

Chapter 8

Learning for All

During its early existence, Unicef took the view that children's needs could be divided up and compartmentalized. The founding resolution defined the Unicef mission beyond emergency relief as to do with physical well-being: 'for child health purposes generally'. As the years went by, this was treated very much as a *tabula rasa* on which the Executive Board might write what it chose, and the definition proved reasonably elastic. But it was not stretched to cover activities that contributed to the child's knowledge, understanding, moral or spiritual health, or social behaviour.

Although the school was the social institution outside the family with the most influence on the formation of the child, assistance with education—whether in the form of items such as blackboard, textbook or desk, or of teacher's training—was off limits. The only knowledge that Unicef was willing to help impart—either to adult or to child—was that concerning child health and nutrition. And the only learning 'institutions' that Unicef was willing to assist were the informal gatherings where mothers met or where young children were deposited in a minder's care.

A change in this position was first mooted in the late 1950s by certain delegates from the developing world to the Executive Board¹. But it was resisted by those who regarded Unicef as having a deliberately narrow humanitarian focus that must be defended from the proposition that children's needs were indistinguishable from those of the wider society. These objections gradually dissolved in the currents of contemporary opinion. One influence was the mounting evidence that education was a key to economic advance: in the era of development, many countries were not able to absorb technology and financial

investment because they did not have enough administrators or trained manpower. Education would solve this by building up the 'human capital'. The idea that people were a natural asset, like a rich lode of ore waiting to be mined, was central to development thinking at this time. 'Children are a country's most precious resource' was the version of the idiom to infiltrate Unicef's ideology. Logically, to champion the interests of the child required investing in the intellectual, psychological and social as well as the physical needs of this 'resource'.

Other interconnected influences were at work. Many African countries came to independence at the beginning of the 1960s, and their hunger for education echoed the pressures from others for a wider range of options concerning the type and content of cooperation available from the Unicef shelf². A desire to respond to the recipient voice and react to changing times led to Unicef's landmark Survey on the Needs of Children. This was conducted worldwide between 1960 and 1961, and received major inputs from WHO (on children's health needs), FAO (on their nutritional needs), UNESCO (on their educational needs), ILO (on their training needs) and the UN Bureau of Social Affairs (on their social welfare needs).

The report on the survey, reviewed by the Executive Board in 1961, revolutionized Unicef's outlook on how to help the world's children, presenting the case for addressing the needs of the 'whole child' within the context of national development plans³. During the discussion by the Board, many delegates stated that education was as vital an aspect of children's needs as were health and food, and that this field of potential assistance should not be overlooked.⁴ From this point onward, it would not be. The compartmentalization of children's needs was over; the 'whole child', within the context of both the family and the community, set the new parameters within which Unicef assistance would be provided. 'Elementary education', 'agricultural education' and 'vocational training' were now eligible for Unicef aid.

In many of the countries arriving at independence, the educational inheritance from colonial times was meagre, to say the least. In some African countries, only a tiny élite had finished secondary school, let alone university. At primary level the picture was often of more children out of school than in. In Africa, no more than 37 per cent of primary-age children were enrolled in school; in Asia, the figure was 50 per cent; in Latin America, 60 per cent. Of these, only in Latin America did girls constitute nearly half; in Africa and Asia, only a third of schoolchildren were female⁵.

These figures disguised the disappearance of many children from the classroom—one third of boys, one half of girls—long before the primary school

cycle was complete⁶. Nor did they indicate the quality of the education provided, some of whose inadequacies were legendary: geography syllabuses that required children to know the names of towns and rivers in Europe but nothing of their own continent; history that taught about the campaigns of Gauls, Romans and conquistadors but nothing of the ancient Inca or Maasai. Modern educationalists also complained about the rote learning, the autocratic teacher-pupil style and the lack of attention to analytical and problem-solving skills. Worst of all was the acute lack of teacher training, the disastrous conditions of buildings and equipment, and the shortages of textbooks on every subject.

During the early 1960s, UNESCO convened a series of regional conferences so that African, Asian, Latin American and Arab countries could set their own timetables and priorities for the growth of education over the next two decades⁷. In all regions, ambitious targets were set for expansions across the board, but at primary level the goal was the ultimate: universal primary education—UPE—by 1980 (in the case of Latin America, by 1970). As close as possible to 100 per cent of children in the primary-age cohort should have classrooms and chairs, and be sitting in them facing a trained and well-equipped teacher, in less than two decades. This was a very tall order; quite how tall, given the demographers' continued innocence about the suddenly accelerating rates of child survival, and therefore of the increasing numbers in the age group coming up to educational entry, was not then realized.

The next decade or so saw a historically unprecedented rate of classroom growth in all the developing regions. At primary level, enrolments doubled in Asia and Latin America over the two decades to 1980, and in Africa they tripled⁸. Although Unicef's contribution was bound to be modest, its decision in the early 1960s to support 'elementary education' in response to rising demand was timely. Between 1960 and 1970-71, Unicef aid to education rose by three and a half times (from \$3.4 million to \$14.1 million) compared with that allocated to child health, which rose only by 50 per cent⁹. In 1970-71, assistance to education accounted for nearly one quarter of all Unicef cooperation, while health accounted for just over half. Most support went to educational supplies and equipment, with teacher training, science education and vocational institutions absorbing much of the rest.

By the early 1970s, it was becoming evident that the great leap forward in primary school provision fell far short when measured against the increasing numbers of children entering their school-age years. For all the energy with which Ministries of Education were opening new classrooms and filling them with pupils, they were failing to keep pace with the growth of the five- to nine-year-old age group. The result was an increase in the absolute numbers of the

unschooled, and in illiterates, especially girls and women. The figures, moreover, did not reveal the vast social waste represented by high numbers of drop-outs, failures and 'repeaters'. Instead of presenting a time-bound challenge to the leaders of the newly independent countries, the quantitative and qualitative shortcomings in educational opportunity now seemed to constitute an unfillable gap. Leading commentators described a 'world educational crisis': the need and demand for learning was rapidly outstripping the capacity to provide it¹⁰.

The experience in educational progress had mirrored that in the social and economic sphere: there had been rapid advance, but its benefits had failed to filter down, further entrenching the poor in their state of disadvantage. This outcome of the development crusade of the 1960s led to the quest for 'alternative' strategies in the 1970s, emphasizing social equity and poverty alleviation. Within Unicef, one of the earliest manifestations of this quest was a radical overhaul of its policy on education. In 1972, the Executive Board decided that it would cease to offer more de-luxe inputs such as sophisticated vocational training and science education in secondary schools; Unicef would now focus specifically on those children deprived of basic education by poverty, especially in rural areas. No longer was 'building up the human capital' the priority; improving the lives of the poor and remedying educational disadvantage had taken its place.

One of the strongest criticisms of contemporary school curricula was that they were inappropriate to the future lives of the vast majority of primary-school leavers. A small minority were destined for secondary education and salaried jobs in town, but around 80 per cent were left stranded in the pre-industrial rural economy, equipped not with ideas and methods for its transformation but with the mark of failure by the standards of urban society. The cities of the developing world were full of young people with half a school certificate and few prospects of gainful employment, whose only ambition was not to go home to the constricted horizons and predictability of life on the land. Accordingly, 'alternative' educational thinkers were full of ideas for amending the curriculum to match the exigencies of future rural life. Unicef's new policy attached importance to reforms of this kind, which could mean introducing goat-raising and poultry-keeping as school subjects or teaching sanitary conduct and disease control in the science classroom. In Tanzania, for example, Unicef was a strong backer of President Julius Nyerere's *ujamaa* (community) schools and helped provide practical support for making operational his philosophy of 'Education for Self-Reliance'¹¹.

As well as reordering its priorities for conventional schooling, Unicef was also keen to explore what might be done outside the formal system to help

prevent the waste represented by the millions of half-lettered children who had dropped out of school, and those who had never managed to get there. It therefore commissioned a major research study from Philip Coombs, a leading international expert, and his team from the International Council for Educational Development (ICED) into schemes for 'non-formal education'. Such schemes had long been a target of Unicef cooperation, often under the label of health education or women's programmes. They ran the gamut from mobile training schools for teenage drop-outs (Thailand), to radio schools for remote *campesinos* (Peru), to 'village polytechnics' (Kenya), to preschool arrangements and literacy training for mothers' clubs in a large number of countries.

In 1973 and 1974, ICED reports were presented to the Unicef Executive Board. They drew heavily upon 'alternative' pedagogic ideas and on a landmark UNESCO report entitled *Learning to Be*. According to contemporary wisdom, what education gave to a person in terms of ability to take on new challenges and engage with new ideas could be as important as the actual content of the syllabus. Coombs and his ICED colleague Manzoor Ahmed took as their starting-point the recognition that education was a lifelong process in which what people learned as children at their parents' knee, and what adolescents learned as they found their way in the adult world, was as significant as the prescribed chunk of their lives spent in the classroom. They identified a 'minimum package' of attitudes, skills and knowledge needed by every young person, including a positive attitude towards learning itself; basic literacy and numeracy; a scientific understanding about the environment; and functional knowledge about raising a family, running a household and earning a living¹². The most important category of clients for the delivery of this package were those who had missed or dropped out of school, the great majority of whom were, of course, female. Here was the genesis of 'basic education'.

During discussions on these reports, some reservations were expressed by members of the Executive Board that non-formal education was being overhyped as a panacea for the shortcomings of the formal primary system. This was a period during which radical educational thinkers such as Paulo Freire in Brazil and Ivan Illich in Mexico were going so far as to debunk standard schooling systems altogether, describing them as instruments for reinforcing structural inequity¹³. According to this perspective, schooling could not be a valid learning experience unless it not only imparted knowledge but helped people to become 'conscientized' about the forces operating in their lives and to be able to take some control over them. (The use of knowledge to 'empower' people was the less revolutionary version of the same idea current in the 1980s.) Such

critics tended to be in favour of alternative systems of learning as a substitute for contemporary primary schooling systems; other supporters of non-formal programmes simply felt that some countries were too poor to secure a reasonable primary education for all their young citizens, and that in such circumstances, a shorter, cheaper alternative imparting relevant skills for rural life would be better than nothing.

Unicef side-stepped the politicization of the education issue by expressing its support for education in both formal and non-formal contexts and by refusing to join in condemnation of the former. But this somewhat artificial debate, in which formal and non-formal educational approaches were wilfully presented as a dichotomy, rumbled on within the international educational establishment for many years, its various protagonists vying for funds and ideological favour and generally clouding the educational sky. As far as Unicef was concerned, the ICED reports marked the systemization of what it meant by non-formal education, and a commitment to future support, including support for adult literacy schemes, especially among women, and to educational activities for out-of-school youth. Unicef was careful to point out, however, that enthusiasm for 'learning to be' should not be allowed to substitute for reforming the mainstream educational system and providing more standard schools. These were ultimately the only long-term answers, and graduates from as many non-formal schemes as possible should be able to cross over into the educational career pathway that proper schools existed to provide.

By 1980, public expenditures on expanding networks of schools and colleges—with the exception of oil-rich developing countries—had levelled off. By now it was becoming evident that although the growth rates for primary schooling recommended by the UNESCO regional conferences of the 1960s were almost miraculously on target, few countries were anywhere near being able to provide enough places for universal enrolment. In Africa alone, they had underestimated the need for places by around 11 million¹⁴; as in so many other development contexts, population growth persistently scuppered their plans. Moreover, the enrolment figures continued to mask the high number of drop-outs and 'repeaters'. Enrolment could not be trusted as a measure of whether universal primary education had been reached in any given setting. The capacity of a country's school system did not necessarily indicate either the way it was used or its quality—which, in turn, affected parents' decisions about whether or not to send their children to school.

The benefits of educating their children were not always obvious to poverty-stricken rural or slum-dwelling families. Some parents could not afford to do without their children's—especially their daughters'—help in minding younger

siblings, tending livestock, fetching water and firewood, and other tasks essential to family well-being. Others might skimp and save to put a boy or two through school in the hope that he would be one of the lucky ones to make it to a big desk in town: even where school was nominally free, uniforms, shoes, a school bag and bus fares usually represented a major investment. But if the school was far away, the teacher negligent, the girls' modesty and even chastity insecure, parents might feel that the benefit was not worth the cost, especially for girls, and especially if their children were among the 'repeaters' whose chances of respectable graduation receded every year. As far as non-formal alternatives were concerned, parents often felt that the sacrifice they had to make was pointless if the education their children received was inferior and failed to provide a passport out of the life of drudgery they themselves had known.

As the 1980s dawned, therefore, the promise of UPE remained unfulfilled. Just over two thirds of all 6- to 11-year-olds in the developing world were enrolled in school as compared to 92 per cent in industrialized countries¹⁵. In Africa, the figure was well up from one third plus at the start of the 1960s to nearly two thirds, but this still left over one third of school-aged children unprovided with basic education.

Worse was to come. Under the impact of debt and adjustment, educational expenditures plummeted. In sub-Saharan Africa, public spending on education per inhabitant fell by one half between 1980 and 1987, and in Latin America, by 11 per cent over the period¹⁶. At the same time, the combination of currency devaluations and the depression of public sector salaries reduced the value of teachers' earnings to a point where they were forced to moonlight—even to sunlight—and work elsewhere. In many countries, teachers became demotivated and demoralized by their deteriorating working conditions and standards of life¹⁷. In some countries, many lost their jobs: in 1984, as part of Zaire's austerity plan, 46,000 teachers in primary and secondary schools (20 per cent of the total) were laid off¹⁸. The quality of the schooling service in certain countries was undermined to a point where the very viability of the educational process could be called in question¹⁹.

During most of the 1980s, Unicef was deeply engrossed with the child survival revolution. Although 'female education' was one of the three 'F's' suffixed to GOBI, the Unicef mission had become heavily concentrated on technologically doable elements of the primary health care agenda. The 'child survival revolution' never squeezed out education as it did much of the non-medical basic services programme agenda, although expenditure on education rose very little over the decade; instead, it more or less co-opted the education

programme on behalf of child survival. New materials produced for primary schools and primary school teachers' training emphasized child survival messages: the value of immunization, growth monitoring and the use of ORT²⁰.

Outside the school setting, the story was repeated. Women's groups and literacy classes were natural targets for a curriculum revision emphasizing information that was compelling and precious because it was about child health and child survival—matters that touched them deeply. It often contrasted favourably with the childish and irrelevant texts borrowed from the primary syllabus that often alienated adult learners. As the decade progressed, a degree of fusion developed between efforts to promote non-formal adult education and the social mobilization process, steadily gaining ground as the Unicef-recommended tool for building momentum behind services for child survival at all levels of society.

This fusion between the propagation of information among adults via non-formal educational channels, and social mobilization for child survival, was dramatically advanced by a particular initiative emanating from Unicef. This was jointly backed by UNESCO and WHO and gathered support from over 100 other organizations concerned with the health and condition of children. It was the brainchild of Peter Adamson, Jim Grant's collaborator on the annual *State of the World's Children* reports. Its name encapsulated its quintessentially simple purpose: *Facts for Life*.

The first line of attack in the child survival campaign was the promotion of disease prevention via simple medical technology. Among the prescriptions that made up GOBI, only breastfeeding had no scientifically modern, 'quick fix' characteristic. But in spite of their technological prowess, all of them—even immunization, the most proximate to a magic bullet—required the willing cooperation of parents, especially mothers. In other words, people had to understand their value in order to use GOBI techniques, willingly join in community efforts to promote them or demand that they be provided. And if knowledge was a critical ingredient of the propagation of GOBI, this was even more the case in matters such as personal hygiene, the spacing of births or the avoidance of HIV infection. In cases such as these, the use of technology might be incidental and the application of knowledgeable behaviour all-important.

The *Facts for Life* initiative was based on a simple premise. Every year, 14 million young children's lives were lost and millions more were permanently impaired almost entirely as a result of preventable causes. The information that, converted into knowledge, could prevent this waste of life was readily

available, and was easy to grasp and put into practice. Therefore, all parents and all communities should have access to the information as a right. Clearly, on the basis of past experience, the fulfilment of this right could not be left to the health sector alone: the transformation of beliefs, attitudes and behaviours that the spread of information was supposed to effect demanded reinforcement from many different directions. The promotion of health, especially child health, had to become the concern of all parts of the community.

To make this happen, two types of actions were necessary. First, the information should be reduced to its essentials and packaged in an easily understandable, non-controversial and distributable form. Hence, an 80-page publication with key facts under 10 child health and survival headings: timing births, safe motherhood, breastfeeding, child growth, immunization, diarrhoea, coughs and colds, home hygiene, malaria and AIDS. The messages contained under these headings were to be the simplest and most authoritative expression of contemporary scientific consensus. Second, the material contained in the *Facts for Life* publication had to be communicated by every conceivable channel and organizational partnership in such a way as to make the information part of the basic child care knowledge of every family. *Facts for Life* activity could be seen as a way of shortcutting the educational process that would normally put this knowledge at the disposal of people still excluded from standard information and communications channels or alienated by the messages they carried.

The process of distilling the world's child health expertise into a handful of dos and don'ts was by no means straightforward. Information is not neutral, nor can it be divorced from context: within different cultural settings and depending on different behavioural codes, the priority and aptitude of messages—about child feeding, for example—changed. Nonetheless, some essential information about child health remained constant: the desirable minimum age of child-bearing, for example; the desirable duration of breastfeeding; the necessary immunization routine; the importance of washing hands before eating. Adaptations and prioritization could be made *in situ*, by health educators and communications professionals with intimate knowledge of the audience's attitudes and beliefs.

More problematic was the achievement of consensus within the health and practitioner community about what the messages should say. There might be areas of disagreement among medical researchers about matters such as the role of home-brewed ORS in dealing with childhood diarrhoea and the child-spacing properties of breastfeeding, for example. For this reason, the technical supervision of *Facts for Life* was undertaken by WHO, and a large array of

child health experts in many disciplines were fully consulted. If something appeared in the booklet that gave any senior health policy decision maker a reason to dismiss its contents as inaccurate, the chances of its use in that setting would be negligible. These 'facts for life' must be ownable by everyone, not least by those who would decide upon their fate.

Having gone through an exhaustive consultative process to produce a deceptively simple text, the even more difficult task began: that of enlisting all types of communications personnel and machinery to make *Facts for Life* penetrate barriers of understanding and behaviour that had previously remained impervious to health education advice. This was the subject of lengthy discussion during 1988-89. Experience showed that only frequent and varied repetition of new information, over a long period and from sources that could be trusted, could truly succeed in putting health information at people's disposal in such a way that they actually used it to supplant old habits. This was particularly the case for an illiterate mother who had learned how to raise her children from senior family women whose diklat was not lightly flouted. Unless the weight of information surrounding her—from media, community leaders, health workers, trusted friends, shopkeepers, visiting relatives—endorsed what she learned in her mother's club, she might easily assume that curious ideas about child sickness and mothering behaviour did not apply to her.

Facts for Life was launched in 1989. It was published in tandem with a resource book, *All for Health*, which provided myriad examples of communications ideas, vehicles and partners. Teachers and primary health care workers were leading candidates: *Facts for Life*, ready-made, could be incorporated into classroom syllabuses and health education courses. But the essence of the project was to extend the spread of health education via the kind of partners the 'child survival revolution' had called upon for immunization drives. The same principle of social mobilization was to be put to work to create alliances; the only difference was that this was a campaign to spread knowledge rather than the use of medical technology. Religious leaders could disseminate *Facts for Life*; so could employers, trades unions, journalists, community leaders, NGOs and entertainers. The aim was not only 'health for all', it was also 'all for health'.

The first print run of 275,000 copies of the booklet in five languages went out of stock within a year. Already versions had been brought out in Chinese, Burmese, Swahili and six Filipino languages and dialects²¹. By the end of 1991, *Facts for Life* had been published in 138 languages and distributed in 97 countries. Altogether, 4 million copies had been produced²². The worldwide

response had been everything that could be hoped for, and more. In around 25 countries the slim volume had entered the school curriculum. In as many, its messages had been adapted into leaflet and poster form for use in clinics, health centres and consulting rooms. A number of countries had developed training programmes based on *Facts for Life* so that teachers, health volunteers and agricultural extension workers had a confident and professional grasp of how to communicate the basic messages.

A number of Unicef country offices had created video and audio versions of *Facts for Life*, and in many, these were being used for TV and radio 'spots'. Newspapers, journals and magazines carried articles, cartoons and competitions. In some countries, communications and marketing media other than standard TV and radio had been used. For example, in Brazil, a major supermarket chain had put 'facts for life' messages on 120 million plastic shopping bags; in Kenya, they were carried on 10 million matchboxes; and in Turkey, they appeared on 2 million milk cartons²³.

One of the most obvious settings in which localized versions of *Facts for Life* could be used was programmes for women. One organization to take up this idea with enthusiasm was the Viet Nam Women's Union. Initially, this national movement intended to propagate 'facts for life' throughout its 11 million members and ensure their sustained application. The Women's Union had a dynamic secretariat at national, provincial and district levels and its outreach was therefore assured. But it soon transpired that adjustments were necessary. At this time, Vietnamese women were having to weather the profound social changes accompanying the process of economic transition. In the late 1980s, the commune-based system of production and social management was replaced by one based on the family unit. Suddenly, Vietnamese women had to shoulder far more economic responsibility for family well-being and take up the slack of social services cut-backs. The Women's Union felt called upon to help them.

In 1990, with support from Unicef, the Women's Union launched what was to become a countrywide project based on two components: *Facts for Life* and credit for rural women. *Facts for Life* was translated into Vietnamese and the five main ethnic minority languages. Teams of communicators—25,000 altogether—were trained to put across the top 10 messages, both in public meetings and in one-on-one discussions during household visits. The respect in which the Women's Union was held meant that their training carried authority. Team members learned fast and were susceptible to such new ideas as family limitation and the need to breastfeed the baby immediately after birth (which went against local custom).

One of the promotional activities introduced in a number of Vietnamese provinces was *Facts for Life* contests. These were first conducted at village level. On the appointed day, women who wished to enter came to the village hall. The audience sat on one side, and participating mothers with their children on the other. On the platform stood a paper tree covered with questions folded and tied to look like blossoms. Each mother plucked a question from the tree, and when her name was called, gave her answer. Then all the babies were weighed and their growth and appearance checked to see which mothers were putting *Facts for Life* into effect. The judges then chose the winning 'couple' who received a prize—usually of clothes—and the right to progress to the next round at district level. These contests became celebrated provincewide events.

The credit scheme enabled women to put into practice what *Facts for Life* had taught them: without this component, many women struggling to make ends meet in the new market economy would not be in a position to put into effect the information communicated to them. Viet Nam's most significant child health problem was malnutrition, from which around half of the under-five population suffered in one degree or another²⁴. With the modest loans of \$30 provided under the scheme, most women bought small livestock, piglets, ducks and laying hens. This would not have been permitted in the old days of communal production, and their knowledge of livestock raising was rusty. But Vietnamese women quickly recovered the necessary skills. Many became poultry and piglet mini-entrepreneurs, enabling them to abandon menial jobs—portage and haulage are common traditional occupations for Vietnamese women²⁵—and spend more time with their children. Diets, as well as child-care skills, improved as a result. One small-scale study in a commune in Hai Hung province found that out of 187 families, only six had not managed to make significant improvement at home as a result of the programme²⁶. 'Facts for life', promulgated within a structured and well-run campaign, were providing a genuine inspiration to Vietnamese women.

Such was the worldwide success of *Facts for Life* that, in 1993, a second edition was brought out. By this time, more than 9 million copies of the first edition had been published and the text had been translated into 176 languages. Fears that the text would prove too universalist had been dispelled: in many instances, the messages had been recrafted and retailored. Chapters had been added or substituted, following the advice of local experts, on subjects ranging from smoking and drug abuse to dental hygiene, accidents and sexually transmitted disease. The second edition of the booklet took advantage of experience gained with the first. Its co-publishers included a new sponsor, UNFPA, which joined the original trio of Unicef, WHO and

UNESCO. Over 160 international NGOs signed up as partners in the venture²⁷. By 1995, more than 10 million copies of *Facts for Life* in over 200 languages were in circulation²⁸.

The new edition of *Facts for Life* contained only one major change: the addition of a new chapter, on early childhood development. This subject—the cognitive and psychosocial growth of the young child—had been eclipsed in Unicef during most of the past decade by the campaign for child survival. The movement for ‘basic education’, gathering momentum in the run-up to the 1990 World Conference on Education for All, managed for the first time to inscribe early childhood cognitive growth on the child survival and development agenda.

The impetus for this Conference came, perhaps surprisingly, from the foremost champion of child survival and of the technological ‘fix’, a person often derided for his ‘mono-focus’: Jim Grant of Unicef.

Jim Grant had never overlooked the need to respond to the glaring educational needs in the developing world. Before he became head of Unicef, he had been as interested in examples of low-income countries with high literacy rates as he had in those with low child mortality rates. He believed that these ‘positive deviants’ in education and primary health care provision offered blueprints for achieving reductions in the worst manifestations of poverty without having to wait for the conquest of poverty itself. For this reason, he had appointed as his head of programming worldwide Dr. Nyi Nyi, an ex-Minister of Education in Burma responsible for a renowned mass literacy campaign.

Early in 1982—before the development of GOBI—Grant made a determined but vain attempt to persuade UNESCO to collaborate on a major initiative to promote ‘primary education for all’²⁹. Without a positive response from the key international partner, education had to wait. By 1987, cognizant that child survival gains could only be sustained by an informed population, Grant was again beginning to cast around for ways of accelerating progress in basic education. He looked for an equivalent to GOBI: low-cost, doable interventions that would work on a mass scale. In his Annual Report to the Executive Board, he gave an indication of the way his mind was working: ‘Social mobilization was the principal means for the unprecedented expansion of primary education and literacy in Burma and the United Republic of Tanzania in the 1970s. Unicef is now examining ways in which the rapidly growing experience in social mobilization can contribute to more effective educational activities.’³⁰

Grant believed that there must be strategies that could short cut the long, slow, intergenerational process of inculcating new knowledge, new ideas and new attitudes into people via the classroom or its close equivalent. But in order to find out what these might be, and to create a sense of international agreement and momentum behind them, he believed that a common international platform had to be constructed. UNESCO was now headed by Dr. Federico Mayor, whose attitude towards a major international initiative on basic education was positive. In 1989, a Joint Committee on Education consisting of representatives of the Executive Boards of UNESCO and Unicef was set up to promote collaboration between the two organizations³¹. With support from Mayor, Grant then set about persuading the heads of UNDP and the World Bank to commit themselves to a joint inter-agency venture. In February 1989, the heads of these four organizations announced their proposal for a World Conference on 'Education for All' to take place in Thailand early in 1990³².

Twelve years earlier, an international conference at Alma-Ata had tackled the world crisis in health and come up with the primary health care strategy and goals for 'Health for All by the Year 2000'. Grant was determined that the international conference on 'Education for All' would similarly confront the world crisis in education. He was prepared to commit considerable time and energy—his own and Unicef's—to trying to make this happen.

Under the impact of structural adjustment programmes and the drain of debt repayment, this crisis had continued to deepen. UNESCO pointed to a 'dangerous erosion of human resources that . . . might set back the countries of the South by a whole generation or even more'³³. Cut-backs in educational expenditures were striking most damagingly at the foundation of the educational pyramid, in primary schooling and basic literacy. The proportion of 6- to 11-year-olds enrolled in primary schools was falling in many countries, especially in sub-Saharan Africa where, by the late 1980s, average educational expenditure per person had more than halved since 1980, from \$33 to \$15 dollars per head³⁴. In many countries, capital spending had virtually ceased, and recurrent expenditures were often confined to teachers' salaries alone. The impact on school operations and quality could be devastating. A survey of schools in rural Mozambique, for example, found that only 3 per cent of pupils had seats or desks, and only 17 per cent of classrooms had a desk for the teacher³⁵.

Despite their sorry state, the main problem facing children of school-going age was not that they did not have classrooms to go to. By 1990, over 90 per cent started school; the more serious continuing problem was that the rate of school drop-out was still so high that almost one in two disappeared long

before completing primary education—often before reading and writing skills had been properly absorbed. Children's absence might well be connected to parents' lack of conviction that demoralized teachers in dilapidated buildings could confer much of value on their youngsters, but more significantly, family economic circumstances were making it increasingly difficult for parents to afford schooling costs. The combination of rising expenditures on fees and incidentals, the lack of useful qualifications gained and the need for older children to contribute to household income at the earliest opportunity made a chilling recipe for the reinforcement of educational deprivation among the truly poor. The consequences for social stress and progressive alienation of young people could only be imagined.

If the 1980s had seen a further deterioration in the world educational crisis, they had also produced an impressive array of data confirming the economic value of education. World Bank studies consistently showed that returns from education were higher than from most other types of investment: four years of primary schooling, for example, led to an average increase in farming productivity of 10 per cent or more³⁶. Furthermore, the growing emphasis on gender-based inequalities had amplified this aspect of the educational picture. The World Bank found that nations that had invested heavily in female primary education also benefited from higher economic productivity than did countries whose women remained educationally deprived. Countries with a large 'gender gap' in education—meaning a wide discrepancy between male and female enrolment rates—tended to be less economically productive than countries whose capital investment and labour-force situation was otherwise similar³⁷. These advantages of investing in girls' primary education were additional to their already well-known social benefits: lower infant and maternal mortality, raised life expectancy and considerably reduced fertility. Female education was therefore becoming a potent and proven influence not only on child survival but on development as a whole.

Yet, one decade from the end of the century, nearly 1 billion people—of whom two thirds were women—could not read or write. Over 100 million children—of whom two thirds were girls—had no chance of going to school³⁸. All these were people whose basic learning needs would not be met under prevailing economic and educational circumstances, and whose prospects in life would be correspondingly curtailed. This was the situation the World Conference on Education for All set out to tackle. Its aim was not only to set educational goals for the year 2000 and mobilize new financial resources to meet them, but also to forge a world consensus on a feasible concept of 'education for all'. A new vision of basic education was heralded on which to

construct national plans and strategies to reach the educational goals for the year 2000. The most important of these were that 80 per cent of 14-year-old children should have attained a nationally designated level of learning and that adult illiteracy should be reduced to half its 1990 level, at the same time closing the literacy gender gap.

The new vision of basic education circumvented the time-worn contest between the merits of formal and non-formal educational systems. Unlike in the case of primary health care, commitment to basic education implied less a commitment to a particular curriculum delivered by a particular type of learning institution than to the twin principles of 'learning for all' and 'learning as an essential ingredient of equitable and sustainable development'. Basic education was seen as the learning foundation for all citizens, in which fundamental knowledge and skills for life were acquired. It was also regarded as the foundation on which—depending on their resources and needs—societies built further learning opportunities for as many people as possible. The normal venue for acquiring basic education was the primary school, which should be within reach of every child; however, non-formal programmes could substitute and supplement where necessary. All other possible channels of communication and social action—traditional and modern—should also be harnessed to the basic educational cause³⁹. Here was the emphasis on social mobilization on which Jim Grant set so much store.

How these principles were to be put into practice on national and local scales was not specified in the 'Framework for Action to Meet Basic Learning Needs' developed during the pre-Conference consultative process. The conference organizers deliberately chose to set up a 'Framework for Action' rather than a 'Plan of Action' because it was considered inappropriate to designate one global plan for the great diversity of situations and stages of development among the countries concerned. The idea was that countries should develop their own plans within a framework that reflected an international sense of solidarity behind the educational cause. Therefore, the Framework drew together a wealth of practical experiences from all over the globe for the inspiration of policy makers, educators and communicators. Among the programmes described were many supported by Unicef, including examples from Bangladesh and Colombia.

The non-formal educational programme run by the Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee (BRAC) was known as an outstandingly successful experiment in recuperating children left out of the primary system. The country's literacy record was among the lowest in the world; only a third of those aged 15 years and over could read, write and understand numbers at a functional

level—skills that were denied 85 per cent of rural women⁴⁰. In 1985, in response to requests from landless villagers, BRAC initiated a primary education programme with experimental schools in 22 rural communities⁴¹. By late 1989, when the Education for All conference was under preparation, the programme had expanded to 2,500 schools. From its inception, the programme's objective was to develop a replicable basic education model, which in three years could provide basic literacy and numeracy to the child of the poorest family. To redress the disadvantages suffered by girls, they were to make up 70 per cent of the pupils in every school.

BRAC adapted the learning procedure to the circumstances of the child, rather than requiring the child to adjust to the conventional rules of the primary school. For example, the school building was a modest thatched hut with walls of bamboo slatting and a packed earth floor constructed by the community at a convenient location. School timing—three hours per day—and school terms were coordinated with the requirements of the farming season and the domestic chores that all children, especially girls, were expected to shoulder. The typical BRAC teacher was a young married woman from the neighbourhood. She received an intensive two-week training, regular supervision and an extra day of group training every month. The running of the school was in the hands of a village management committee, and parent-teacher groups met regularly to discuss the children's progress.

The overwhelming response to the programme debunked the myth that poor and illiterate rural parents were apathetic—even hostile—towards their children's prospective education. The drop-out rate was almost negligible, and among the younger age group (8 to 10 years old), over 90 per cent joined the fourth or fifth class in the regular primary school after having completed three years with BRAC⁴². The cost of BRAC schools was extremely modest: only \$18 per child per year, or one quarter of the cost of the state primary system. (Following the Education for All conference, and in the wake of 1990 legislation for compulsory primary education passed by the Bangladesh Government, the BRAC programme rapidly expanded. By 1992, it had mushroomed to 12,000 schools reaching 360,000 children, and continued to grow exponentially⁴³.)

Unlike BRAC's programme, the Escuela Nueva—new schools—programme in Colombia was designed not as an alternative to the formal primary system but as an alternative within it. It was intended to redress the educational disadvantages suffered by rural children, whose chances of attending schools of reasonable quality were much more restricted than those of their counterparts in town. Rural schools were short of teachers, textbooks and equipment, and

although the curriculum was designed to be taught by one teacher per grade, the majority of schools were multi-grade but had only one or two teachers. As a result of these schools' many deficiencies, the situation in the early 1980s was that only around 65 per cent of rural children enrolled, and only one in five completed the full five-year primary cycle⁴⁴.

The roots of the Escuela Nueva programme extended back into the 1960s, when the concept of the 'unitary school' was introduced in parts of the country with low population density. In this experimental type of school, only one teacher was needed, and his or her main function was to help children to teach themselves rather than to give lessons in the traditional way. This meant that the teacher could work with several groups of pupils at once, with each group following a subject guide and proceeding at their own pace. The greater autonomy in learning conferred on the pupil meant that the timetable was flexible, allowing children to absent themselves for agricultural tasks at planting and harvest time. It also enabled one teacher to supervise five different grades. This methodology owed much to the enthusiasm of the late 1960s for radical pedagogical approaches.

The unitary school experiment was not as successful as it could have been because the necessary changes in teachers' training and curriculum revision were not introduced. These shortcomings were systematically addressed by the Escuela Nueva programme, launched in 1975. Practical problem-solving and the application of knowledge within the community rather than performance in tests became the hallmark of the methodology. Teachers were given a much fuller training in the philosophy and content of the programme. They were also encouraged to use popularly elected students to help run group work and to call upon parents and local officials to help with school management. Links between the school and the community were fostered. Stories and songs from the local culture were used in the classroom, which also became a conduit for information about health, nutrition and hygiene.

During its first few years, the programme was extended relatively slowly, but by 1985 there were 8,000 Escuelas Nuevas across the country. At this point, the Colombian Government decided to adopt the approach as the means to achieve universal rural primary education⁴⁵. From 1987, with assistance from Unicef, a period of rapid expansion began. By 1989, nearly 18,000 of the 27,000 rural schools in the country had been embraced by the programme. Within three to four years, the expectation was to reach the entire rural primary school cohort. Studies undertaken in the late 1980s showed that Escuela Nueva students scored as well as or slightly better than students from traditional rural schools in terms of self-esteem, civic and social behaviour.

And they scored consistently higher in academic achievement tests, notably in mathematics and Spanish. Among teachers, 90 per cent believed that the new schools were superior⁴⁶.

These educational experiences, and many others that similarly aimed to provide a basic education efficiently and at low cost, came under close scrutiny during 1989 in the run-up to the World Conference on Education for All. Unicef helped a number of Ministries of Education to conduct investigations into their schooling situation and to hold preparatory seminars and workshops. The Conference itself, co-sponsored by UNESCO, Unicef, UNDP and the World Bank and hosted by the Thai Government, took place in Jomtien, Thailand, in March 1990. It attracted nearly 1,500 delegates and observers from 156 countries, four Heads of State, over 100 Ministers of Education, heads of several international organizations, professional teaching bodies and NGOs from all over the world. The participants unanimously adopted a World Declaration and a Framework for Action to meet the basic learning needs of every person—child, youth and adult—in the world.

The 'vision' of a basic package of knowledge and skills—a 'basic education'—to which everyone had a right was accepted. It would be up to countries to define their own version, but at a minimum, access to primary schooling should be universal⁴⁷. Countries committed themselves to planning a strategy for achieving this access by the year 2000—although Jim Grant had to use all his powers of persuasion to have this date included in the conference Declaration—and to using this goal as the cutting edge in a broader 'Education for All' offensive. Also accepted was the principle that enrolment levels could no longer be used as a gauge of primary educational progress, and that assessment systems should be devised in each country to give a more accurate measure of how both pupils and educational programmes were faring.

The Conference also stressed that priority was to be given to girls and women, and to other disadvantaged groups: ethnic minorities, children in remote rural areas and children in 'especially difficult circumstances', notably those caught up in war, those with disabilities and those obliged to live and work on the streets. These emphases reflected the current concern with children's rights: the Convention on the Rights of the Child had recently been passed in the UN General Assembly. Finally, the Conference emphasized that the other elements of basic education, including early childhood development, adult literacy and basic knowledge for living, needed widespread promotion through all conceivable communications channels. This legitimization of the 'third channel'—the informal as opposed to the formal or non-formal educational route—was seen by Unicef as recognition of the important developmental role

of social mobilization, both as a means to achieve other development goals and as a knowledge-conferring end in itself.

The stage had been set, just six months before the World Summit for Children, for the generation of new resources and action towards the goal of 'learning for all'.

In the original plans for the Conference, the concept of basic education did not include early childhood development. Only as a result of regional discussions and pressure from NGOs was the importance of special attention in the earliest years of life recognized as critical to the child's later educational attainment⁴⁸. Children who took part in some kind of preschool programme where they learned the alphabet and took part in structured activities were more likely to go to school and to do well than those who did not. The effects of early childhood programmes on enrolment and school performance therefore captured the attention of policy makers seeking to cut the numbers of 'repeaters' and drop-outs. However, the argument connected to education was only one part of an impressive case for making early childhood care much more widely available.

Down the years, Unicef had been ambivalent about the degree of support it should offer the mental and psychosocial, as opposed to physical, development of the young child. Preschool centres in a number of countries had long been a target of Unicef assistance, but the rationale usually presented was the opportunity to provide a nutritious meal for youngsters, monitor their physical well-being and provide substitute care arrangements for overburdened mothers. While all child development experts were agreed that early stimulation improved the infant's and youngster's learning potential, the feeling persisted that many preschools were head-start programmes of a luxury kind for better-off children, and therefore had a less compelling claim on Unicef cooperation than did those attempting to ensure survival and physical well-being. The ideas of child development experts such as Piaget and Montessori seemed destined only for application in the industrialized world.

The 1979 International Year of the Child prompted new enthusiasm for early childhood development, and a number of countries instigated new preschool programmes⁴⁹. Many borrowed ideas from the basic services approach, and set about helping communities run their own simple centres by providing training, backup and equipment to local volunteers. A typical example of such a programme was that launched in 1979 in the Dominican Republic, where a preschool department was created in the Ministry of Education. Its staff worked

with local communities to select and train preschool *promotores*, build rudimentary thatched shelters, make playthings out of local materials and operate the centres. The community response to the scheme was enthusiastic, and within two years 20,000 children had been enrolled⁵⁰.

Similar programmes could be found in a number of Latin American countries, and early childhood care was a common feature of area-based and urban basic services programmes in Indonesia, the Philippines, Zambia and other countries in Asia and Africa. One of the most renowned was the Integrated Child Development Services programme in India, which, by 1985, had established networks of *anganwadis*—day-care centres for children aged three to six—in around 100,000 villages⁵¹. Although in the *anganwadis* provision of a nutritious meal was still seen as important, much more emphasis was now given to the young child's psychosocial development through play and interaction with peers.

Despite the success of this and other similar programmes, within Unicef the spotlight on early childhood development dimmed during the 1980s. The takeover by GOBI of Unicef's infancy and early childhood agenda meant that the policy focus—if less so the practice—was once again, as in Unicef's early years, virtually confined to the child's physical well-being. With few exceptions, little attention was given to psychosocial development as an integrated component within 'child survival and development revolution' programming. A policy review on early childhood development⁵², which came before the Board in 1984, performed a useful function in reviewing the state of the programming art, but its recommendation that psychosocial concerns should be fully incorporated into health-promoting activities barely ruffled the child survival surface. Over the next few years, UNICEF put considerably more energy into incorporating child survival activities and messages into preschool programmes than into extending child survival to include mental, psychological and social well-being.

By the late 1980s, with the Education for All Conference on the horizon, moves were afoot to refocus attention on the non-physical components of the child development picture. Independently of Unicef's main priorities, the decade had witnessed mounting interest in early childhood, not only in the industrialized but in the developing world. This was in part a reflection of profound social and demographic changes. The urbanization explosion and the monetization of all aspects of life, the rising number of women raising children on their own—30 per cent of households in Latin America and the Caribbean were female-headed⁵³—and the increasing entry of women into paid employment had turned custodial day care of their children into an

essential need for millions of struggling families. Unlike her rural sister working in the fields, the poor urban mother could not easily take her toddler with her to the workplace. Nor did she have older female relatives living nearby with whom she could safely leave them. Under the pressures of contemporary life, family structures were changing, and traditional arrangements for early childhood care were vanishing.

The impact of these changes was manifest not only in Latin America and the Caribbean, which in the developing world had set the pace in organized early childhood care, but more strikingly in Asia. For example, in Korea, the percentage of children attending preschool programmes had risen from 8 to 57 per cent between 1982 and 1986; in Thailand, 24 per cent of children between ages three and six spent part of the day in a non-formal educational setting, and in the Philippines 19 per cent of this age group enjoyed 'early childhood enrichment'⁵⁴.

The scientific evidence accumulated from these experiences provided powerful ammunition for arguments that this kind of childhood enhancement should not be postponed until age five, when survival was more or less assured. Children in disadvantaged groups appeared to gain even more from it than the better-off. Structured care and stimulation at each developmental stage were far from being a luxury. Cognitive and social growth began automatically on the child's entry into the world. If neglected or actively hindered, this could have as profound a negative effect on the child's future well-being as—for example—the lack of a nutritionally optimal diet or the absence of clean water and sanitation. Child survival and child development—in all its guises—were interdependent.

The debates surrounding the Convention on the Rights of the Child also helped to underscore the fact that inadequate care in early childhood was an important predisposition not only for poor school performance but for landing up at an early age begging or working on the streets. Over the longer term, a poor start in childhood could lead to delinquency, unemployment and the intergenerational perpetuation of failure and poverty⁵⁵. The Convention claimed on behalf of children the right to 'develop to their full potential', and Article 18 gave expression to the right of children of working parents to 'benefit from child-care services and facilities'. The need for an expansion of low-cost family and community-based services was reiterated in the World Summit Declaration and Plan of Action.

The 1989-90 series of landmark international commitments to a new vision of fulfilled childhood—the Convention, the Education for All Conference and the Summit—therefore marked the moment at which a degree of fusion finally

occurred between the concepts of biological and other types of healthy growth. As a result, in the 1990s, a subject now redefined as 'early childhood care and development' (ECCD) entered a new phase of creative life.

Within Unicef, the new commitment to ECCD led to an effort to synthesize the wide range of experiences stemming from programmes all over the world and to draw the insights from them into future programming directions. There was still a need to counter the narrow, institutional, elitist and expensive image associated with preschools. A formula along the GOBI lines would be inappropriate; instead, a menu of different but complementary types of intervention was developed. One approach could be to educate caregivers. In China, for example, at the instigation of the All China Women's Federation, over 200,000 communities organized 'Parents' Schools', designed in part to help people adapt to parenting in the one-child family⁵⁶. Included in the curriculum on child development was a Chinese version of *Facts for Life* produced by Unicef.

Another example of the 'educating caregivers' approach was the 'Child-to-Child' concept developed by the Institute of Child Health in London. This was pioneered in a number of countries, including Jamaica and Uganda, and was eventually adopted in 75 countries, including Romania and the UK⁵⁷. The programmes were designed for school-going children aged 8 to 15, who could take health-promoting messages and actions back into the home. The normal parental and social expectation was that these children helped to look after their younger siblings as part of their household duties. The Child-to-Child syllabus helped to ensure that they performed their duties—bathing or feeding the baby, playing with him or her—in ways best designed for the child's development. Adult members of the family, it was hoped, would learn from them and follow their example.

The Child-to-Child curriculum taught growth monitoring, sound health and nutritional practice, and how to play with brothers and sisters, and included skills such as toy-making and ORS preparation. The programmes proved very effective in supporting the conventional GOBI package and in reaching beyond it to a fuller picture of stimulation and cognitive and social growth. In 1991, the Child-to-Child Trust won Unicef's annual award, given in memory of Maurice Pate, its first Executive Director, for what was described as a 'new, effective and revolutionary idea' in working with children for better health. In 1993, a publication called *Children for Health* was developed by the Child-to-Child Trust in association with Unicef for use by teachers, youth leaders and others working with children and young people. It contained an adaptation of *Facts for Life* messages, along with ideas on how to communicate

them to children and ways in which to incorporate them into Child-to-Child: the two concepts thus became mutually reinforcing.

A different kind of approach towards early childhood development was support for the more typical village-based centre. Some of these—such as UPGK in Indonesia and Programa de Alimentação de Pre-escolar in Brazil—were originally inspired by the need for nutritional improvement, and later added cognitive skills; others—like the ‘Entry Point’ scheme in Nepal—were intended primarily to enable women involved in credit programmes to organize child care collectively and make better use of their time. All such programmes supplied a complementary environment to the home for part of the child’s nurture and upbringing. Other approaches emphasized the strengthening of national institutions, developing national family policies or proposing changes in laws and regulations to protect the infants of working mothers or other children in difficult circumstances.

Last but not least, there was a need to inform parents and all those professionally concerned with children about the benefits to be gained from well-rounded early nurture. Hence the importance of the new chapter on early childhood development in the 1993 revision of *Facts for Life*.

In the wake of the Jomtien Conference, Unicef made strenuous efforts to ratchet up the level of human and financial resources committed to basic education, and—alongside UNESCO, the World Bank, and many other national, international, NGO and corporate partners—to make the 1990s as significant a decade for learning as the 1980s had been for child survival. At its first meeting after the Conference, the Unicef Executive Board approved a plan whereby allocations to basic education would rise from the level of 10 per cent in 1990 to reach 25 per cent by the year 2000—at which point they would equal the allocation to child health⁵⁸. A team of senior advisers on education was recruited for Unicef headquarters and for the regional offices, and a number of country offices began to expand their capacity to support educational programming. In his own public statements, Jim Grant made it clear that though he was still as committed as ever to the child health agenda in the Children’s Summit Declaration, he regarded education as critical in leading to and sustaining the achievement of all other Summit goals⁵⁹.

The idea that the universalization of primary education should be the cutting edge of Education for All was endorsed by the Joint Committee on Education (UNESCO and Unicef) in October 1991. By this time, Jomtien had already inspired a worldwide mobilization: governments, international

agencies and NGOs had collaborated in holding over 100 conferences and round tables on Education for All issues, and an Education for All Forum had been established, based in UNESCO. Unicef had played an active role in these activities, encouraging and supporting the formulation of plans of action and other follow-up activities in over 70 countries. In 1993, a previous Minister of Education in Zimbabwe, Fay Chung, was invited to head Unicef's Education Cluster, and new energy was devoted to Unicef's own strategic thinking for the sector. A policy review in 1995 strongly reiterated Unicef's commitment to primary education as the most important component of basic education—whether in a conventional primary school or a more flexible schooling environment. 'Second chance' equivalents of primary education for youth and adults and early childhood care and development were regarded as important in helping to reach the EFA goal, as well as in their own right⁶⁰.

The twin thrusts of Unicef support to primary schooling were to make the classroom more accessible, especially to girls, and to increase schooling efficiency. This was to be achieved by promoting greater flexibility in the organization of the school and its management. Teaching and learning practices were to be geared towards making the school better fit the child's circumstances. At the same time, Unicef would support non-formal programmes in order to provide immediate places in the classroom to those whom the formal system would take many years to reach. This was described as a 'Bailey bridges' approach, indicating that it was meant to be a temporary but serviceable stopgap. Certainly, there was an immense task to be undertaken if there was to be any hope of meeting the goal established at Jomtien—Education for All by the year 2000. This goal had been endorsed by the World Summit for Children, with special emphasis not only on access to schooling, but on completion of the primary school cycle by 80 per cent of children. The mid-decade 'stepping-stone' goal for education adopted in 1993 was to promote primary education 'with gender equality'. Education was to be the main context in which Unicef pursued affirmative action on behalf of girls.

The part of the world in which Unicef was most active in this context was South Asia, mainly because of the attention the SAARC countries had decided to devote to the 'girl child'⁶¹. In this part of the world, girls' primary school enrolment trailed that of boys by 29 per cent⁶². The main reason for girls' absence was the time-honoured parental belief in the value of investing in sons rather than in daughters. Experience showed that resistance to sending girls to school dwindled where the classroom was nearby, and the opportunity cost to parents was reduced. In Bangladesh,

Bhutan and Nepal, enrolment rose when each community had its own small school and girls did not have to travel far to the classroom. This was especially important in societies where girls past puberty were not allowed to walk about the neighbourhood, or where they were at risk of sexual harassment. In Pakistan, girls were kept out of mixed schools and schools without separate washrooms. Providing separate facilities so as to be able to maintain sexual distance made a significant difference.

So did an active policy to train more women teachers. In Nepal, where the female teaching force rose from 3 per cent in 1971 to 10 per cent in 1980, girls' enrolment rose tenfold. In both Africa and the Middle East, advocacy on behalf of girls also began to pay dividends, if more slowly. Tanzania similarly focused on bringing more women into the teaching force, assigning 'female coordinators' to train underqualified girl teachers on the job. Within five years girls' enrolment jumped from 74 to 95 per cent of boys' enrolment⁶³. Altogether, Unicef identified nine different types of approaches that purported to reduce the 'gender gap', including the provision of scholarships to compensate parents for the loss of household help and adjustments to the curriculum to make it relevant, practical and gender-neutral.

Another large group of children for whom accessibility to schooling was an issue consisted of those who lived in remote, mountainous or arid regions where population was scattered. For these settings, an increasing use was made of multi-grade schools, similar to those developed under the *Escuela Nueva* programme in Colombia. Multi-grade methodology was used in many poor and mountainous areas of Viet Nam, where a teacher learned how to instruct two classes in the same room simultaneously, each facing opposite ends and receiving the teacher's attention alternately. One-teacher schools were also used in the marginal rural areas of many Latin American countries other than Colombia: Bolivia, Mexico and Peru, for example.

Many indigenous peoples living in these areas—such as those in the high Andean *altiplano* in Bolivia and Peru—had suffered centuries not only of economic and social neglect, but of cultural oppression. For Aymara and Quechua children, accessibility to schooling not only meant the need for its physical presence, but for instruction in a language they could comprehend, and in terms that did not denigrate their own culture. In Bolivia, growing demand for cultural recognition by the 60 per cent of the population made up of indigenous peoples prompted the national Teachers' Union to insist upon educational reform. In 1988, with support from Unicef, a special unit was set up by the government to take this forward. In 1990, a new intercultural bilingual educational syllabus in three languages—Aymara, Quechua and Gua-

rani—was introduced into the first grade in 114 schools. Each year, another grade was added so that by 1994, the original intake was in its fifth grade of bilingual instruction.

Evaluation of the programme showed a notable improvement in school performance, particularly in the lower number of 'repeaters'. Children who had learned Spanish as a foreign language were actually more proficient in it than those for whom Spanish had been the exclusive language of instruction. In the more developed Aymara and Quechua areas of the *altiplano*, there was some resistance to the programme from teachers and communities steeped in the old Spanish-driven ways, but among the Guarani of the Amazonian basin, the programme was enthusiastically received. Here it became a rallying point for the preservation and promotion of the Guarani cultural identity and the rights of indigenous people in general. In accordance with the tenets of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, intercultural and bilingual education in Bolivia had become an expression of the right of the child to be educated in the context of his or her own language and culture⁶⁴.

The need to improve primary schooling efficiency prompted an equally wide range of response. Some programmes focused on the quality of instruction, some on syllabus content, some on community management of schools and many on all three. All were designed to reduce drop-outs and repeaters and ensure a certain level of attainment at an economic cost per child. One outstanding programme was the Shikshak Samakhya or Teacher Empowerment Project (TEP) in the Indian state of Madhya Pradesh.

In this state, the largest and one of the least developed in India, the obstacles to reaching universal primary education seemed truly insuperable before the TEP programme was introduced. A low rate of school enrolment, particularly among girls and among scheduled castes and tribes, reflected all the usual problems prevalent in backward and remote rural areas, plus the extremely dysfunctional condition of their primary schools. Teachers did their best not to be posted to schools in such areas, to the point of irregular twisting of officialdom's arms, and those who were appointed often simply failed to turn up. If they did, the order of the day was rote learning and scolding by turns. The teachers' low motivation and negligible professional commitment was the product of poor training and lack of orientation towards the needs of children from backgrounds regarded as socially and culturally inferior⁶⁵.

Shikshak Samakhya set out to revive regard for teaching as a noble profession whose practitioner—the guru—was a person of high status and self-esteem commanding the trust and respect of pupils and parents alike. One-day reorientation courses for teachers were conducted in a typical classroom, trans-

formed overnight by the painting of bright pictures and a three-foot-high blackboard all around the room. The training emphasized children's participation, stimulation and gaining their attention through teacher-child interaction, singing, dancing and learning-by-doing. Teachers were expected to use these techniques in their own classrooms, to make their own materials and to be creative in inventing songs and games. At the end of the session, teachers pledged their continuous commitment to their work and to their school for a minimum of five years. They were expected to gain the same commitment from their pupils to attend. They also received a small grant with which to brighten up the classroom. As members of associations of newly trained peers, they met regularly and received follow-up from the educational authorities.

By late 1994, more than 50,000 teachers of Standard I children had been reoriented. Plans had been made to complete the reorientation of all 160,000 such teachers in Madhya Pradesh by the end of 1995. Each year, another class has been added in a phased, incremental way so that all five primary grades are gradually moving over to an action-oriented curriculum and teaching style. The designers of the approach, which include staff from Unicef's Bhopal office, have developed a monitoring system that allows them to measure its capacity to attract children to school, keep them there and enable them to master specific knowledge and skills. By early 1995, in Dhar district, where the programme was first introduced, enrolment in Standard I had risen substantially, and in a number of schools the performance of children in Standard I had overtaken that of children in Standard II⁶⁶. Progress towards UPE was being achieved in a sustainable way at very low cost.

In December 1993, the international movement for Education for All gained a boost in momentum. An Education Summit of the nine most populous nations in the developing world (dubbed the E-9)—Bangladesh, Brazil, China, Egypt, India, Indonesia, Mexico, Nigeria and Pakistan—was held in New Delhi. Heads of State and their representatives pledged commitment to the goal of reaching universal basic education. Between them, these nine countries accounted for 2.7 billion people, half the world's population, and almost three quarters of its illiterates. It was in these countries, seven of which had a good chance of reaching UPE by the year 2000, that the main battle for basic education would be lost or won. In his statement to the New Delhi Summit, Jim Grant described Education for All as 'at the centre of the revolution in human development'. He continued: 'Progress towards the EFA goals must be accelerated with both national and international resources if we are not to fall further behind in the struggle to narrow the rich-poor chasms in the global society.'⁶⁷

While recognizing the many initiatives that gave great cause for hope, UNESCO sounded a similarly apocalyptic note. Despite all the progress of recent years, rising numbers in the school-going age group were still making quantitative achievements appear negligible. An estimated 162 million children, 70 per cent of them girls, would be excluded from primary school in the year 2000 unless a breakthrough in basic education was managed within the next few years. Of these, 72 million would be South Asian children, and 52 million, sub-Saharan African⁶⁸. The 'world crisis in education' was still far from being solved.

Early in 1994, the four organizations that had backed Jomtien—Unicef, UNESCO, UNDP and the World Bank—began to consider a special African Education for All Initiative, complementary to the already launched E-9 programme, which included Egypt and Nigeria. Some African countries, notably two of the Southern African countries that had gained internationally recognized independence in the 1980s, Namibia and Zimbabwe, were investing heavily in primary education. Zimbabwe had managed to double primary school enrolment in the almost unbelievable time-frame of two years by a variety of measures: double-session teaching, training teachers *in situ*, rationalizing the curriculum and devolving financial and managerial responsibility for schools onto the community⁶⁹. But this tremendous public policy commitment was very much a reaction to the long years of white minority rule and the skewed schooling investment of the past. The story of Zimbabwe's success contrasted sadly with the situation in countries without so strong a political impetus for educational reform and with fewer resources. In many African countries, the long years of debt and structural adjustment had led to heavy reductions in educational expenditures and eroded the physical fabric and quality of schooling. In 1990, it was estimated that one half of school-age children in Africa were not in school, and all the signs in the first part of the decade were that this negative trend was continuing⁷⁰.

Worse still, the eruption of wars and civil conflicts, many of them symptomatic of the 'new world disorder' to which the end of the cold war had given birth not only in Africa but elsewhere, meant that millions of children were being deprived of anything resembling a normal, structured, regular school-going childhood. In this climate, two new themes began to emerge. The first was attention to children's educational and psychosocial well-being as an important element of emergency relief, often by setting up schools in relief camps and among displaced populations. An example of this was the 'school in a box' project introduced in the aftermath of the 1994 Rwandan emergency, whereby

11,500 teachers were trained in using a portable kit that enabled them to set up a classroom anywhere⁷¹.

The other new theme was 'Education for Peace'. In countries such as former Yugoslavia and Lebanon, Unicef began to support programmes for children who had been brought up among violence, communal hatreds and factionalism, and who might well carry such attitudes forward into adulthood were they not replaced with ideas of mutual understanding and a belief in the virtues of peaceful coexistence. In the humanitarian as well as the development context, education was undergoing a renaissance.