

THE PROGRESS 2000 OF NATIONS



THE PROGRESS OF NATIONS

*The day will come
when nations will be judged
not by their military or economic strength,
nor by the splendour of their capital
cities and public buildings,
but by the well-being of their peoples:
by their levels of health, nutrition and education;
by their opportunities to earn a fair reward for their
labours; by their ability to participate in the
decisions that affect their lives; by the respect that is
shown for their civil and political liberties;
by the provision that is made for those who are
vulnerable and disadvantaged;
and by the protection that is afforded to the
growing minds and bodies of their children.
The Progress of Nations, published annually
by the United Nations Children's Fund, is
a contribution towards that day.*

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UNICEF
3 UN Plaza
New York, NY 10017

E-mail: pubdoc@unicef.org
Web site: www.unicef.org

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Foreword

Over the past eight years, *The Progress of Nations* has diligently recorded the world's progress towards giving all children the chance to live a decent life – a life of dignity and opportunity. The benchmarks have been the goals set at the 1990 World Summit for Children and the rights enshrined in the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which virtually all nations have ratified.

This publication describes what becomes possible when nations invest in children's well-being and protect their rights. Millions of children are now less likely to be left mentally impaired because of iodine deficiency. Millions more are enjoying better health, thanks to improved access to clean water. More children are enrolled in school now than was the case 10 years ago. Breastfeeding rates are up in many countries, and birth registration records have vastly improved. Polio is on the verge of eradication. Immunization has worked miracles in countless villages and remote locations in developing countries, turning despair into hope and uncertainty into promise. *The Progress of Nations* also captures the slow but steady progress girls and women are making as they overcome inequality and discrimination and regain their right to live to their full potential. Child labour and sexual exploitation are being tackled with great vigour.

But this publication also recounts the great distances the world must still travel. Goals remain unmet and rights unrealized because of poverty, gender discrimination, debt, wars, inadequate commitment or unequal social development. *The Progress of Nations* records the devastating speed with which HIV/AIDS has, in less than a generation, become the greatest catastrophe facing the continent of Africa and is now spreading in Asia and parts of Central Europe and Latin America. So malevolent is the threat that the economic prospects and social stability of entire regions are at risk. It is fitting, therefore, that HIV/AIDS is the central topic of this issue of *The Progress of Nations*. The figures on infection rates among youth are horrifying. Efforts to educate and inform people, especially youth, about HIV/AIDS must be pursued with far greater energy.

This issue also celebrates the power of immunization and sets out a new agenda for vaccines. In the chapter on early childhood care it makes the case for early investment in children as a key to reducing poverty. And it concludes with a painful reminder that, on every continent, in brothels, slums, factories and war-torn areas, children lost among the living are hoping to touch the moral radar of a world that seems to have forgotten them. The principle of 'all children, all rights' is still much too far from being a reality.



Kofi A. Annan
Secretary-General
United Nations