



# An urgent call to leadership

As the 21st century begins, the overwhelming majority of the people in the world who live in poverty are children and women. They are also the overwhelming majority of civilians who are killed and maimed in conflicts. They are the most vulnerable to infection with HIV/AIDS. Their rights, as set forth in the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, are violated every day in numbers of such magnitude as to defy counting.

But the pall that these abuses of poverty, conflict, HIV/AIDS and gender discrimination have cast on lives around the globe can be lifted. The conditions are neither inevitable nor immutable. Nor is the international community about to abandon women and children to them. Government bodies and civil groups, organizations of the United Nations system and non-governmental organizations, philanthropies and responsible corporate citizens – as well as children and adolescents themselves – have formed alliances to redress these wrongs.

Ready to take the necessary next step in advancing the well-being of the world's children, representatives of these various groups are to gather in an extraordinary meeting in the New York autumn of 2001, that will be linked to a Special Session of the General Assembly. Together, they will form a grand global coalition committed to fully meet the goals of the 1990 World Summit for Children. And they will begin the 21st century with a new agenda, clear and passionate about

what needs to be done – for all women and all children – before the first decade of the new millennium ends.

Taken as a whole, these many organizations and the millions of people they represent – neither cowed nor intimidated by the challenges ahead – will form an unprecedented international movement on behalf of children. Many have worked long years to better the lives of children, adolescents and women: bringing the Convention on the Rights of the Child into being in 1989, setting goals and plans of action the following year at the World Summit, striving in the decade since then to be true to their promises. Others have embraced the cause of child rights more recently, drawn by a particular issue such as child soldiers, child labour or the trafficking of children for prostitution.

Together, they share a belief that human progress and overall development lie in the progress of women and children and the realization of their rights. They are animated by what has already been accomplished: the proven child survival gains of the 1980s and 1990s, the tenets of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), the law and spirit of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the achievements in nearing the World Summit goals.

Humanity has seen stunning advances and has made enormous strides for children, many of them in the last decade, many others in just over the span of a generation. Children's lives have been saved and their

*Two girls enjoy lunchtime at the Angela Landa primary school in Havana.*

suffering prevented. Millions have grown healthier, been better nourished and had greater access to a quality education than ever before. Their rights as put forth in the Convention have been acknowledged and laws to protect them enacted and enforced.

Polio, once a global epidemic, is on the verge of eradication, and deaths from two remorseless child killers, measles and neonatal tetanus, have been reduced over the past 10 years by 85 per cent and more than 25 per cent, respectively. Some 12 million children are now free from the risk of mental retardation due to iodine deficiency. And blindness from vitamin A deficiency has been significantly reduced. More children are in school today than at any previous time.

Despite the many stunning steps forward, a number of the goals remain out of reach for hundreds of millions of children throughout the world. Their lives and futures are threatened in a world marked by deeper and more intractable poverty and greater

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inequality between the rich and poor, proliferating conflict and violence, the deadly spread of HIV/AIDS and the abiding issue of discrimination against women and girls.

These problems are not new, but they are more widespread and profoundly entrenched than they were even a decade ago. Interwoven and reinforcing, they feed off one another and abrogate the rights of children and women in compounding ways. In some countries and regions, they threaten to undo much of what has been accomplished.

Intergenerational patterns of poverty, violence and conflict, discrimination and disease are not unconquerable. They – like other challenges before them – can be met.

What is more, given the resources that the world has at hand, these deadly cycles can be broken within a single generation.

The world must now direct its efforts towards those points where the potential for change and impact will be greatest: the best possible start for children in their early years, a quality basic education for every child and support and guidance for adolescents in navigating the sensitive transition to adulthood.

*The State of the World's Children 2000* seeks to fan the flame that burned so brilliantly for children a decade ago. It is a call to leaders in industrialized and developing countries alike to reaffirm their commitment to children. It is a call for vision and leadership within families and communities, where the respect for the rights of children and women is first born and nurtured and where the protection of those rights begins.

And it is a call to all people to realize a new world within a single generation: a shared vision of children and women – indeed of humankind – freed from poverty and discrimination, freed from violence and disease.



*In Colombia at the beginning of the decade, 3.5 million children under five years old were reached through a network of health clinics and the dissemination of health messages. A woman weighs a boy in a sling scale in her home.*

## South Africa: Helping children by helping families

A group of young South African children files into the park, their eyes wide with anticipation. Suddenly, 2 four-year-old boys dash over to a bright red climbing structure, their squeals of glee piercing the din of traffic. The boys scramble up a ladder, while several girls, their black hair in short pigtailed and colourful beads, bolt for the swings. Soon the play equipment is swarming with giddy children, while their caregivers chat on a nearby bench. The scene looks utterly normal, like many playgrounds the world over. Which is what is so remarkable: because Joubert Park is so much more than a playground.

The park is a swatch of green in the crime-ridden inner-city neighbourhood of Hillbrow in Johannesburg, one of the world's most violent cities. Until last year, the formerly 'whites only' park was a magnet for everyone from hawkers to squatters, and its sidewalks served as a crowded taxi stand for commuters. The Johannesburg Art Gallery, located here, was largely abandoned as its former well-heeled clientele fled the inner city.

A renaissance is now under way in the heart of Johannesburg, and it is being spearheaded by, of all things, an innovative child-care centre. The Joubert Park Child and Family Resource Service, housed in a low-slung building beneath shade trees in a corner of the park, is part of the Impilo (meaning 'life') Project. Managed by the provincial Gauteng Department of Education (GDE), Impilo is a series of linked pilot projects that are developing new multi-service approaches to early childhood care and development. The Joubert Park Service, led by Cynthia Ndaba, is building partnerships, including one between the Service and the health clinic, to help families and communities meet the needs of young children for health, safety and nutrition.

But this is not simply a crèche. Aimed at providing opportunities for poor people and rejuvenating a blighted neighbourhood, it is a model of comprehensive care for children that promotes the major pillars of children's rights.

The idea for a crèche-cum-empowerment centre came about after South Africa's first democratic election in 1994, which ended a half-century of white minority rule that had entrenched striking inequities for children. The province of Gauteng, which includes the cities of Johannesburg and Pretoria, is home to about



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1 million children below the age of six. Fifty-nine per cent of Gauteng households are classified as poor, and 6 out of 10 mothers of school-age children are unemployed. Early childhood care has been nearly non-existent for black children: 80 per cent of pre-schoolers in the province were not being served by any programme. "We needed a new framework that overcame the inequalities of the past," asserts Carole Liknaitzky, Impilo Project manager for GDE.

Since opening in 1998, the Project's pilot programme has striven to be a catalyst for providing a broad range of services to lower-income families. At its heart is the centre that provides day care for the poorest children in the neighbourhood, many of whom had been shuttered inside high-rise apartment blocks that ring the park. The crèche is adjacent to a mother-child health clinic that offers care to children, their families and the community.

*Children in a playground in Johannesburg.*

In an ambitious effort, the Project has also taken on the challenge of making the neighbourhood child- and family-friendly again. It is working with the police to improve safety around the park and has joined with the provincial Department of Agriculture, Conservation, Environmental and Land Affairs to clean up the park and provide nature outings and education to children and their families. Even the Art Gallery, once a bastion of white privilege, is now involved, offering arts education to caregivers from the Project. This 'web of linked services' is Impilo's holistic approach to early childhood care.

### Jobs first

Inside the Joubert Park Service one morning, 30 children, ranging in age from three to six, are busy at different stations. The room is divided into areas for fantasy play with dolls and dress-up clothes, stations for math and puzzles and other areas for science, blocks, art and books. "These children are working freely, making what they want to make," explains Liza Titlestad, an artist and Montessori educator from the provincial Curriculum Development Project. "Most people assume children can't think for themselves. In fact, they are much more stimulated and creative when they can choose how to express themselves."

The caregivers in the Service meet monthly with parents, encouraging them to be involved in their children's education. The meetings are also designed to learn what parents need in order to help their families. During initial meetings, parents repeatedly highlighted their biggest concern: jobs. It became clear that the best way to help the children was to ensure that their families had steady incomes. "The idea was to help the child by helping the family," explains project coordinator Leon Mdiya. "Once they have a source of income, it is then more relevant for us to talk about the child's education and health care." So the parents conceived of the idea of opening a bakery.

A few blocks from Joubert Park, the Itsoseng ('wake yourself up') Community Bakery is catering to a steady stream of lunchtime visitors. The bakery, which was set up with support from the Urban and Rural Development Education Project, the US Wheat Board and the Open Society Foundation, serves hot lunches and will eventually sell fresh bread and other baked goods. Within one month of its May 1999 opening, the storefront was bustling with enthusiastic customers. The bakery employs 17 people, all of whom have children at the Joubert Park child-care centre. One of the parents is Catherine Bosoga, 27, whose five-year-old son takes part in the centre's activities while she bakes. Ms. Bosoga had been unemployed for five years before participating in the bakery cooperative. Noting that she is paid R200 (\$33) per week, she says, "Now we have food in the house."

Ms. Bosoga motions to the queue of people waiting to buy the food that she, along with other parents, cooked this morning. "I think we are going to make it," she says.

### Teaching the caregivers

The township of Kathlehong, just outside Johannesburg, appears an unlikely place to look for creative approaches to early childhood care. The landscape is dominated by small cinder block homes and shacks. In the early 1990s, this township was a war zone, the scene of deadly faction fighting between rival political groups vying for power. Just surviving was challenge enough for families and children in those days; development was a luxury. This was the urgent dilemma that confronted the Impilo Project when it arrived in 1998.

## About early childhood care

- Assuring the best for children throughout their lives depends on assuring them the best beginnings: The health and well-being of their mothers are essential, as is the care and attention children receive during their earliest years, from birth to age 6.
- A child grows and develops holistically, with his or her physical, emotional and intellectual needs interrelated and interdependent.
- Early childhood care is one of the best ways to assure the child a smooth transition into primary school. It is also a critical factor in the child's subsequent transition to adulthood, influencing both social skills and behavioural choices.
- The family and immediate community environment are fundamental to ensuring the rights of the child.
- Attention to early childhood is a critical aspect of anti-poverty strategies to break intergenerational cycles of chronic poor health and suboptimal human development.

In Kathlehong and the neighbouring townships of Thokoza and Vosloorus, the Impilo Project has reached out to the numerous 'informal' services in shacks and hostels, offering training, resources and funding to upgrade facilities. "Services in informal settings do not qualify for legal recognition," says Sophia de Beer, the early childhood development officer for the province's Department of Education. Day-care providers routinely hid children from apartheid government inspectors, fearful that their crèches would be discovered and closed down. As a consequence, Impilo Project workers have to seek out the unregistered services – often finding them by sighting brightly coloured drawings in windows – and reassure them that the Government is there to help.

As part of its mission, the Impilo Project carries its philosophy of child-centred learning down a rutted dirt road where, at the end of a row, a gaily coloured metal shack has the words 'Teboho Child Care' (*teboho* means 'a gift') painted on the side. Some children run around the sandy lot, while others sit outside on a veranda working with measuring utensils. "I made this for the love of the kids," says Emily Serobe, 48, dressed in a brilliant red dress and blue scarf, as she motions to her small, neatly kept crèche. She and three other women look after 29 children up to age five. "The kids were running in the streets, and they were victims of child abuse. There was much fighting here in 1994. I saved the children by taking them inside."

Ms. Serobe now receives an annual subsidy from GDE of R4,000 (\$670). She has used it to expand her space and to buy art supplies, toys and teaching resources. The Impilo Project also provides Ms. Serobe with training in how to care for children. "I used to beat and yell at the kids if they didn't respond," she acknowledges candidly. "They were crying, making noise, and I didn't know what to do. Then I learned to talk to them quietly and not beat them." She motions to the youngsters who are absorbed in drawing pictures and measuring seeds. "Now they have things to keep them busy. You can see the change," she says proudly.

The Impilo Project has made a similar difference at the nearby Vulindlela Crèche in Kathlehong, a formal child-care centre with 42 children. Principal Beatrice Radebe explains,

"Impilo has been teaching me that children must learn through what they need, not through what I want them to do." She walks over to Jabu, a five-year-old girl who has drawn a picture of a woman with green legs. The small girl stands proudly next to her creation. "I like it here. I can draw and write," Jabu says with a shy smile.

Ms. Radebe holds up the picture and recalls how at one time she would have corrected the girl's choice of colours. The principal declares, "I mustn't tell her that it is wrong. Now, they can do what they like with the drawing. The children learn through their senses."

Other components of the Impilo Project include an 'action research project' in Kathlehong and neighbouring townships that is trying to identify what families need to support their children's development. Their research found that deep poverty and schools that are not child-friendly proved to be major reasons why more than 100 school-age children in the community were not attending school. A 'back to fast track' initiative brought 100 out-of-school children, ages 7 to 14, back to school and helped them catch up with their peers.

The most important contribution of the Impilo Project may simply be that it recognizes the hard and lonely work of child-care providers in poor communities. In the back room of a flower shop in Kathlehong one day, a dozen local caregivers are attending a training session with Fanny Ntuli from the Learning Project, who is working with all Impilo practitioners in the district. Ms. Ntuli observes, "The Department of Education never gave funds to informal crèches. Now they realize that even an auntie in a shack is important to children. They just needed some guidance on how to do things better."

Freda Thusi, a tall, matronly crèche owner who is attending the training, stands up and declares, "This training has really empowered us, and it will help the children. It has given us the real *impilo* in our future."



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Emily Serobe with a child at the Teboho Child Care crèche in South Africa.

## Promises to keep

To tell the story of how well the cause of human rights was advanced over the course of the last century is not simple. An honest narrative would raise questions of what became of the promises made for children and women, or of those pledges for international peace and commitments to universal human rights.

Some of the most dramatic and compelling stories of our times are of the significant gains in social development when the ideals of human dignity, justice and equality became reality through the actions of governments, organizations and individuals. Millions of people who might have died from communicable diseases and preventable illnesses in the past 50 years were saved because of public health measures such as immunization,

improved access to safe water and sanitation facilities, and mass information campaigns.

Hundreds of thousands of women are alive today because of well-spaced and healthy pregnancies. Many more women than before are emancipated from illiteracy, largely because of political commitments to educate girls, commitments that were followed by global campaigns and local reforms.

Millions of children, born of healthy mothers, well-nourished and immunized against childhood diseases, have survived, whereas others, born before the child survival and development revolution of the 1980s and its life-saving programmes, did not. Thousands of children and adolescents, boys and girls alike, are now in school rather than trapped in exploitative and hazardous labour, or living on the streets and train platforms, or being trafficked for prostitution.

*Nearly half of the children in the least developed countries of the world do not have access to primary education. Girls and boys share textbooks at a community school in Bhutan.*



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But there are also sombre accounts of the 20th century about actions and inaction and times when not even the slightest shadow of the ideals of human rights could be seen. Clearly, not all have enjoyed the fruits of progress – and children and women especially have been denied.

Over the last 20 years, at the same time that the world economy increased exponentially, the number of people living in poverty grew to more than 1.2 billion, or one in every five persons, including more than 600 million children.<sup>1</sup>

In the last 15 years, denial and an unconscionable silence have allowed the HIV/AIDS pandemic to kill millions and decimate societies, especially in sub-Saharan Africa.

And in the last 10 years, the rape of women and girls and the systematic slaughter of civilians, including children, have become conventional weapons of war in every region of the world where conflicts rage.

How can one era hold such disparate and conflicting realities? Why has progress been possible in some countries and not in others? And what distinguishes countries where the rights of women and children are protected and promoted from those where children and women languish in poverty because the commitment to their rights was a hollow promise?

Answers to these questions turn on the point of leadership. Where leadership for children and women is just, their rights can be protected. Where leadership is abdicated, abuses and human rights violations follow.

Many countries have begun the task of building a society around the best interests of children, and the benefits are evident. In Uganda, where political leaders invested in basic social services, infant mortality and child mortality rates were reduced by 5 percentage points between 1992 and 1997. In

125 countries, nearly 80 per cent of an entire generation of children were immunized against common childhood killers such as measles and tetanus through the collaborative actions of governments, civil society and international organizations. More than two thirds of all the world's children under five years old – 450 million – were immunized against polio in 1998 alone. In India that year, health workers and volunteers vaccinated 134 million children during National Immunization Days.

Even in countries at war, the commitment to immunize children has been honoured. In the Democratic Republic of Congo, for instance, National Immunization Days held since 1998 have reached 96 per cent of the children in more than two thirds of the country.

Though national efforts and large-scale campaigns are more visible, examples also

abound of vision, solidarity and social change at every level. Because such actions often break with traditional power structures and relations, they call for courage and an impassioned motivation. Indigenous women in Chicontepec (Mexico), for example, formed a women's network in their community and installed a water pump,

built a school and helped develop a gender-sensitive curriculum. They also engaged the men of the village in their workshops and provided skills training for them.

Similarly, young people across Africa and South-East Asia, like the teenage counsellors in the Zambian capital of Lusaka, have taken the initiative and volunteered in support groups to provide confidential counselling about HIV/AIDS in youth-friendly health services. And in many parts of the world, people are refusing to accept violence against women as inevitable, creating shelters and hotlines for women and raising awareness. In Bangladesh, young women have organized

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a movement that speaks out against the horror experienced by hundreds of the country's girls and women who are injured in brutal acid attacks by spurned suitors and hostile relatives every year.

BOX

1

## Children's rights: From chattel to citizens

To start from the contention that all children possess rights is to challenge many of the world's most long-held beliefs. One thousand years ago, children were all but invisible as individuals, regarded as property and made to work as soon as they were physically able to. Adults paid little attention to their special needs.

By the turn of this century, when the deadly scourges of cholera, typhoid and influenza were rampant throughout the world, children were no closer to gaining their basic rights than they were during that earlier period. It took the world's horror at the First World War and the commitment of the newly formed League of Nations to peace and rehabilitation to transform charitable approaches on behalf of children into the recognition that children had rights as well as needs.<sup>1</sup>

The important but still limited benefits of charity frustrated many child advocates, including Eglantyne Jebb. The dynamic Briton, who established the Save the Children Fund in 1919, drafted the first document in history endorsed by the international community to state that children have rights. Writing in 1923, Jebb noted, *"The moment appears to me to have come when we can no longer expect to conduct large relief actions. If we wish nevertheless to go on working for the children . . . the only way to do it seems to be to evoke a cooperative effort of the nations to safeguard their own children on constructive rather than on charitable lines. I believe we should claim certain rights for the children and labour for their universal recognition, so that everybody . . . may be in a position to help forward the movement."*<sup>2</sup>

Throughout the 20th century, a burgeoning field of experts and grassroots children's advocates mounted a movement to recognize children's special needs as inalienable rights and to guarantee those rights under law. In 1989, this 'child rights movement' resulted in the Convention on the Rights of the Child, a landmark in international human rights legislation that incorporated the full array of rights embodied in the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the twin Covenants on Civil and Political Rights (1966) and Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1966), international humanitarian law and the rights of refugee children.

In an unprecedented collaboration, governments and NGOs from around the world hammered out the most comprehensive human rights instrument in history. On item after item, the drafters reached a consensus on such sensitive issues as child labour, child soldiers and the sexual exploitation of children. Child rights advocates were successful in insisting that paramount importance be given in the document to the principle of "the best interests of the child."

When the United Nations General Assembly unanimously adopted the Convention on the Rights of the Child on 20 November 1989, groups of children looking on from the gallery burst into applause.

## An altered landscape

When the story turns to leadership on behalf of children's rights, there are no more exhilarating chapters than those that tell of the 1989 Convention on the Rights of the Child and the 1990 World Summit for Children. With its full spectrum of civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights, and the overwhelming consensus seen in its nearly universal ratification, the Convention positioned children squarely at the forefront of the worldwide movement for human rights and social justice. It altered the landscape for children by clarifying the vital and distinct roles to be played by State signatories, NGOs, international organizations, communities, parents and children themselves in realizing children's rights (Box 1).

The Convention on the Rights of the Child put forward several principles to guide the world's work on behalf of child rights, including one with the most expansive potential: that the best interests of the child shall be a primary consideration in all actions concerning the child. Moreover, another compelling clause made it clear that a partnership of rich nations and poor is vital so that resources are committed to the extent possible at the national level and assistance is pledged internationally to ensure that children have the opportunity to enjoy their rights.<sup>2</sup>

Following closely on the adoption of the Convention by the UN General Assembly, the World Summit for Children was convened in New York City in September 1990. The 71 Heads of State and Government and others assembled drafted an ambitious plan for the closing decade of the century, with 27 goals, 7 of them considered major, to be accomplished by the year 2000 (Box 2).

No one who took part in these momentous events on behalf of children could have anticipated the extent to which the Convention and the Summit goals would suffuse every significant summit and conference that followed.<sup>3</sup> In particular, they

informed the agenda of the 1995 World Summit for Social Development and were reflected in the *Human Development Report* of 1994.<sup>4</sup> And they can be seen in the goals of the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) to cut poverty in half, reduce mortality by two thirds among children under five years of age and ensure universal access to primary education by the year 2015.<sup>5</sup>

Nor could those present in 1990 predict how much the World Summit and the Convention would galvanize the energies of many thousands of individuals and groups around the world for years to come. So although human rights abuses against children still persist in all parts of the world, remarkable progress has been made for children in country after country.

In 1990, for example, the member States of the Organization of African Unity drafted their own Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child and, since then, countries have used it in conjunction with the Convention on the Rights of the Child in their programming and advocacy activities. Since 1990, 117 countries have developed a national plan of action for children, and 17 countries in Central and South America have passed significant child rights legislation.<sup>6</sup> Many other countries have revised their national legislation in response to provisions of the Convention on matters ranging from public health to juvenile justice and female genital mutilation. And national reports on such subjects as 'The State of Our Children' and 'Children's Budgets' are now issued in countries around the world.

The United Nations has made its own commitment to keep children's rights at the centre of its peacekeeping and peace-building activities. In 1993, Graça Machel, former Minister of Education of Mozambique, was appointed by the UN Secretary-General to undertake the first comprehensive assessment of the multiple ways children suffer in armed conflict. Following Ms. Machel's compelling study, the Secretary-General

BOX  
2

## Major goals of the 1990 World Summit for Children

To be achieved by the year 2000:

- Reduction of mortality rates for children under five.
- Reduction of maternal mortality rates.
- Reduction of malnutrition among children under five.
- Reduction of adult illiteracy rates.
- Provision of universal access to basic education.
- Provision of universal access to safe drinking water and sanitary conditions.
- Improved protection of children in especially difficult circumstances.

appointed Olara A. Otunnu in 1997 as Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict to serve as a public advocate and moral voice on behalf of children caught in war's chaos. Today, children hold a regular place on the agenda of the UN Security Council as it considers the effects of its actions – whether, for example, to intervene in the Democratic Republic of Congo, Sierra Leone or East Timor – on the rights and welfare of children.

In the UN General Assembly, too, the plight of children receives attention. In opening remarks to the 54th General Assembly, President Theo-Ben Gurirab, Foreign Minister of Namibia, identified the future of children as one of the seven main challenges facing the world today: "... their lives are at daily risk of being snatched away by the cruelty and indifference of adults." GA President Gurirab added his endorsement to designating the first decade of the new millennium as the International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-violence for the Children of the World.<sup>7</sup>

Perhaps most significant of all, the spirit of the Convention and of the World Summit has stirred a remarkable level of interest and participation on the part of children and adolescents. They have addressed



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national parliaments, and in several regions, 10 countries in West and Central Africa, for example, they have formed their own Children's Parliaments or similar structures. Millions have participated in referendums on children's rights in Chile, Ecuador, Mexico and Mozambique. In Colombia, riven by war and violence for over 30 years, children and adolescents have taken the courageous lead in launching a nationwide peace movement.

## The price of failure

For all the gains made, the story of the 20th century is also about failed leadership – a lack of vision, an absence of courage, a passive neglect. The number of violations of children's rights that occur around the globe every day are staggering. They range from acts of omission – such as the failure to register births or provide access to health care services and primary school – to the deliberate abuses of armed conflict, forced labour and sexual exploitation. They are often hidden in families, rich or poor. They lead from one violation to another, exponentially.

Every day that nations fail to meet their moral and legal obligations to realize the rights of children, 30,500 boys and girls under five die of mainly preventable causes, and even more children and young people succumb to illnesses, neglect, accidents and assaults that do not have to happen.

Every month that the full-scale campaign needed to stop the terrifying HIV/AIDS pandemic is postponed, 250,000 children and young people become infected with the fatal virus.<sup>8</sup>

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*The devastating effects of war continue long after the conflict ends. This Iraqi woman lost her right hand and injured both legs when she mistakenly picked up a landmine.*

Every year, 585,000 women die of complications of pregnancy and childbirth that could have been prevented.

In the last year alone, approximately 31 million refugees and displaced persons<sup>9</sup> – mostly children and women – were caught in the conflicts that ravaged the world, searching in vain for a safe haven, fleeing inhumane circumstances and ruthless attacks by mortar and machete, rape and dismemberment.

And every year that governments fail to spend what is needed to support basic social services and that development assistance is slashed, millions of children throughout the developing world are deprived of the access to safe water and sanitation facilities, and school and health services that are vitally necessary for them to survive and develop.

These are gross violations of the rights of children and women and as long as they persist – and the circumstances that give rise to them remain unchanged – human development will be compromised.

## Alliances for children

To shift the way the international community assumes its responsibility towards children requires political will and an unwavering commitment on all levels to social action. It requires the rededication of those who have been working for children over long years and the building of new alliances. The momentous social movement that is needed for children is too important – and the urgency too great – for it to be led by a traditional few.

The leadership called for in the next millennium extends beyond traditional sectors and governmental structures, to engage all those who share a concern for human progress – people's movements, community-based organizations, youth movements, women's groups, professional networks, artists and intellectuals, the mass media. It is a global leadership that will work bottom-up as well as top-down, involving Heads of State,



UNICEF/98-0201/Lembyne

*More than 150,000 children and women were forced from their homes during the civil conflict in Yugoslavia. This woman stands with her children in a temporary settlement of displaced ethnic Albanian Kosovars.*



UNICEF/99-0109/Pirotzi

*In Uganda, Umaru, 8, and Avisa, 10, who lost their father to AIDS and whose mother is sick with the disease, watch as Maxim Vengerov, internationally renowned violinist and UNICEF Envoy for Music, share a light-hearted moment outside their house.*

leaders in the political, business, academic and religious communities and children and adolescents themselves who are already working towards positive change in their families and in their communities.

This expansive leadership, set to gather in 2001, will be the catalyst to the profound social transformations that are necessary to improve the world for children and women and to advance human development.