institutional context within which policies and programmes for children operated was no longer to be seen as beyond Unicef's scope. It had to be included in the analysis of children's and women's situation, and it had to be addressed even if this meant steering a course that brushed up against the political process and invited intrusion on the actions of politicians and even of political parties.

Through building partnerships with government and NGOs and across the whole range of civil society, Unicef in Brazil had begun to indicate a new programmatic framework and set a new advocacy trend. Where Unicef Brazil had led, other Unicef country programmes were—in time—bound to follow.

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