

CHILD FRIENDLY SUMMARY OF 'WE THE CHILDREN'

WHAT IS 'WE THE CHILDREN'?

The document is called 'We the Children' and is a report by the head of the United Nations (the UN Secretary General). He was asked to prepare it by the governments of the world so that they could see what has happened to children over the last ten years. In particular it looks at how successful the governments have been in keeping the promises they made to children at a big meeting in New York in September 1990.

WHAT WAS THE MEETING IN 1990?

The meeting was called the World Summit for Children. 71 world leaders and other important people met in New York to agree what they should do in order to give 'every child a better future'. At the end of the meeting they made a set of promises towards the children of the world. They wrote these promises down in 2 documents – the *World Summit for Children Declaration* and the *Plan of Action for the Survival, Protection and Development of Children*. The world leaders made two kinds of promises:

- They said that they would always put the best interests of children first – in good times and bad, in peace and war.
- They agreed that they would try and achieve 27 specific goals. Most of these were about children's health but they were also about trying to get more children into schools, to stop them going hungry and to protect them from different kinds of danger.

WHAT IS THE 'WE THE CHILDREN' REPORT ABOUT?

The 'We the Children' report looks at how successful the governments of the world have been in keeping their promises over the last ten years. Did they keep their promises? It uses all sorts of information to help answer that question. This information includes reports from over 130 countries as well as facts and figures from surveys and censuses. The report is the most detailed look at what has happened to children that has ever been made.

WHAT IS THIS CHILD FRIENDLY SUMMARY?

The report is very long – the current version is 109 pages long and has 517 paragraphs! It also has lots of tables of figures and diagrams. So this summary aims to present the key results of the report. The long version of the report gives lots of information about what has happened to children in different parts of the world – such as Africa, South Asia or Latin America. The full report is available on the UNICEF website (www.unicef.org) and also on CRIN (www.crin.org).

In this summary we are going to look mainly at what has happened to the children of the world as a whole.

This child friendly summary was produced by Save the Children.

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DID THE GOVERNMENTS KEEP THEIR PROMISES?

The report says that the world has **not** kept most of the promises made to children in 1990. However there was real and important progress in a number of different areas **and** more was done for children in the last ten years than in any other period in history. So the picture is very mixed – some good things were done for children, some other things are taking longer to achieve than was expected and there are some areas where things have actually got worse. The report says that when you compare what went well with what didn't go well, the successes were more important than the failures. It also says that a good basis has been made for speeding up progress in the next ten years.

WHAT WENT WELL?

- 63 countries managed to achieve the goal of reducing the number of deaths among children under 5 years of age by one third.
- The number of young children dying from diarrhoeal diseases were reduced by a half over the last ten years
- In the year 2000 3 million more children were able to live who would have died ten years earlier because of various diseases
- One of the major diseases of the past – polio – which kills and disables children has almost been got rid of. For every 100 cases of polio in 1990 there is only 1 today.
- More and more children are receiving vitamin A supplements and iodised salt. As a result they are much better protected against problems caused by not getting enough vitamin A or iodine – problems which include blindness and mental disability.
- Breastfeeding – which helps babies grow up better and more safely – increased by one third from 1990 to 2000.
- More children are in school than ever before
- More and more adults are trying to do something about the problems facing children such as child labour, the buying and selling of children, the abuse

and exploitation of children, the impact of wars and other kinds of violence on children.

WHAT DID NOT GO WELL?

- More than 10 million children still die each year, often from problems that could easily be dealt with.
- 150 million children go hungry.
- 100 million children are still not in school – 6 out of every 10 of them are girls.
- 250 million children between the ages of 5 and 14 years are working - up to 60 million of them in dangerous conditions.
- 30 million children are being bought and sold ('trafficked') so that they can be exploited in such activities as commercial prostitution or as child slaves.
- 600 million children - 40% of the children in developing countries - live in extreme poverty and have to survive on \$1 a day or less.
- In the year 2000 some 600,000 children under 15 years of age were infected with HIV; half a million children under 15 years of age have died of AIDS and 10.4 million children have lost their mother or both parents as a result of AIDS.
- Although there were improvements in a number of areas the benefits have not been evenly spread. There are big differences between what has happened to children in different regions of the world, as well as between children living in rural and urban areas, between girls and boys and between children from richer and poorer families. For example, on average a child from a poor family is twice as likely to die before their fifth birthday than a child from a rich family.

WHY WERE PROMISES NOT MET?

The report says that the main reason that governments failed to meet their promises was that they had the wrong priorities. In particular they did not put enough money into key services for children such as safe water supplies, basic education and primary health care. Instead the governments spent their money on other things - including buying arms and other weapons. At the same time rich governments cut their help to poorer countries and offered too little support for these services to children. The report suggests that the main reason for this was that political leaders were not committed enough to putting children first.

Other reasons which have contributed to failure include:

- The way that **economic growth** happened in the 1990s meant that those children who needed it most were the ones who were least likely to benefit from it - especially those living in the least developed countries in Africa.
- Not enough was done early enough to combat **HIV/AIDS**. It is now having a terrible impact on the countries most seriously affected by the disease. Young people from poor families - especially girls - are now the main victims. Apart from the deaths of children and adults, it has put tremendous pressure on struggling health services and other services such as schools.
- **Discrimination** continues to block progress for large numbers of children, particularly girls and young women. Discrimination on the grounds of race, ethnicity, language, disability, religion, HIV and refugee status, etc prevents many children enjoying the benefits of any progress that has occurred.
- **Wars and other kinds of armed conflict** killed more than 2 million children in the last ten years. They forced over 35 million children to leave their homes, exposing them to terror and insecurity and to the loss of their access to basic services. 10,000 children a year are killed or disabled by landmines.
- Many low-income countries continued to be burdened by **debt** (i.e. the money they owe to banks or other organisations in the richer countries). The 41 countries with the greatest problems owe a total of \$205 billion. As a result some countries spend 3 to 5 times as much on paying back their debt than they can spend on basic services for children.
- **Aid** (i.e. transfers of money) from the richer countries to the poorer countries fell during the 1990s to their lowest level ever. The richer countries gave only a third of the amount that they had promised to give. Only one of every ten dollars of aid went on basic services. The countries that lost out the most were those that needed it the most - the poorest.
- **Environmental hazards and natural disasters** continue to threaten children's lives. The movement of people to towns and cities, the cutting down of forests and the increase in desert conditions all contributed to difficulties in meeting the goals set.

WHAT HAVE WE LEARNT?

- Promises by political leaders are not enough. Success requires leaders to stick with their commitments over time and to involve other groups of people (such as NGOs, the media, children and the private sector) in achieving them.
- Approaches to fulfilling the promises need to be based on child rights and human rights principles such as non-discrimination, the best interests of the child and children's involvement in decisions that affect them.
- Governments need to allow people to see and talk about what they are doing for children. They need to uphold the rule of law and make sure that people who injure, abuse, kill, sell or exploit children are punished. Governments also have to make sure that children receive a basic set of public services - including health care, education and protection from violence.
- Governments need to work in close partnership with families, civil society and the private sector in broad public-private-community partnerships.
- Children and adolescents should be seen in a positive way as a part of the solution rather than as a part of the problem.
- We need to understand the root causes of the problems facing children, including poverty, exclusion, discrimination and other deep-rooted social attitudes.
- Programmes run for younger children and their families bring lots of benefits for children and for societies as a whole.
- Children and their families need to be strongly involved in decisions that affect them.
- The role of parents and the wider family in bringing up children should never be neglected.
- Technology can be a great help but is often not enough on its own.
- Goals and targets have shown great power to encourage people to make an effort, to provide a basis for people to work together and for reporting on progress.
- Good data is needed so that we know what is happening to children - especially the less 'visible' children.
- Governments who did well spent more on basic services for children and didn't stop spending money on basic services when they were facing difficult times. They also helped the more excluded and vulnerable children and supported women.

PROMISES KEPT AND BROKEN

(The most important goals agreed by world leaders are highlighted)

<p style="text-align: center;">The 27 Goals (set at the World Summit for Children)</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">The Results</p>
<p>1. Reduce by one third (33%) the rate of deaths among children under 5 years of age by 2000</p>	<p>Deaths fell by 14% - less than half of the goal. Big differences remain within countries, between rich and poor, rural and urban people, etc</p>
<p>2. Get rid of polio by 2000</p>	<p>Polio is still regularly found in 20 countries but more than 175 countries are now free of polio</p>
<p>3. Maintain a high level of immunisation coverage (reaching 90% of all children)</p>	<p>Routine coverage of three quarters (75%) of children is now maintained</p>
<p>4. Reduce the number of measles cases by 90% by 1995</p>	<p>The number of cases of measles fell by two thirds (66%) by 1999</p>
<p>5. Make sure that no child dies from tetanus in the first four weeks of life by 2000</p>	<p>Deaths fell by a half - from 561,000 deaths in 1990 to 289,000 in 2000</p>
<p>6. Reduce the number of children dying from diarrhoea by half by 2000</p>	<p>Achieved.</p>
<p>7. Reduce the rate at which children under 5 years of age go hungry by half by 2000</p>	<p>The proportion of hungry children only fell by 17% (just over a third of the goal)</p>
<p>8. Support women to breastfeed their babies without any other food for the first four to six months</p>	<p>Breastfeeding rates went up by nearly a fifth</p>
<p>9. Get rid of Vitamin A deficiency by 2000</p>	<p>40 countries now give over 70% of their children an annual Vitamin A supplement</p>
<p>10. Get rid of Iodine deficiency disorders by 2000</p>	<p>Nearly three quarters of families in the developing world are using iodised salt, compared with less than a fifth in 1990</p>
<p>11. Reduce the rate of low birth weight among babies to less than one in ten births</p>	<p>57 countries reached the target but 11 million babies in South Asia and 3.6 in Africa are born each year with low birth weight</p>
<p>12. Governments to be checking the growth of children as a normal practice by 2000</p>	<p>A majority of countries now monitor the growth of children</p>
<p>13. Support increased food production by providing more information and services</p>	<p>The number of people in developing countries not getting enough food went down very slightly</p>

14. Reduce the number of deaths among mothers during pregnancy or birth by a half	Little progress towards the goal
15. Give all couples access to information and services to plan pregnancies	The use of contraceptives increased by 10% globally and doubled in the poorest countries
16. Give all pregnant women access to proper care before the birth of their child, trained attendants at birth and special care when needed	Modest gains in care before birth and the availability of a trained attendant were made in all regions except sub-Saharan Africa
17. Reduce iron deficiency anaemia in women by one third	Little change in the rate of anaemia among pregnant women
18. Everyone to have access to safe drinking water by 2000	Only 83% of people have access to safe drinking water – only 3% more than in 1990. 1.1 billion people still lack access.
19. Everyone to have access to adequate sanitation	Only 60% of people have access to adequate sanitation - only 5% more than in 1990. 2.4 billion people still lack access.
20. Get rid of Guinea worm disease	The goal was nearly reached - the number of cases has fallen by 97%
21. Expand support activities for small children (ECD - Early Childhood Development activities)	ECD activities have expanded at the same rate or higher than population growth
22. All children to have access to basic education	82% of all primary school age children are enrolled in school. 100 million such children remain out of school.
23. Reduce the gap between girls and boys in school attendance	The gap between primary school enrolment of boys and girls fell by a quarter
24. Reduce the adult illiteracy rate (i.e. the proportion of adults who cannot read or write) by half	The adult illiteracy rate fell by 16% - only a third of the goal
25. Increase the skills and values for better living	Education and training for young people in getting new skills is increasing
26. Improve the protection of children in especially difficult circumstances	No information
27. Ratification of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child	All but 2 countries have now ratified the Convention