

FUTURE GENERATIONS READY FOR THE WORLD

UNFPA'S CONTRIBUTION TO THE
GOALS OF THE WORLD SUMMIT FOR CHILDREN



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FOREWORD

In September 2001, World Leaders will gather in New York for the UN Special Session on Children. This session marks the ten-year anniversary of the 1990 World Summit for Children. It is a forum to review the gains of the last ten years, and explore areas in need of further work. It is a historic moment for the welfare of children.

Together with Governments, Non-Governmental Organizations, United Nations organizations, in particular UNICEF, and many other partners, UNFPA has made tremendous gains in programming for the health and rights of children and adolescents over the last ten years. However, a great deal of work remains to be done.

Consistent with our mission, UNFPA has focused on four major areas of work addressing young people. First is *promoting girls' education* through advocacy for solid national policies that ensure universal education for all children. Second is *the promotion of adolescent reproductive and sexual health*. This is addressed through interventions to promote access to health services and education, and provide the information, tools and skills to enable young people to make responsible choices. The third is *HIV/AIDS prevention* with a focus on young people. The fourth area of work is *the reduction of maternal mortality and morbidity* in order to prevent the injury and death of adolescent mothers in childbirth, and to help ensure the survival of their children. All of this work has been undertaken

through country and regional level programmes as well as through global and local advocacy.

UNFPA and its partners recognize that the young people of today will become the adults of tomorrow. It is through our work to support them and expand the opportunities available to them that we will broaden the capabilities of the future generation. To achieve this UNFPA will continue to assist countries with health and education policies and programmes.

The World Summit for Children has done a great deal to shape the course for adolescents and children. Now, this ten-year follow-up offers a unique opportunity to review the lessons learned over the last decade, and reassess the needs of the world's children. At the Special Session and beyond, UNFPA will continue its commitment to ensuring that young women and men have access to the information and services they need to live healthy, fulfilling lives.

*Mari Simonen, Director
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INTRODUCTION

There is no task more urgent than to improve the current state of the world's children and to work towards providing them and the generations after them a better future. The future of the world has to be better than its past and who better to make this come to pass than today's children.

One can think, however, of the world's past and its future not only in terms of time but of space in which children live and grow. Different contexts – countries, cities, towns, villages, families – in which children live are affected by the active interplay of the dimensions of politics, economics, culture, environment, and gender. The effects of these have affected children adversely, especially in the developing world.

What needs to be done is to make the world less harsh, more sensitive, and much more humane. At the same time, children must have, within their reach, the knowledge and the tools they need to help each one of us shape this world.

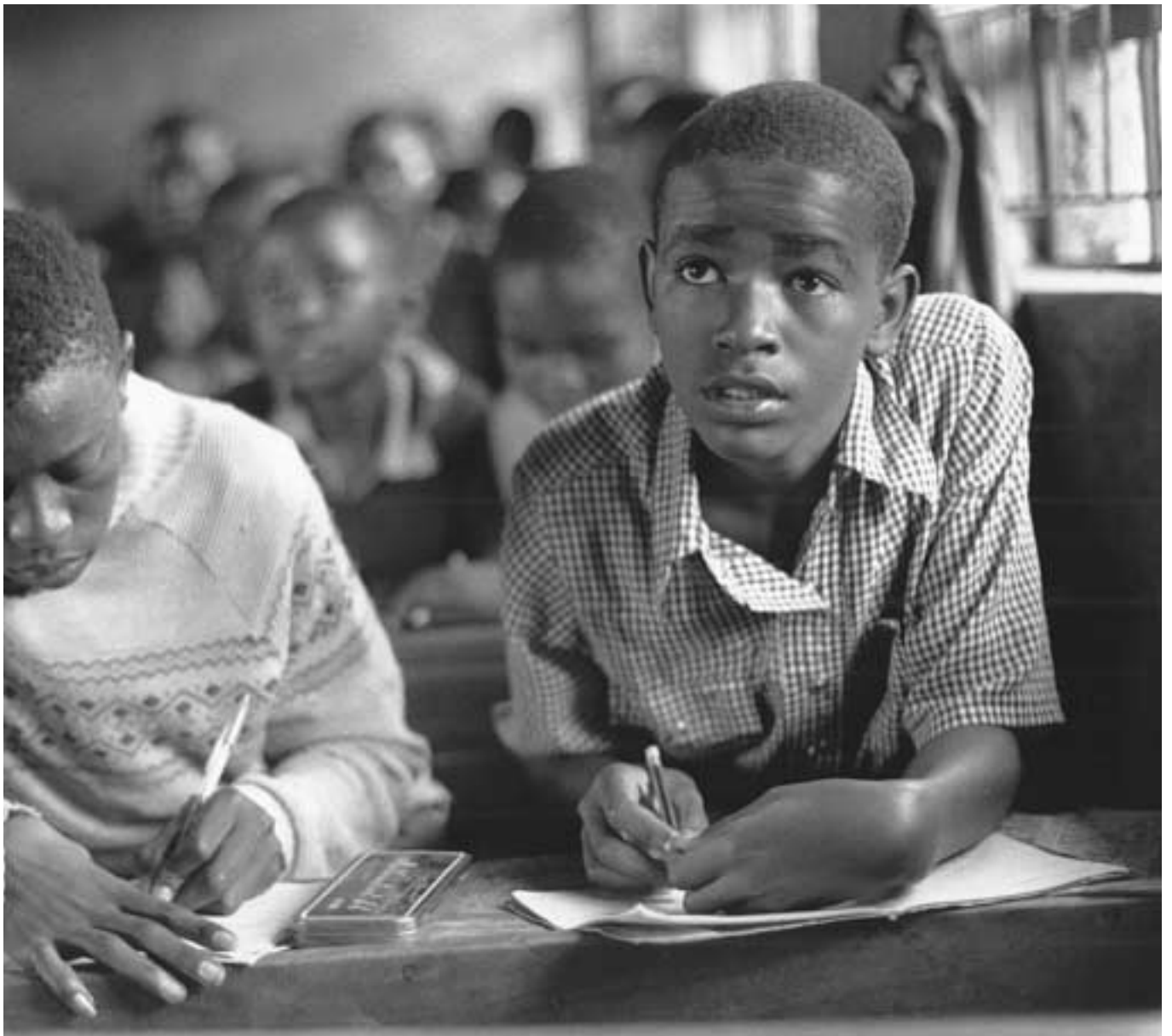
The possibility that one can actually do this – change the world to make it fit for children and to make children ready for the world – has captured the imagination of world leaders. When they met in 1989, on behalf of their countries, 181 of them signed and adopted the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), a significant document recognising that the state is duty-bound to fulfill the child's rights to assistance and protection.

The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) has contributed to translating the CRC into

reality by ensuring universal access to reproductive health, including family planning and sexual health as well as in implementing population and development strategies in support of sustainable development.

UNFPA is the lead organisation in the United Nations system supporting the implementation of International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) Programme of Action and is a staunch advocate of the Convention of the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). Thus, in these capacities, by promoting and implementing the goals of these two critical and related documents, the ICPD Programme of Action and CEDAW, UNFPA's work has exerted enormous synergistic and catalytic effects on advancing the goals of CRC, particularly those related to girls, adolescents, and women.

For, after all, today's women are yesterday's girls who have lived – and continue to live – the ascribed roles of their gender. Women who have chosen to be mothers can help their children, especially girls, broaden and grasp opportunities that will make equality a reality.



WORLD LEADERS RESOLVE TO CREATE AN ENVIRONMENT – A WORLD
MORE LIVEABLE FOR CHILDREN.

THE WORLD SUMMIT FOR CHILDREN



A year after the CRC came into being, the World Summit for Children (WSC) took place on September 29-30, 1990 at the United Nations in New York. One hundred fifty-nine (159) governments, major NGOs, and UN agencies participated and took up the challenge of translating the CRC into reality.¹

They resolved to create an environment — a world more liveable for children — where infants survive beyond their first birthdays and children live past the age of five; where their mothers are able to overcome the risks associated with every pregnancy and childbirth; where girls enjoy the same educational opportunities as boys; and where every child's highest potentials are fulfilled.

This was the vision of the World Summit for Children, a vision which world leaders intended to realise. By the year 2000, in a span of only 10 years, world leaders,

WHEN POLITICAL WILL MADE ALL THE DIFFERENCE: SAVING WOMEN'S LIVES IN MALAYSIA

As early as 1948, Malaysia, then under British colonial rule, identified maternal health as a priority. Since that time, maternal deaths have steadily declined due to the unwavering, sustained, and top-level commitment of all leaders to prevent women from dying during pregnancy and childbirth. Estimates showed that maternal mortality ratios declined from 570 per 100,000 live births in 1957 to 146 in 1970 and 17 in 1996.

Since the 50s, Malaysia has always placed maternal health as an integral part of consecutive Five-Year Development Plans. The Educational Policy as outlined in these Plans provided equal access for girls and boys to free primary and secondary education. The Plans' Rural Development Policy provided basic infrastructure, including housing, schools, clinics, roads, transport, communication, poverty alleviation programmes.²

These Plans and Policies created an enabling environment to support the efforts of the Ministry of Health (MOH) to reduce maternal deaths and disabilities.

Within this environment, the MOH was able to set up a functioning health referral system which efficiently managed obstetric emergencies. It also trained midwives and deployed them to remote villages and made sure that they worked closely with traditional birth attendants.



together with their peoples and the assistance of international agencies, decided to:

- reduce mortality rates of children under five years of age by a third of 1990 levels;
- reduce malnutrition of children under five years of age by half of 1990 levels;
- provide universal access to basic education;
- provide universal access to safe drinking water and hygienic ways of disposing waste;
- reduce maternal mortality ratios by half of 1990 levels;
- reduce adult illiteracy rates by half of 1990 levels;
- protect children from the physical abuse, violence, and the emotional and psychical trauma that wars inflict, exposure to radiation and dangerous chemicals, sexual abuse, all forms of commercial and sexual exploitation.



These are lofty and bold goals but difficult ones. No single strategy can adequately respond to the immense problems which these goals intend to provide and eliminate, but they can be achieved with multi-sectoral responses involving all sectors of society.

Malnutrition, for instance, cannot be dealt with by distributing vitamin pills alone. It requires an acknowledgement that, within the same household, girls and women are entitled

complexities vary from country to country, one underlying factor which is key to unravelling these complexities is the sustained and high-level commitment of governments and their capacity to exercise their political will.

Ten years after, in September 2001, world leaders, UN agencies, and NGOs as well as young people and children are reconvening for the UN General Assembly Special Session on Children. The purpose of this meeting is to assess how

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